

Who Am I? A Struggle with Biracial Identity

Jennifer Malcolm 00:13

Welcome to the Jennasis Speaks podcast, The Transformative Power of Women's Stories, a platform that empowers women storytelling, to promote collective vulnerability, acceptance and healing. I am your host, Jennifer Malcolm, self made entrepreneur, women advocate and life balance expert. Hey, everyone, welcome back to our next podcast. I'm Jennifer Malcolm with Jennasis and Associates. And this podcast, Jennasis Speaks The Transformative Power of Women's Stories where every woman has a story and every story matters. Today with me is risiko. waits, who is also on the Jennasis and Associates team. It's been several years riskier as a BW Baldwin Wallace University intern. And she was in a team of five. And we knew when we hired five interns, there would probably be one that would stick with us and want to stick with us. We identified to be on our team culture, availability, desire and risk. Oh, is that one? I think you've been on the team now. Two and a half years.

Rizpah Waytes 01:19

Yeah.

Jennifer Malcolm 01:21

So I will let you roll and kind of introduce yourself what your role is within Jennasis, what you're currently doing, and then we'll just dig into your story.

Rizpah Waytes 01:31

Yeah, um, so first off, I want to say thank you for having me. Um, I was like, shocked and honored. Um, but really, I've been with Jennasis for, like she said, two and a half years ish. And I started out as an intern, typing up notes, doing organization in Google drives. And now I've worked my way up to being an account manager, and project manager and analytics expert, and all the things on the back end to which has been amazing. I've been able to find my voice in talking to clients and customers through working with Jennasis to which has been amazing. But today, I'm really kind of here to talk about to have like an open conversation with Jenn and anybody else who's listening about my story, a little individual, just in general, and with this limited social era that we're in right now. So yeah,

Jennifer Malcolm 02:41

Well, welcome. We're really excited. And it's funny because it's, it's been amazing to see you as you're in your senior year of college. And then really just being the grunt person behind the scenes being the glue that holds things together. And then really kind of coming into your own space and using your voice. And you just said that a little bit ago, but using your voice to say, and this is how we created our culture, be very assertive to say, I really love this, I think I might like to do this. And I don't like to do that. We're now with the analytics and just being there for customers and being a face to customers, how the growth you've had just in two quick years, so. But thank you for being willing to share your story today. I know, the last month in light of everything that's going on throughout the nation, and even locally here in Cleveland, Ohio, has affected you personally. I don't know if it's affected you

professionally, but just wanted to kind of you know, you're a young woman who's thriving in a business community. But feeling some of the stuff that's going on locally and nationally. And just wanted to hear you know, about your upbringing. What got you here today, and we'll go from there.

Rizpah Waytes 03:57

Yeah.

Jennifer Malcolm 03:57

All right.

Rizpah Waytes 03:59

Um, so really, I mean, there's nothing super special about my upbringing. I'm very lucky and blessed with my parents. My mom was she worked full time, but she always made come home. around like four, so she was always home. My dad was a stay at home dad went to bed.

Jennifer Malcolm 04:22

I didn't know that. That's awesome.

Rizpah Waytes 04:23

Yeah, it was kind of reverse. So my mom was great. She was an executive director for a local agency. And yeah, my dad coached basketball. So he would be at home and then I would go to practice with him if my mom was at home. And we I was just very blessed. I've been in the same home since I was brought home from the hospital.

Jennifer Malcolm 04:44

Wow.

Rizpah Waytes 04:47

And we always, like we were in a very fortunate position, just in life, like we were able to travel almost every summer, which is how I've been able to travel as much as I Like we would always go on road trips, train trips.

Jennifer Malcolm 05:02

Are you an only child?

Rizpah Waytes 05:04

Yes, I am. Yep. Um, so that was also fortunate because if there were more kids, we might not have been able to.

Jennifer Malcolm 05:10

Exactly.

Rizpah Waytes 05:12

So we did.

Jennifer Malcolm 05:13

Right.

Rizpah Waytes 05:14

Um, but yeah, I mean, I was I'm very blessed with how I was raised awesome. Really, like, never occurred to me that my parents, marital status was any different than anybody else's. I always saw them. And I'm like, these are two people that love each other.

Jennifer Malcolm 05:37

Absolutely.

Rizpah Waytes 05:38

He my friend's parents are like, those are two people that love each other.

Jennifer Malcolm 05:41

Right.

Rizpah Waytes 05:42

Like, it was never like, I never thought twice about it.

Jennifer Malcolm 05:45

Sure. So what's the one thing then that most people really don't know about? You?

Rizpah Waytes 05:51

Um, I mean, the one thing that people don't know about me is that I'm biracial. I mean, my mom is British, Italian. Her mom came over from England at World War Two, she met my grandpa, and then they moved here together. But my dad is African American. And look at me, you don't notice that, which is nobody's fault. It's not okay. Well. People make assumptions. And yeah, I mean, that's the one thing that people don't know about me waving right now my hair is straight. But naturally, I have super curly hair. And like, sometimes that could be a giveaway, but not really,

Jennifer Malcolm 06:36

Right. Well, we were talking in our prep for today's show, and you were on the team for a long time. And you got hired, there was, I think, five interns and interviewed and we hired five interns. But until we became Facebook friends, and I saw pictures, it was Father's Day, or just family pictures, I had no clue. So your appearance is very Caucasian. And again, you straighten your hair. And if you would you most people would not know that you are being biracial. And I'm sure that comes with a lot of mixed emotions. And a lot of things that you have to navigate in a very loving, secure family, that other individuals, whether they're, you know, to African Americans to Caucasians to have anything that, that you do differently and have different, you know, experiences. So, so give us some examples of some of the struggles or some stories, that because some people might be listening to this of like, Alright, what's so important about that story, and the whole essence of the podcast here is that every woman has a story, and every story matters, and your story is going to connect with other biracial women, men, kids,

adults, that they went, I find I'm finally hearing some of the pain points that I've dealt with in my heart or misunderstandings. And so give us some examples of what you've walked through in life.

Rizpah Waytes 08:07

Yeah, and I mean, before I like talk about some of my things, I just want to, like, be upfront and say, like, this is just what I've been through, like, this is my, this is what causes me stress or causes me to think or obsess about something, or that hurts my feelings. And some people might be in the same situation. And I don't care about this, or like, I This doesn't impact me. But, I mean, this is what I've gone through. And this is stuff that affects my life.

Jennifer Malcolm 08:37

Absolutely.

Rizpah Waytes 08:38

I still think it's a valid conversation to have and information to share. So absolutely

Jennifer Malcolm 08:45

No, absolutely. And that's the part of our story capturing we are going to hit things that identify with people in similar stories and other people. It's not going to resonate, and that's okay, because we're not trying to hit the masses on every story. We're trying to hit the few that bring courage and voice and healing through that and bring community so the part of stories is it brings people together and honored that you're willing to share your story today. Yeah. Awesome.

Rizpah Waytes 09:19

So I guess the first one that comes to mind and that I always, like, I'll bring up to people when they ask me about how it I like to like to be biracial. The easiest thing for me to explain that is whenever like on a test or a survey, or even like at the doctor's office, when you have your baseline questionnaire, they ask what your race is they ask you to identify. And in some cases, I just don't know if that's really necessary, but it's always on the document.

Jennifer Malcolm 09:51

Right.

Rizpah Waytes 09:52

By they'll give you the list all the races and it's check whichever one applies.

Jennifer Malcolm 09:59

One.

Rizpah Waytes 10:00

right, yeah. Always one, right. And in some cases, what really grinds my gears? Because that's not an other for a mixed? Yeah, one that applies to you, and go to the next question. And countless times I have to just sit and look at that, because it's like, well, which parent am I choosing?

Jennifer Malcolm 10:26

Right.

Rizpah Waytes 10:27

And then I pick one over the other. I was that going to impact them?

Jennifer Malcolm 10:32

Sure.

Rizpah Waytes 10:33

So I literally I, when I take those, sometimes I just have to sit, because you have to it's I'm being dramatic. Sometimes I think I'm being dramatic about it. But that's how it feels like I have to pick a parent, which parent Am I going to represent today?

Jennifer Malcolm 10:50

Wow. Which is interesting. Because as a Caucasian woman, that's probably the easiest like Jennifer Malcolm, next one Caucasian keep going, like, for a lot of people is just, you know, check mark and keep going. And there's a question here that usually one of the first top questions in a questionnaire and you it brings you pause and frozen of feeling like I have to pick a parent. And that's, that's crazy. All right. So keep going.

Rizpah Waytes 11:19

Yeah. So another instance, kind of in the same realm, is, I got into a car accident earlier this year, everything's fine. No worries. cars in the shop.

Jennifer Malcolm 11:31

I remember that call. Yes. I do. Remember that call.

Rizpah Waytes 11:35

And naturally, when you get in a car accident, you'd have to get a ticket, like you get whenever like, um, but and when I got my ticket, I like looked at it. And I was like, the first thing was like, the price and I was like, Oh, great. So I take it home. And it's just sitting on my table, because I didn't want to deal with it. I was stressed out about the, my dad comes in, and he looks at the ticket. And he like, looks at it. And he like I thought he was gonna get mad at me for like, right, and for getting in an accident. And instead, he looks at me. And he was like, Did you tell them that you were only white? And I was like, What are you talking about? Like, he didn't even ask me at all. And he was like, you know, they signify your race on your ticket. I was like, I literally had no idea. And he told me like where I needed to sign and he sent me on my way. And he was like, well, he marked that you're white. I'm here. And I like sat there. And I looked at it. And I was like, I was like how like, I was like That's so rude.

Jennifer Malcolm 12:42

Right.

Rizpah Waytes 12:43

And he was making assumptions. And then like, we were talking about it, and he didn't he didn't outright say that he was upset. But his mannerisms and his voice like, he could hear that he was upset that I was right. Or even he I think initially he thought that I said that I was well,

Jennifer Malcolm 13:03

I'm sure the initial reaction is when he sees that that you are asked or something and you identified and so I'm sure there's some hurt or hurt feelings, or I mean, I know with my kids things that they say that I'm like, ouch. And like I wasn't meaning to hurt you. And I was like, I know, but it still hurts. There's things that are said and done. So I'm sure in that situation, you're shaken up from the accident. Now you have a ticket. Now you have money, you have to worry about all this, you know, am I okay? Physically car, etc. And now there's an emotional level of dealing with your dad's and rightfully so dealing with your dad's emotions of someone who just made an assumption.

Rizpah Waytes 13:41

Because I had no idea like, like I said, when I got that ticket, I looked at showed it to me Show me where signing and go and like when I got in the car, the first like, all I looked at was if it told me how much my tickets were

Jennifer Malcolm 13:54

Absolutely, or which court system you have to go to to right.

Rizpah Waytes 13:57

Exactly. Like I wasn't even looking at Sure. is like also it didn't occur to me that that would be a thing to mark on, like your ticket.

Jennifer Malcolm 14:07

Okay, so question on this, because this is my naive question. On your driver's license. Do does that have anything? I just curious cuz I'm like, wondering if, like how a state ID or if there's something on a state ID that identifies No. Okay, so I didn't know if like, it was a police officer just pulled from. I don't know, because I guess I haven't looked at my driver's license that carefully. But

Rizpah Waytes 14:39

yeah, I'm just looking at it now. And it's just your sex you identify with your height, your weight, and the color of your hair and your eyes.

Jennifer Malcolm 14:46

Okay. Yeah. So there's nothing about race on there. Okay. So he literally took made an assumption. So it wasn't like you had something on your state, the state ID and Okay, so it's interesting. So how did you navigate that with your dad?

Rizpah Waytes 15:00

I mean, it was heartbreaking to see that he was upset about it and like, rightfully so because like, if I had, like, if I was in his place, I would be upset too. Sure. So I mean, like, we just had a conversation. Like, that's not like he just asked me he did, or he didn't even ask me he just like made an assumption.

It's not something that I would say. And like, it asked me, like, I would have said that I mixed or I'm biracial.

Jennifer Malcolm 15:25

Sure,

Rizpah Waytes 15:27

But like, he didn't even ask me, so I kind of brushed it off, but we haven't really talked about it. Yes. This was at the beginning of 2020. So it's a little bit and it's just, I think there's something that he's come to understand is going to happen when.

Jennifer Malcolm 15:48

And I think there's I mean, it's part of me because I do know you there's a probably a part of you that wants to apologize for something that you have no control of you didn't do you didn't speak into someone else's assumption or misunderstanding or identification of who they thought you were caused, you know, emotional turmoil between you and your dad. And I know that that's nothing intentional. But there's that layer of stress emotionality, that through people's ignorance or lack of question asking, you know, puts your heart Your dad's heart, your mom's heart in a space of hurt, and that that isn't fun as well.

Rizpah Waytes 16:32

Like it could have just been avoided if you just like, ask the question, like, can you ask me for my ID he asked me, like, if this was my car, like he asked me all the best. Yeah, when my car was made, but that would have been one more question that he could have asked.

Jennifer Malcolm 16:50

Absolutely. So So what is the correct answer? So when you get asked, you know, what race? Are you? Is biracial? Like, what is the correct terminology?

Rizpah Waytes 17:01

I mean, I just go for I'm mixed. And then like, I'll be like, my dad's black and my mom. All right. Wait. I mean, probably like

Jennifer Malcolm 17:11

The ratio can be a lot of different. You know, my, my niece is biracial. And she's half Filipino, half Caucasian. So I didn't know if there was, I don't know what to say

Rizpah Waytes 17:21

I usually just say I'm mixed.

Jennifer Malcolm 17:27

So when people identify you, so obviously you're dealing you've shared with dealing with filling out a form that is very, very mundane for most people, a lot of people, but causes you to pause and really reflect of picking a parent being misidentified by individuals, because your parents, especially when

they're straight here comes across as Caucasian. How does it affect you beyond the example with your dad? Like, how does it affect your mental health? Your emotionality? Yeah, like how does it make you feel when, because some people will say, and some people who may listen to some, like, it's really not that big of a deal, I just clear, you know, clearly identify and then move on. But for others, it really impacts So, you know, how does it affect you?

Rizpah Waytes 18:18

Um, I mean, to bring up what's going on, like, publicly or not publicly, but just like in the world right now, with our social justice issues and protests and doing things. For me, what comes up for me the most is, I, I'm very passionate about these issues. And not about them. Because, I mean, if I take a step back and just look at it, like any of these black men that are getting wrongly accused, and injured or shot like, that could be my dad, that could be my uncle, that could literally be any of my family. Sure. And so I'm very passionate, and I have, like, I have a lot of fire in my heart around that issue. But I have and still have a really big issue and struggle around speaking up about it because, like, I don't necessarily look like I should be fired.

Jennifer Malcolm 19:20

Or that that you may be people may assume, like, what what's your right to speak up about it?

Rizpah Waytes 19:33

racial issues that black individuals are dealing with, like what do you know about x, y, and z? And it's like, just like, so that's kind of where it causes me a lot of stress. Okay. It's just hard to vocalize when I know that there's going to be so many people that come back and be like, Well, what do you know?

Jennifer Malcolm 19:55

Right.

Rizpah Waytes 19:56

I know a lot more than you think. But you're not going to ask me And if they do ask you, it's more so probably in an accusatory manner than in a kind hearted, like, Hey, you know, I see that you're passionate about this, do you want to share more? versus really like pointing the finger? And who are you to, you know, show voice or position in this, you know, arena. Even shared just today actually, before we got on this call, I shared something, somebody shared it on Instagram, about microaggressions and different phrases that you don't necessarily know, that are being aggressive, or they're not intended to be offensive, but are taken by a person that you're directing them to in a very harmful way. So there is the one that you're so tan, or you look just like, more fat, really, you're not really that black or calling Oreos. Like, it's like that, that people just think that they're just like, Oh, it's just the phrase like, yeah, it's not really a thing. But people say those things to me. And you don't understand how it affects

Jennifer Malcolm 21:09

absolutely, even the so I'll say the story for my sister. So like I said, my, my brother in law is Filipino. And he's, in the summer, he's got really, really dark skin. And you've met my niece, Kailyn and Judah, and, you know, they look more Filipino than white. But I remember when my sister started dating, my

brother in law, Jake, and she, they, she introduced him to my grandparents. And my grandmother, his response was, wow, your skin is dark. And my sister was mortified. Like, like, you know, in, you know, there was a lot of racial tensions that grew. My grandparents grew up in southern Kentucky where racism was very prevalent. But she, my grandmother knew, as soon as she spoke those words, like, my sister was mortified. And you know, she covered up with like, I wish I had a tan like you, but it doesn't make the stain go away. You know, the things that people say that. That there, they say is not harmful, or it's just, you know, have thick skin type scenario, like those really stink, because that really is your identity. It's who you are as a woman, and your womanhood has an African American father, and, you know, a white mom. And that's who you are. And that's the beauty of who you are, and who God created you to be or a universe higher power, whoever you want to say. And that's the beauty of it. And so, for someone to make small comments, you know, that hurt, and, you know, the, they always say the word, the phrase, you know, sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt me is a complete fallacy. Because six scrapes, the scrapes and bruises will go away. It's the heart. It's the hearts things that take time to heal and to you know, break through. So. So how did you react on Instagram, when you saw that today?

Rizpah Waytes 23:00

When I saw that, I was like, because I know the person that created it was a person of color, like, and I got those things like I totally see how those can be aggressive and hurtful. And then I sat back and I was like, oh said those things to me. Like, you're not really that black, so you don't really count.

Jennifer Malcolm 23:22

Wow.

Rizpah Waytes 23:23

And it's like, when people say that to me, and that's kind of the reason why I haven't really spoken out about these things is because I know people are going to come at me and use it to devalue what I have to stay.

Jennifer Malcolm 23:37

Sure.

Rizpah Waytes 23:38

And I mean, that's why I shared it. And I was and I, like I said, I was like this is so important. Because like saying these things does not mean that what I have to say isn't valid. Absolutely. So it it really struck a chord with me when I saw that I was like, yeah, people say those things to me too. And I'm a white passing individual.

Jennifer Malcolm 24:01

Right.

Rizpah Waytes 24:02

So and when I shared it, I've had a couple of my friends and one individual that I know that she's also mixed, but her mother is black and her father's white shows she is much darker. Okay? He responded

to my story, and was like, thank you for sharing this. This is so important because I'm going through the same thing, right? And so it's just I wish people like thought about how he thought about what they said all the time both instances like this. Like it's so like, you don't know how heavy your words will weigh on somebody.

Jennifer Malcolm 24:45

Right and then in with everything, you know, it's been going on in the nation and then Cleveland the last four weeks, and the black lives matter how important that is, is extremely important. And then you know, the bigger you know, world That is all lives matter, all voices matter, all people matter. And, you know, with this women's empowerment podcast, you know, we are showcasing women and women's stories. But it's not to negate men, it's not to say that women are better than men, it's just giving a platform for women to have their voice. And the beauty of your voice is going to be that you're going to be this in between or bridge, that you're going to be bridging the gap that most people can't, or don't understand. But that you'll be able to really identify with both cultures, both sides have deep compassion on both elements of that. And obviously, your friend is already you know, saying like, Hey, this is important. And we're there's two, there was one others too, you know, all it takes us then four, then eight, and in the art of multiplication, and to really have that courage to say, I, this is who I am. And be proud of, you know, who God created you to be. So yeah, that's, that's it's weird, because we grew up in the same city of Cleveland, Ohio. And the difference of stories. Obviously, I'm quite a bit older than you. But the difference of stories is just amazing. So tell me like growing up with your family, and, you know, having was it segregated? Was it together? Were you no parent? Did your parents besides the family do things together? How has that grown up?

Rizpah Waytes 26:36

Yeah, I mean, it was always, and I think that's the reason that I always questioned why people look at my family any different, because to me, there was ever any, like, divide, like, ever. I have pictures from like my christening, when I was like, just Sure. Both sides of the family black and white. wasn't just like, wasn't even like everyone was at the same party. But they were sitting.

Jennifer Malcolm 27:05

Right. Everybody was family, right? That's what families, right?

Rizpah Waytes 27:09

My family was always awesome. together. So like when people like when I got older and learned that not everybody is like this, or that people are gonna look at me different. Like it ever occurred to me when I was younger, because it's always just how it was when we had just the fact that they don't know any better.

Jennifer Malcolm 27:28

No and that was your normal. And the bottom line is that you were in a very loving, kind home. And you were blessed with two parents who not only loved each other deeply, but loved you and raised you that that's the part of it that mattered is that you were a family unit that love thrived. And there was no looking at, you know, you didn't know any different. It was normal. And so as you grow, how was it for school? Like? We're like, I don't know what school district you were in. But was your school more white

than African American? Or was it mixed? Or did you do like, when did you feel like the tension was at college that you started feeling this tension? Was it in high school was an early on?

Rizpah Waytes 28:21

Um, I mean, looking back in my I'm thinking of like, my school yearbooks, like here, um, it was definitely white predominant. But I mean, there were still, like, minorities in my classes, like, there were still Hispanic, African American, Native American individuals in my classes. So that was, but like I said, it was generally quite common. But I don't know if there was, I can't I don't identify a specific period in my life when I was like, Oh, I'm different than other people. Um, because, like, my dad coached basketball, and he like he did all age groups. And he's very respected, like state championships and all the things so he was a respected individual. So people didn't like people treated him with respect. When I saw him like I practices and games and things so it really didn't occur to me until I'm trying to think I want to say it was around Middle School. When I started wearing my hair, just like doing my own thing people would, like, throw things in my hair to see if we would stay because my hair when I was younger, my hair was really curly.

Jennifer Malcolm 29:55

Wow.

Rizpah Waytes 29:55

Um, people would throw things in my hair to see if it would stick or if it was Day. And I was like, Well, nobody really that looks like me has hair like me. So like, I wonder, I wonder why. And so then, like, when we travel a lot, that I noticed I started as I got older, I started to pick up on that, like when we would go into. So I don't know how to phrase this, but like not so developed. The not even states, just like areas across the country that were generally quite predominant areas we would get looks, right. And like, my dad, like we would drive past certain gas stations and go to specific ones. And why are we doing that? And well, now that I'm older, I understand that, like, my dad didn't feel like that was a safe place. You know, no, No. And again, like, I know, my, my niece and nephews experience are very different than yours. But when they travel, they do the same thing. Like they're very cognizant that a biracial marriage in a lot. They're in Columbus, Ohio, it's very, very, very accepted in Columbus. But when they travel, there's a lot of areas that they're in and out because they don't feel comfortable people are staring. And my sister is very blonde and short. And you know, she's with black hair, dark skinned individuals, and they feel that tension as well. But so obviously, from an early age, at least, even if you didn't cognitively know all the whys, looking back, I'm sure you saw where your dad was wanting to protect you. Yeah, looking back now I'm, like, I can see things that like my younger self wouldn't have noticed, because I'm not naive, just like, everybody like, this is no different. But now looking back, I'm just like, oh, okay, so some of these people had some prejudice towards my situation. Over the last month, there's been a lot of riots and tension. And with the recent turmoil, in response to George Floyd's death, how has that impacted you? Or your household? I'm sure that there's an advocacy in your heart and a protectiveness, and again, that stigma of you know, who are you? You? You know, look white, you know, what, right, or voice do you have? So, kind of walk me through what you've gone through personally, and maybe between you and your parents? Or the last, you know, three to five weeks? Yeah. Um, so I like many people, um, I saw a video of what happened during George Floyd's arrest. And I, I sat there and I watched it, like, the guided like, I didn't start crying. I

didn't do anything. I was just like watching and i was in shock. I was in pure shock. And then I like put my phone down. And I just sat there for a second. And of course, I was watching this right before I went to bed. And I started sobbing, like, hysterically sobbing like hyperventilating, like, that was a very ugly cry. Like, I like, I sat there. And part of me was like, why am I crying so hard? Like, from the outside? I was like, I don't know this man. Yes, it was a very, it was a serious injustice that happened. And like, there's going to need to be some serious repercussions and all the things but like, why are you crying like that? That video of I want to say his name was his name was but he was jogging and got shot. Like, I watched that. And like, I was outraged and frustrated. And I called and texted, and Simon did all the things. But like I did, I was like, I sat there and I was like, bawling my eyes out. And then the next day, I felt numb. I was, I think, and I now that I'm looking back and I processed through those emotions. It was the exact same thing that I'm talking about today. I didn't know how to speak up. Sure, given what I look like, right, and I didn't know how I could use my voice to take action, which was really part of why I was crying and why it's still and I'm still feeling it now. Like I felt like I couldn't take action because I don't know how like I don't know how to use my voice. And so since that happened, I mean, we've had a lot of conversations in my household. About what has happened, what is going on? Um, we are like up, like, we watched the news in terms of like, what's happening with, like the officers involved, or the current men and everything, like we watched, like watch the publicize funeral and things to like, we were like, we're still very in touch with what's going on. But it was a, it was a heavy conversation in our household. Because like I said earlier, like, that could have been my dad, you know, like, what if his check? Didn't clear and the cashier got concerned? And they called the police on my father like, right? I think that's also, why about so much. We write checks all the time, right? It really does the grocery shopping, right? What if you wrote a check that didn't go through or credit card got declined or something for some weird reason? Sure. Like? So it's almost like a fear paralysis, like paralysis, that's fear driven, where you want to be an advocate, and you want to show voice and you want to show support. But that paralysis of you know, how do I do this, where my voices heard, and both sides of this, and again, it should be one voice through this, not a segmented. And I know, you know, we have a long way to go for that one voice to be heard, you know, doesn't matter the color of skin, but the one voice to be heard. But that paralysis of how do I express my voice in a manner that is powerful, honest, truthful, gut wrenching, and safe, all those things where you want to be heard, and you also want to feel safe, and not put yourself out there in a warm position? So how did your parents besides that, like, help you navigate? Or is it just through conversation and time together? And? Yeah, I mean, when, like, the first couple days of like that video surfacing and everything like that, I mean, it was, like, visually apparent that I wasn't myself. And so my parents, both my mom and my dad were very like, like, really? Feeling like, Is there anything that we can do to help? Like, is there anything we talk about? So both of them are very, and I had multiple conversations with both of them together and separate, to talk through every, obviously, even though they've been together for years. They still have very different experience. So that was kind of how we navigated through everything. And it was just helpful because they were there, I knew that they had, they gave me support, but they gave me the space to process do it on my own first before, like, you know. So how do you think that this your story of a mixed heritage has guided? You? Yeah, how do you feel like through this? I mean, for me, the first thing that I think of is I don't make assumptions, or I work hard to actively stop making assumptions, because we're all humans, like, you're looking at somebody and you're gonna make that first second assumption about somebody but like, I work really hard internally. And stop that first inclination of wanting to assume something about somebody. Because I know how hurtful it is to me instantly. Um, so I mean, that's the

number one thing that I really try and in not doing, and that's impacted, how I have conversations with people and, um, but really, it's just like, I'm more open to having conversations with people. I'm just more open person because people make assumptions like so how it works typically is somebody makes an assumption about me, and then they'll say something all the time, but sometimes people will say something that is insulting or annoying or not true about right. Like black people there. culture or anything like that, and they don't think it bothers me. Right. Right. Does so me conversation? Sure. Um, but so I'm really, but my heritage guides my conversations to I listen to people and I don't say harmful thing like I don't say home for things in general but like having that experience for years guides how I have conversations with others. No, I love how you worded it when I just wrote down your heritage guides your conversation that's powerful. to, to not make assumptions. And yes, we are human and we may react somehow. But it's through a lens of kindness and love and that love of unconditional and doesn't mean you have to like everyone. But that kindness of demonstrating love and understanding that you may not be in my circle of friends because of XYZ you may be rude, you may be belligerent, you may be harmful in other ways. But certain aspects of those are good, healthy boundaries that are needed in life that we all need. That's not a that's not a racial thing. That's just a life, you know, boundary thing. But kindness I you know, I tell my kids often, it's not what you're saying your words are truth, how you say it, the tone, you say it in, the intentions behind it could be done in a kinder manner. And I think that, if we're all intentional to own our assumptions, and then dismiss, like, fluff them off, get them off of us to see through eyes, eyes of love and kindness. And then, you know, really demonstrating heart of kindness and words of kindness that makes our space and we can only impact those around us, but really impacts our space, space and sphere that when that becomes normal, how different, you know, the world and culture can be. And I've even had no what it was that you said that made me think of this, but I've had in the past couple of weeks, I've had people that I haven't talked to in a while, where people that I didn't know how our relationship was, I've had so many people reach out to me and ask me how they can support me and help support the movement and ask about terminology like is it? How do you call somebody black? Or do you call them African American? Or is it just people? Like I've had so many people, multiple occasions, different channels on insert are on, like just texting me. And that has been kind of reassuring to me to know that people here know and understand that I have something to say about?

Jennifer Malcolm 42:57

Yeah, that's awesome.

Rizpah Waytes 42:59

And it's not like, I'm not just speaking? Yeah, no, I like it. No, so no, and I love that. So how do you see your path? unwinding? in the future? Like as you are? Or how would you like to see, you know, maybe it doesn't quite come out. But as you're navigating this issue, you're being a bridge and a voice in this space? You know, how do you see your path on winding? Um, and I mean, that's something that I'm still trying to figure out. But I've come to the conclusion that I'm not going to be that voice that's always on Instagram, or on Facebook, like, going to protests and sharing all of the videos and sharing all of the everything I'm I'm realizing that that's not me. And I think that's also what's been causing me a lot of stress the past couple of weeks, like the feeling that I should be doing all the things and showing everybody because the more I look at it, like, I'm starting to wonder if those people are actually doing the work or showing that they're doing the work if they're doing activism or performative activism. So,

I've been realizing that just because I don't post on social media doesn't mean that I'm not actively doing the work and doing what I can to make a difference.

Jennifer Malcolm 44:27

I love that. No, I love that because you're going to find your space in your cadence, and whether that's on the forefront in the protests, whether that's on social media, whether it's educating, you know, through your friends, texts, questions, inquiry, and enlightening those who are curious and bringing knowledge to that space. That's incredible, and everyone's gonna find their lane. And that doesn't mean that your lanes less than anyone else's lane. It's just a different lane of advocacy and voice and education. And that's, you know, very, very important.

Rizpah Waytes 45:12

I think that's what I'm realizing. But just because I'm not this loud voice, like, in general, regardless of social media, like doesn't mean that I'm not moving the needle in the right direction. Sure, I had one single conversation with one of my friends that didn't understand protests and did not stand. Like the movement. And like, I sat down with them, and they understood, like, they listened to me. And they heard me and they're like, wow, I guess like, I didn't look at it that way. Or I was only looking at it from this side. And, like, well, don't know that I have those conversations. So like, when I do publicly Speak up, there's always one person that's like, Well, what do you know? or Why are you choosing to speak up now, but it's like, I'm doing the work behind the scenes, but nobody knows it. But that doesn't mean that, like, what I'm doing is any less important than what I do? Absolutely. And, and to piggyback on that, even with this podcast, with the stories, we're going to be sharing with what I'm called to do and in empowering women to have their voice and it's, I'm gonna get a lot of questions, I'm gonna get a lot of questions and a lot of accusations of Who are you. And it gets into that self doubt of Who am I and my response has to be and it's a mantra, if not me, then who, and I am not going to impact every woman on the planet. But I'm going to have a sphere women that I greatly influence in this space to give voice and encouragement and freedom and healing to through these stories. And, and by positioning these stories, and you're going to have that same space, you're going to Oh, is gonna we're always gonna have naysayers, we're always gonna have people who scrutinize and, and that's okay. And we have to take those, and, you know, throw them down and have tenacity to say, you know, this is who I am. This is who I want to be who here's what I'm called to be, here's a place that I have a voice and power and position and, and move it that way. So, no. So you have to you have to do the same thing. Because if you go by the one naysayer, or the 10 naysayers out of the hundred, you know, you'll be paralyzed. And you know, you're called to really be an advocate and a voice and in this space as well. Yeah. And I think that's what I've been doing. Like I've, there's been a couple people that have told me in my past that what I have to say, isn't valid, and I've carry that with me. But that I can. For me, I what I think a lot of people have been coming to me and asking me these questions is because them in their eyes, I'm more approachable to them, which I'm like, sure. But they're coming to me and asking me these questions to help better understand and I, at first, I was like, why are they asking me like, there's so many thought leaders, like black women of color, and many individuals really that are coming out and explaining and teaching and understanding. But to some people, that might be uncomfortable. Sure. For some people, I look like them right? Outside, I look like them. So it's easier to have those conversations. Interesting. No, that's very interesting what I've been, it sounds kind of crappy to say, but that's how I'm noticing some people, like, notice people circles and who they will come to, you

know, and like for some people, I'm the most diverse friend they have. Sure. Sure. Oh, I'm the closest person to them to be able to have these questions and these conversations with and I'm realizing that that's, that's okay.

Jennifer Malcolm 48:57

No, it is. Okay. So I have a few closing questions for you. And we can do these a little faster. But what inspires you?

Rizpah Waytes 49:08

Um, I guess what inspires me really is people being their authentic selves. You know, like, that's something that I've been really working on and inspires me when I see other individuals or other and it doesn't even have to be a person. It can be a brand, it can be a musician, it can be anything really true to their authentic selves. I'm like, wow. Like, I love that and I want to aspire to be like that.

Jennifer Malcolm 49:34

That's awesome. All right. So I'll piggyback on that one. Who inspires you? Is there a person in your life that inspires you? Whether it's a famous author, speaker, musician, or family member friend who inspires you?

Rizpah Waytes 49:50

Mmm hmm. I mean, obviously, like there's a couple people that come to mind like the first one is obviously you. Like, the thought of this conversation, it's my parents, you know, I have, they've stayed true to themselves. They've stayed true to their, like their marriage and their love for each other, despite all of the obstacles and things that have been thrown their way. Oh, those who really, really, truly inspire me. I love it made it they stayed true.

Jennifer Malcolm 50:26

Absolutely. I love it. What's a dream in your heart that you want to do someday?

Rizpah Waytes 50:32

Um, I, the first thing that comes to mind is I want to, it kind of goes along with what we've been talking about today, too. I want to be able to speak and confidently no matter what it's about, you know, like, I really want to stop caring about the point 3% that you're going to have an issue with it, or the five people that are going to be upset and outraged with what I have to say. Regardless if it's like a social injustice, or just like in general, like I want to stop second guessing myself. I love it. What do you do to decompress yourself? exercise, sing, run, dance scream? What do you do? Dance? teach dance. So whenever I get stressed out, yeah, you dance class, love it. In your body. Yeah. And so I'm moving. But I'm also working with kids. And teaching them and working with them. And they just like, you, when you're teaching kids, you can't go in with all of the external baggage that you have going on. Like you drop that at the door, you come in, ready for these kids so and even like on my own, if I don't have class, I'll just turn on music and like, I'll just move around, and I'll clean my room or so.

Jennifer Malcolm 51:59

Yeah, I love it. I love it.

Rizpah Waytes 52:01

So any other thoughts, stories that you want to share before we close this out? Um, I mean, the only thing that I would want to say is, I mean, you don't even have to like this isn't something just for my mixture, biracial people out there, it's like literally anybody, like, Don't think that your story or what you have to say is invalid just because of like, the way you look or the way you speak or whatever like your story has, or you're not even your story, your statement has value just because it comes from you. That's something that I'm still working on. But I think is important for people to hear. Well, thank you so much for taking time this afternoon. I know that you were nervous and excited at the same time, and that you were willing to talk about something that obviously is very prevalent in our nation right now, but has the it's an ongoing, you know, issue and that you had the courage to come on and share your story. Because, again, it's your story and your story matters. And it's going to empower other women, other men who hear this in a biracial situation that who knows Oh, sure, start your own movement of being the bridge between some two races. So thank you so much for your time. And we're looking forward to seeing you next time and the next podcast and stay tuned. We will put social media out there. If you want to have any further questions for me or for Rizpah, we'd love to hear your feedback, your stories, your questions and keep this really important conversation at the forefront. But we're here to support. So please reach out to us with any questions or feedback on us. So thanks again, and subscribe to the Jennasis Movement to empower women's voices and reclaim the power over your own narrative.