

Audio Title: The Book Stoop Britt Hawthorne - Raising Anti-Racist Children

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Transcript

Rebekah Borucki: Hello, friend! I heard you were looking for our spot. I got you.

So, you're going to go past the corner bodega and down the block from the fresh cuts barbershop, and there you'll find a brick row house at the intersection of Literature Place and Social Justice Blvd. That's the stoop.

Amanda, Amanda Lytle, she will be there to welcome you to the conversation. The Book Stoop, that's the name of the spot. We got the hottest takes on book culture, nerd culture, current events, with best-selling authors, change-makers, and risk-takers, the best kinds of folks.

Oh, me? I'm Rebekah Borucki, President of Row House Publishing, and this is our podcast. I am so glad you're here.

Now, I'm going to let you get to Amanda.

Amanda Lytle: Thanks, Bex. Hey friend. Let me be the second to welcome you to our spot, *The Book Stoop*. I feel incredibly honored to be the host of this podcast and I'm so grateful to have you with us.

Today on *The Book Stoop*, I'm speaking with Britt Hawthorne. Britt is an anti-racist educator, teacher, speaker, visionary, and activist committed to raising a generation of anti-racist children by centering families of the global majority and fostering equitable learning environments for students and children of all ages and backgrounds.

Britt's work moves the idea of equity in education from a goal to a reality. In this dynamic conversation, Britt shares her back story to her online community Collective Liberation. She also tells us about her experiences being pushed out of teaching when her two black sons experienced educational racism.

We talk about power over, power with and power within as well as prison technologies upheld in many schools. We also hear about Britt's new book *Raising Anti-Racist Children: A Practical Parenting Guide*, which will be out in 2022. We start our chats on *The Book Stoop* with a rather fitting question. So, what you reading these days?

Britt Hawthorne: That's a great question. Right now, I can't say there's anything in my lap that I'm reading. I just got a new book by Lorena German which is *A Framework for Culturally Sustaining Practices*, and I cannot wait to dive into it. It actually just got delivered yesterday and I have been very impatiently waiting on that book and there's another book I cannot wait. I

preordered it and that's Aja Barber's book *Consumed: The Need for Collective Change: Colonialism, Climate Change and Consumerism*.

So those two I'm really excited. I have to say I'm doing a lot of watching Netflix right now and listening to podcasts.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. The podcasting I understand. What are you watching on Netflix?

Britt Hawthorne: Oh, goodness. I just finished *Money Heist*.

Amanda Lytle: So good!

Britt Hawthorne: It's so good. Oh my goodness!

Amanda Lytle: So, I bawled the very last episode.

Britt Hawthorne: I know. OK. So, no spoiler alerts but I was not ready.

Amanda Lytle: Me neither.

Britt Hawthorne: I did not see it coming and then I didn't see what happened in the last episode coming or the cliffhanger for part two either.

Amanda Lytle: I'm like I have December 3rd in the calendar ready to go, like highlighted.

Britt Hawthorne: And that also makes you think about *Clickbait*. Have you watched *Clickbait*?

Amanda Lytle: We just finished that one too!

Britt Hawthorne: OK. Also, the last episode, I wasn't ready either.

Amanda Lytle: Uh-uh, no, and I never – at some points of that show, I was like, “Oh, it's definitely the son. Like the son did something when he was texting that other person.” I was like, “Obviously.”

Britt Hawthorne: I had this – so it wasn't in the – so I can kind of give this little snippet since it wasn't – but in my mind it was like, oh, I bet the mom has a brother and he's texting the uncle who is in collusion with him. OK. But there was absolutely no uncle at all in the whole series.

Amanda Lytle: No.

Britt Hawthorne: By the end of it, I was like, OK, a few things I learned of myself. One, I'm a terrible detective. Two, I had everyone framed for it.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah, yeah.

Britt Hawthorne: So that – I mean those two series; I love series too. I’m not a huge into like movies. I like series, something that I – there’s like this character development that happens so much in books.

Amanda Lytle: Right.

Britt Hawthorne: You know, and you like get to know the people on this journey. So that’s definitely what I’m watching on Netflix right now.

Amanda Lytle: So, what you just said about the last episode and like not being ready for that at all. I felt the same way and especially too because everything in me was like, “How bad are these people going to feel when the truth comes out having spent the last week and a half, two weeks of their lives thinking this one thing?” Right.

Britt Hawthorne: Yes. And I love that so much about *Clickbait* because there are so many different victims along the way and there are so many villains along the way. Like the one episode with the media.

Amanda Lytle: Oh, yeah.

Britt Hawthorne: And just like how irresponsible folks can be when they are in that position of power. So that’s that *Clickbait* was just – it was incredible and at the end, I mean did not have the ending I thought. It did not have the ending I thought.

Amanda Lytle: I was floored. OK. So, we should be getting some signups from Netflix right now.

Britt Hawthorne: Yes, yes. I am like loving the Netflix series that are coming out.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah.

Britt Hawthorne: But yeah, I mean I just – right now *Lupin*, did you get a chance to watch *Lupin*?

Amanda Lytle: No, I haven’t seen that.

Britt Hawthorne: I loved *Lupin*. You will probably like it because you liked *Money Heist* and it’s an interracial family. The lead character is a black man. It’s set in France. So, some of the episodes actually have – it’s like there are subtitles in the other episodes. There’s the voiceover in English. But he’s a magician and he’s pulling off the biggest heist ever. So that one, it just – again, really great character development. Love it. Watched it with our 14-year-old.

Amanda Lytle: OK.

Britt Hawthorne: I’m trying to think. Any other ones? But I’m really – I have never ever, ever been like into television, into TV, and I think something with just the height and feeling of the

pandemic. There's something about where I'm more geared towards just that visual than the reading. I have to say a podcast I'm listening to, I just started. My friend Tommy recommended it to me, and it's called "70 over 70". Are you familiar with that podcast?

Amanda Lytle: No. I would love to check it out. What is it about?

Britt Hawthorne: So, I reshared someone else's tweet that was like "I'm over 40 under 40" lists. I want 60 over 60 lists, people who have like grieved, have tender hearts. So, I reshared this tweet and Tommy said, "Listen to 70 over 70," and it's about the incredible accomplishments people – contributions and accomplishments of people over 70 years old.

It's so incredible because that's one part of my anti-racist, anti-bias journey that I'm always working to develop and learn and relearn. It's like how am I centering elders. How am I creating like more of an intergenerational lifestyle for myself and for my children? So just to listen to people who have such wisdom and who are laughing out loud, who are reflecting on their life and who are still contributing – the last episode I just listened to is with Joycelyn Elders and she was the first African American person and second woman to be the general surgeon of the United States during the Clinton presidency.

Amanda Lytle: Wow.

Britt Hawthorne: And she only lasted 14 months. I shouldn't say it like that. She did incredible work for 14 months and then they demanded her resignation after really there was this kind of frenzy around her being pro-masturbation and saying that's a part of comprehensive sex ed we should have in school. So just talking about masturbation and she put it all into context. She's like we're fighting HIV. We're fighting the AIDS epidemic. We're fighting unwanted, unplanned pregnancies among teenagers and she's like you have to put it all into context and think about when we say comprehensive, we think about progressive sex education today in 2021. All the things we're thinking about and a lot of things that are normal table talk wasn't then. So just to hear her own story, that podcast is incredible, and I just appreciate that centering of elders.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah, big time. I'm definitely adding that to the list because like you said just about something to consume. I also like being able to consume something that I feel like I'm learning.

Britt Hawthorne: Yes.

Amanda Lytle: So great segue though into the centering of elders because I know that like education is a huge thing between Montessori and just between the book that's coming out, which I can't wait for in 2022, and talking about this is a book that you wish that you had had 14 years ago but a lot of the value in what you're doing and what you're talking about is about education. So, tell me about the journey – actually let's start with Collective Liberation.

Britt Hawthorne: Yes. So Collective Liberation is a dream come true. So, I will kind of back up a little bit and talk just really quickly about – long story short, I was pushed out of teaching and in

that transition of me figuring out am I going to stay in the classroom or leave, we also briefly have just moved to Houston, Texas, and a part of me moving to Houston, Texas, it was just a huge transition in my life.

I not only moved grade levels that I was teaching, so I no longer was teaching lower elementary. I moved to upper elementary. I'm in a new state. The state in Texas does not subscribe to common core standards. So, I had to relearn not only in age group that I'm working with and just the developmental themes that the age group has but I'm also relearning standards. I'm also learning Texas history which from Illinois I didn't know much about.

Then of course I'm a social justice educator on top of all of that. So, I felt very alone. I felt very isolated. I turned to Instagram looking for a community. I'm like there's other people out here in the world. I just have to find my people and so on Instagram, I just was really vulnerably sharing the ways that I was unintentionally perpetuating white supremacy culture inside my classroom.

I was sharing my oops, my ouches. I was also sharing things that – how I was teaching, how I was teaching certain themes, certain units and people started following. People were engaging with me. I was engaging with other people and right around the 10,000-follower mark, a friend of mine Ashley said, “Hey, I think that you really should be compensated for what you're doing,” and I was like, “No!” Like we're all just having fun here helping one another.

Ashley is a white woman and Ashley is like, “No. As a white woman, I really feel like I should compensate you. We're now past the, hey, we're all friends, we're all sharing. Like you're doing a lot of heavy lifting,” and I acknowledge how much I am – what I am consuming, what I am taking.

So, from there, she said, “You know, why don't I do some work? Let me find some different platforms.” This was I think in 2017 or 2018. “Let me find some different platforms and get back to you,” and I said, “Sure.”

We hopped on to Zoom and that was our first time ever seeing each other and she said, “OK, I want to show you what I found,” and she found Patreon.

So, I had started a Patreon page that I now have expired. But I started a Patreon page as a way for me to share resources with folks so folks can compensate me for the work that they are taking, that they are using and reusing.

So anyhow, with Patreon, I loved it because as I was gaining readers on Patreon and as I was becoming more compensated for my work, I was then able to bring in guest speakers. So, between me putting on these monthly webinars and workshops and also me hiring guest speakers where we're really focused on folks of the global majority, trans, non-binary, queer educators, educators of color and we're compensating them for their expertise. I said, you know, there are some things that I'm upholding white supremacy culture by having a Patreon account.

With that is this idea of power is finite and the idea that information needs to be shared one way. So, I turned to my Patreon community and said we need to find a platform in which everyone is learning from each other and that I am not being held as the expert in the community.

How are we all practicing the roles of learner and the role of expert? So, we did a lot of research, did a lot of digging into platforms and we then landed on a Mighty Networks platform. So, I have a handful of moderators that support me over on Collective Liberation and we've asked folks to join us.

But it's this really beautiful platform where it's by educators for educators, although we have a good number of caregivers in the space as well and we host monthly webinars and workshops. We host guest speakers. We've had Dr. Bettina Love, Dr. Farima, just to name a few. Liz Kleinrock was on there. Ace Schwartz was on there, just educating us of how do we create a space in our classroom that really is rooted in liberation, that's rooted in anti-racism, that's rooted in anti-bias. We're also thinking about abolition in our classrooms, in our teaching practice.

One thing I learned from Dr. Farima is that our classrooms are not prisons. Our schools are not prisons as I've heard other educators say. However, we do use prison technology and I think that's really important to note, thinking about the ways that we have surveillance of our students through cameras, how we're using that surveillance to be very reactive with punishments, how we're asking our learners to – in a non-COVID sense but how we ask our learners to line up, line up silently. A lot of times we have teachers that will number students and that's their number for the whole year and the teacher will say, "Well, just easy. It's easy if you're always number nine," right? And then that always takes the humanity and the dignity out of our teaching practice when we're using and infusing a lot of prison technology.

So that's Collective Liberation. It's a platform. Anyone can share. We have folks that will host book clubs. We have folks that will host community meetings. But it's a really beautiful grassroots community that we say we believe in democracy. We believe in an anti-racist democracy. So, what is it going to take and how do we build that?

Amanda Lytle: I have so many things that I'm just digesting right now. The prison technology, just even the terminology, just saying that phrase, you know, prison technology. Having been an educator for the last 10, 12 years, that really hits hard because of how mainstream that seems to be. It's borderline – in every school everywhere, it seems to be that there's someone or just common practice to do something like that.

I love that you're doing that, and I also wanted to come back to the fact that part of Collective Liberation, just right even on when you talk about the online community, learner and adult, so that they can reach their fullest potential.

Britt Hawthorne: Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: I think a lot of the times, there are so many structures in place that limit the adult or the learner, and we don't really realize that that one-way form of educating others that you've

seemed to pull away from with Collective Liberation allows that full circle to come back with education because students teach us so much.

Britt Hawthorne: Right.

Amanda Lytle: Seeing your students and allowing them to feel seen, heard, understood, valued is so important for liberation of everyone.

Britt Hawthorne: Yes, yes. So, one of the guest speakers we had was Ana Catalina Duque and she introduced me to the terms of “power over,” “power with,” “power within,” and there’s a fourth power. But those are the three powers we focused on during her session and that was over a year ago.

I still am sitting with and unpacking those three ideas and one thing I think about is power over is when I was a traditional teacher and when I had a classroom management philosophy. I don’t know if you – did you have to write a classroom management philosophy? It was like a one-pager of what you believe how behavior should be handled in your classroom.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. So interesting that you ask because I was part of the wave that went through and co-created more of just how we wanted our classroom to be and hearing their feedback almost made them respect what it was becoming more because they got to be appreciated in the process of creating it.

Britt Hawthorne: And that co-creation you’re talking about really is that power with. Like how do I help my learners to have power with me? And I am acknowledging that I do hold the majority of the power in the classroom because it is vested in us.

But how do I also make sure that my learners understand and know that they hold power, and they should never ever, ever give that power up? And that classroom management philosophy that a lot of educators had to write was really power over. It was a way that I was going to maintain control in my classroom and that maintaining control could look like having rewards and consequences. Like having a reward system, right? Students had to earn pajama parties or bubblegum parties. Consequences are things that we’re going to take away or that a consequence could be something that I add so the student had to write sentences, or I take away recess.

There’s attention versus relationship and it’s something I use with my own children in my home. So, I will give you like a little example, little story of it. So, let’s say I’m in my classroom and I have an assistant and the assistant comes in a little bit late and I say, “Oh, hey, I want you to know Jakai, uh-uh, not today. Jakai is misbehaving. He’s being naughty. He’s really doing it to seek attention. So just ignore him today,” right? And I will have an assistant that will say, “Oh OK. Yeah, I will ignore Jakai,” versus seeing all of those behaviors and asking ourselves, “What is that behavior communicating?” Right?

Instead of judging the behavior to just trying to unpack the behavior and then instead being like “Oh hey,” to my assistant, “Jakai today, he’s really communicating. He is seeking relationship. So

maybe Jakai could work with you.” Maybe I would go up to Jakai and say, “Hey, Jakai, I have this spot right next to me, next to my desk. Would you like to come work next to me today? I would love if you work next to me,” and Jakai feels like it’s an invitation and it really is because it’s an offering. It’s not by demand and if Jakai wants to bring his math book and his pencil over and he’s like, “Yeah,” and I’m like “OK. And hey, you know what? This spot is available for you tomorrow too if you need it and if you want to work back at your spot or with your friends tomorrow, that’s OK too.”

So really understanding that their behavior is communication and it’s not a moral judgment on anyone. That was my like classroom management idea was that I needed to have control, the ways that I use to seek control, by managing bodies. I was always managing their bodies between having like timed bathroom breaks or saying you could only go once in the morning or once in the afternoon or even having to ask to go to the bathroom.

Like all of that is that prison technology versus that power with and like you’re saying. How do we have conversations with our learners to ask them? Like how do you want to inform me when you have to go to the bathroom?

Oh, should we have a sign-out sheet? How long do we think is a reasonable amount of time to go to the bathroom? Let’s go over the things we need to do in the bathroom. What happens –because it’s going to happen and inevitable. What happens when someone is messing around in the bathroom? What could we do?

We could be a friend and we can remind them. You can ignore it. Like all of that stuff where – OK, here’s my last one about prison technology and this is something that I did early, early on, and I had a wonderful mentor kind of put a stop to it. But I did it because it was what was done to me as a student.

So, let’s say – I will use Deja as an example. Let’s say Deja goes to the bathroom and Deja comes back and Deja says, “Oh Mrs. Hawthorne. Kylie is in the bathroom and she’s messing around. She’s putting on makeup.”

Then I would walk down to the bathroom, open the door, and say, “Kylie, let’s go,” versus being like, oh – that’s that power over, right? Versus Deja comes and says, “Hey, Mrs. Hawthorne. Kylie is in the bathroom putting on makeup.” I would say power with. Oh, well, were you a friend? Did you remind Kylie she’s missing out on instruction?

If Deja says no, it’s like, “Well, would you like to be a friend or would you like to ignore it?” because what we’re not going to do is have informants in the classroom because that doesn’t create a trustworthy ecosystem within our classroom

But like having like that kind of informant where students get in trouble at recess and then you try to ask for a witness of like, “What did you see?” Instead of saying you say your point of view, you say your point of view and how are we going to come to a new understanding together.

Rebekah Borucki: Hey friend. We are coming straight back to *The Book Stoop* after a quick break.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. No, you bring up a great point just even about trusting oneself and that power with allows students and people, you know, young adults even as they grow up, to believe in themselves and to trust themselves but also establish real relationships with other people and that co-creation, feeling and believing that you are seen and heard from a young age translates into the rest of your life.

Britt Hawthorne: It does.

Amanda Lytle: Big time. I was going to say that there's that division as well when you have someone who is working as an informant and when you have kind of everybody for everybody and just kind of – you know, the tattletale-ing and those kinds of things as opposed to using this time to have really constructive, formative conversations with these students. Is modeling really important behaviors and strategies?

Britt Hawthorne: It is because, you know, thinking about myself as an educator working with other teachers is like do I want another teacher being a tattletale and telling the principal when I let my classroom stay out an extra five minutes. Which is something that legit happened to me and then I get called into the office about oh, you know, so and so reported that your classroom is taking an extra five minutes at recess, and you only get 20 minutes, remember.

I was like, “Seriously? Seriously? That's the thing?” You know, instead of maybe if it really bothered her so much and my classroom, to put into context, we were the very last classroom to have recess. So, it wasn't as if my classroom was then taking recess from another one, from another classroom.

I understand or I think I understood her point of view in the sense of it wasn't fair because everybody wasn't getting equality in that sense, and I say I think because she never came and talked to me about it. I wish that she would have come and talked to me about it. Then maybe I could have said, “But you know what, what if on Fridays or what if on Mondays, Wednesdays, your classroom could take our recess slot and your classroom can take an extra five minutes?”

Like there's something in a way that we can figure it out or she could come and bring it up to my classroom in community meeting. But yeah, and then I think the other thing too to really get across to both caregivers and parents is the idea of the tattletale-ing. Like sometimes as adults, we don't even know, and we have to get a foundation on what is tattletale-ing. I think of tattletale-ing as the sense of you're getting someone in trouble versus reporting where you're getting someone out of trouble, right?

So sometimes I think even as adults, especially those of folks who work in workplaces where there is a lot of tattletale-ing. There's a lot of getting people into trouble and then we pass those characteristics on to our children and then they come into our classroom with those same characteristics and those same values, right? Because then it's very individual versus saying like in that situation with Deja and Kylie in the bathroom, “Is Kylie in trouble?”

No, she's fine putting on that lip gloss. Now, I know she's not supposed to be doing it. But you're not getting her out of trouble. You're trying to get her in trouble and that's really not how we're going to create a strong ecosystem within this classroom. So, which one? Do you want to ignore it, or you want to go back and tell Kylie?

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. No, it's so true. The tattling versus telling I think is what we used to use in primary. It was: Are you telling me? Is someone in trouble? They are at risk of being harmed in some way or are they in danger or are you trying to maybe stir it up a bit?

Britt Hawthorne: You know what? When you were just saying that too, it just dawned on me as well why sometimes anti-racist work is such a struggle for adults. It's because they're only used to advocating when they're getting someone in trouble and we see that with like a lot of the Karen hash tags, right, or the barbecue Beckys or they're calling 911 and they're trying to get someone in trouble.

But then when we have a situation where someone really is in trouble, we see an act of violence. Someone is experiencing Islamophobia or bigoted racist remarks and people freeze and now it's like – now they don't know how to get someone out of trouble. We've spent so much time allowing as adults and within institutions, we allow people to really exercise that muscle of getting someone in trouble that then they end up practicing silence when they really – like this is the time now to utilize 911. This is now the time to utilize all of those strategies, to go tell a store clerk or an owner or to have some collective action and get other people involved.

You know, to make a circle around someone. But it's so interesting. Like these are all the things that within the institution of education we could be teaching and practicing. But also, within our homes we're teaching and practicing.

Amanda Lytle: Right. OK. This is – actually, I'm going to use this as a segue into – because I could talk to you about this stuff forever and I want to be mindful of your time. So, I want to segue this into antiracist education and about how a lot of your teaching practice. But now you've brought that home in just home schooling. Anti-biased, anti-racist teaching and what that looks like for you now.

Britt Hawthorne: Yes. So, this is our first year where both of our children are back in school, which is a hell of a school year to start. Both of our children are now back, and we have intentionally chosen public schools to support. So, our children go to our local public school and that's a part of our anti-racist values.

So, for this school year, what that looks like is me always thinking about what's happening within our larger world and to put it into context for caregivers listening, my children are 14 and 9 and that's really important to know where your children are at in their developmental themes to know, “Oh, gosh, is this going to be just right or maybe it's too soon or we should work on something else?”

But for right now it is Hispanic heritage month. Latinx heritage month, Latine heritage month and so for me I'm thinking about, "Do my children understand the definitions of those words?" and so we're practicing them around the dinner table, the dining room table. I want my children to understand the difference between Latino and Hispanic, when to use them interchangeably, when to use one word and then when do we allow for there to be fluidity when we're in a conversation.

I want my children to be able to identify the countries of Central and South America and so for our nine-year-old, he's doing a lot of math work at home, coloring maps. We're like doing puzzles. We have a puzzle map of South America and putting it together. Both of the children have the opportunity to choose one country and study a country and then they present it to us. So, they do like a five-minute poster board presentation and that's really important I have both children work on it even though my 14-year-old is like, "Mom, I'm kind of over this. I'm like 14 now."

I'm like, "I know. But it's really important that you do it because I want our nine-year-old to see the diversity among the Hispanic and Latinx community and I don't want him to walk away with stereotypes. So, by you presenting information, it's challenging stereotypes that he may pick up throughout his research."

Amanda Lytle: I'm curious about the transition or the choice to transition back into a public school.

Britt Hawthorne: Yes. So, I will also back up a little bit to say before home schooling, I was a public school teacher. I myself am also a public school kid, K-12, and so I have this value that I believe in public education. Not just in something in the abstract but something that's concrete, that public education has the ability to transform our country, has the ability to transform our lives and our communities.

So, I'm a huge supporter of public education. As a public school teacher and my children are going to the same school I was teaching at and both of them were experiencing educational racism in very different ways. So, our older child who is very light skinned, he was really experiencing it just with a lack of erasure of talking about black folks, centering black folks, and talking about people, the global majority with dignity and accurate history here within Texas.

So, he's experiencing it in that sense. Our then four-year-old is experiencing it in a very different way. He actually had a teacher that had told him during nap time to shut up and so – and I write about – this is my opening story in the book that I'm writing. But what happened was one morning I wake him up to go to school and he said, "Oh yeah, Miss So and So told me to shut up."

And right away in my heart I deny it. I was like he must – he got it wrong. But I had enough training for when children report things and you know this, right? If a child reports something, there's a specific way in which we're supposed to respond, which is, "Can you tell me more?" Right?

Thank you for reporting that. Can you tell me more? So, I use that on my own children, and I said that and then he got out of his bunk bed. He put his stuffed animals on his bed and then he got

really close to a stuffed animal and whispered, “Cobie, I need you to shut up.” At that point, I was like, “OK, it happened.”

You know, and I just said, “Thank you so much. Would you like a hug?” and he said yes and then I reiterated. I want you to know that it’s never OK to tell anyone to shut up and it’s never OK to be told to shut up. It does not align with our family values. You know, Cobie is four so he’s just like naughty and I said it more for me than him really in that moment and I called a meeting that day with the teachers and he had four teachers.

So, I chatted with the teachers. Long story short, the teacher who told him to shut up admitted it. Just openly admitted and was like, “Yeah, I told him that,” and I said, “Why?” and she said, “Well, it was nap time, and he wouldn’t stop talking,” and my anti-racist lens at that point is like thinking about all the characters at play.

I’m like, “Well, if Cobie was talking, who was he talking to?” and so she said his best friend who’s a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, white boy who’s from France and I said, “Did you tell him to shut up?” and then at that point it was the first time she looked appalled, like shocked and she said, “No.” I said, OK, not that I wanted you to tell the other child to shut up but it’s never OK to tell children and it’s really not OK that you specifically chose my black son to say “shut up” to.

As teachers – and so like I’m juggling between being a mom in this situation but also being a teacher on campus, right? So, I’m like as a mom, I just wanted to scream at the top of my lungs. You’re wrong! I can’t – you’re racist. I can’t believe you did this and as a teacher who clocks in every day.

I’m like there are so many strategies at our fingertips that you could have exercised and that it’s never OK. So, at that point, that was the straw that broke the camel’s back. But there was a lot that was building already. So, I pulled both of our children out as an act of resistance and so from there, we chose to homeschool our children. I had no idea what I was getting into at all because I never saw myself as a homeschooler. It never even crossed my mind. So now I’m trying to figure out without the support of a school district curriculum, co-teachers, experts, ancillary teachers, how do I do this?

We figured it out and it was so beautiful. I loved homeschooling and I wish I could still homeschool. But both of my children made the decision for themselves that they are ready to go back to school. They wanted to be around their peers all day long. They wanted to try school again.

Our oldest has been back in school for two years, maybe three years now, actually three years and he loves it. He’s enjoying it and our youngest just went back this school year.

So, we really allowed them to make that choice and my partner and I, we both felt good about the choice because we’ve spent now the last four to five years intentionally affirming their identities, intentionally allowing them to know that they are valuable, to have dignity, for them to self-identify but also practicing the language out of justice, practicing how do you speak up.

You know, when you hear bigoted remarks, when you experience prejudice whether you're personally experiencing it or you're witnessing it, how do you also have collective action? So, we feel also really good. Like we work with them and at this point, it's time to practice and oh boy, are we always practicing.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah, I bet, and I bet every single day informs the next day and the next conversation and lesson wholly.

Britt Hawthorne: Oh my. And sometimes it's the assignment that our oldest is bringing home that I'm like, "Hmm, let's just unpack this," and, you know, he's like, "Mom, I wish I didn't show you the assignment."

So sometimes it's that – sometimes it's the conversations. Sometimes it's the conversations between him and his peers. Sometimes it's teachers and peers that's informing it. But there's always something to talk about because racism is baked into everything we're doing. Bias is baked in. So, there's always something and it's really hard for me to let it go. Sometimes I have to choose to be like, OK, I'm not going to pick this battle but the next one I'm picking up.

Amanda Lytle: I have a question about a little thing that I had seen on your website about the book – like just being a dream. It's like you get to write the book that you wish you had 14 years ago, and I would love to hear about raising anti-racist children.

Britt Hawthorne: Yes. I am so excited about this book.

Amanda Lytle: I bet.

Britt Hawthorne: And it's so divine on top of that. I've been intentionally being an anti-racist parent for a number of years. I did not start off as an anti-racist parent. I didn't even know what anti-racism was. I didn't have the language when I first had Carter at all. So, I came into anti-racism a few years after I had Carter and picked up that language. But anti-racism has been around – I love how Tiffany Jewell says, "As long as we've had racism and racists, we've had anti-racism and anti-racists."

So, we've always had people who have been fighting against racism since the beginning. It's not anything that's new. It's not something that just kind of fell out of the atmosphere. So, I came into the world of anti-racism a little bit later in my parenting journey and I wish I would have had this book early on. I wish I would have had the book before I became pregnant because there are so many things I would have done differently in the sense of thinking about consent, thinking about body autonomy, thinking about how am I preparing my child's real nursery. Who am I introducing my child to?

What are my expectations of the people that are in my children's life? How am I also communicating my values and our beliefs to our loved ones? Which can be very tricky at times, challenging at times, especially when our loved ones either their love is coming from a good place

but it's coming across as fear-based and that protection is out of fear, or their love is coming out of nostalgia.

Well, this is the way we've always done it, right? We've always celebrated Thanksgiving. You know, don't you like Thanksgiving? We like Thanksgiving. So how do I communicate that? What values do I want to communicate to my children? I think overall one thing that I needed to know early on – because I needed to have a good idea about what bias is and what bias isn't.

When I put on workshops and trainings, one thing I have folks do is I say, "Hey, can you give me a wave?" So, they wave at me. I say, "Take your hand and put it on your beautiful brain," and I say, "If you haven't told your brain thank you today, please tell your brain thank you."

But more importantly, if you have a brain of bias and then I have everyone look at each other and then I ask them. Do you know at what age you started to develop your bias? And I get all – I get the whole range people start. I said as soon as your brain started learning, your brain started developing bias.

There's a really small shortcut your brain is taking. What I needed to know early on is that my child – you know that babies as young as three months look at the race that matches the race of their caregivers longer. So, we know as young as three months old and not that that's something that's good or bad. It is what it is, right? It's just the truth. It's reality. That that's how early I needed to start practicing anti-racism and anti-bias.

I wish I would have known that early on in my journey. I was thinking, oh, this is for high schoolers and then as I develop my muscle, then I said, "Oh, this is for middle schoolers," and then it was like, "Wait a minute. We got to get them young." This is for preschoolers and now what I've realized, this is for babies. This is for everyone.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. It's moving. It's confronting. It's everything that makes you just wonder and question. And I mean, I'm a white woman and thinking about the things that I've – in my life have had access to or what I did and didn't have access to and growing up in a very small white town. You know, it was not a diverse town and the first time to a city and how I remember being in a city and seeing the first person of color that I had ever seen and questioning, you know.

Now, oh my gosh, leaps and bounds to where I'm at now and understanding how important this is and even as an educator and as an auntie and as all of these things. Just throwing books and resources and educational content, you know, at them when they're born so that it's readily available for them to consume. But I mean there's only so much. I mean even myself not being a mom and not – no longer being an educator. I "retired" in June. But ...

Britt Hawthorne: Congratulations.

Amanda Lytle: Thank you. Thank you.

Britt Hawthorne: Yes.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. Oh my gosh. Everything that you were saying, I'm just sitting here, and my heart is so full and my face hurts from smiling because now it's going to be in the world and in 2022 people are going to have access to this book and I cannot wait for it to circulate.

Britt Hawthorne: I cannot wait either and the thing that I love so much about the book, I have a co-author Natasha Yglesias and the thing I love so much about what we are writing together is that it's a lot like the way that I teach, a lot – probably that you also teach where we give a little bit of information and then you just jump into a practice.

So, it's full of practices that you can do with your family, with your children. Some of them are practices for you and your parenting partners. Some of them are practices for you to do with your children. But they're all practices. Like hey, just try it on and see. Go to the grocery store and start to look at the grocery store. What foods are offered? What does the lighting look like? How many accessible parking spots do they have? Do they accept WIC? Do they accept – we call it Link. But SNAP, that's the federal name, SNAP.

Do they accept SNAP? And then don't just stop there. Go to other grocery stores. So, pick another grocery store in a different zip code and start to analyze and think about how racism, classism, sexism are baked into institutions and policies. Go to different sides of town in your community and use language like “under-resourced,” “over-resourced,” “investment,” “divestment”. So that you can literally see. If you're in a community and they don't have streetlights, they don't have stop signs, they don't have crosswalks, they don't have bike lanes and you have it on the other side of town, the other side of town has sidewalks, those are things where your city is investing.

So even though everyone is paying their fair share of taxes, everyone is not receiving the same. So, we're thinking about – and this is where the city is investing. This is where the city is divesting. What patterns can we draw? So, the book is full of practical solutions because at the end of the day, that's what anti-racism is all about. It's about action and it's all about our outcomes. What are the outcomes we're hoping to seek? What are the outcomes we're hoping to observe? What are the outcomes we're hoping to measure?

Amanda Lytle: Britt, I could talk to you for days. I appreciate this conversation so much. As we wrap up, I have a question about an account, a person, an organization, a disruptor, activist or change agent that you would love to give a shoutout to.

Britt Hawthorne: Oh gosh, there are so many. Definitely everyone who I've already named today, people who I'm more hands-on already with. But if I have to pick one, I'm going to say my dear friend Amelia Allen Sherwood. She is the founder of Sankofa Learning Center and it's an African-centered learning ecosystem in New Haven, Connecticut.

She is building a school, building a collective where it's really going to honor the voices and stories of black people from the diaspora and it's a space of healing, of love and liberation and she's starting off with preschoolers. So, she's building an early childhood program. She's in the final stages right now of closing on a house and so the school will be in a home, and I have to say that

that's who – right now I am definitely amplifying. I'm supporting. I sit on the advisory board of the school, of the program. So Sankofa Learning Center.

Amanda Lytle: Thank you so, so much for being a guest on *The Book Stoop*.

Britt Hawthorne: Oh, thank you. It is my honor and my pleasure. I can't wait to come back again especially once the book rolls out. But thank you so much for sharing space with me. I appreciate you.

Amanda Lytle: Definitely. I appreciate you.

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