

Extending Grace; a Conversation with, Dr. Nicola Corbin

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Part of Human nature is the idea that we always think that our way is the best or the only way to do things. This leads to systems that unintentionally leave people out. For example – Have you ever realized how many things are meant for right-handed people? Wyatt recently realized part of the reason he mismeasures things so often is because tape measures are meant for right-handed people, so he's been reading the numbers upside down! Right-handed people might not know how much of the world is built for them. This isn't only limited to right-handedness. Race is one type of exclusion that has been talked about a lot.

Dr. Corbin's recent paper: "Trapped Between Justified Anger and Being the Strong Black Woman: Black College Women Coping with Racial Battle Fatigue at Historically and Predominantly White Institutions" draws upon experiences that have previously only been anecdotal, using research to back these experiences. The media, and through that, society have two main stereotypes when it comes to Black women – they are often strong or angry. And as a result, Black women will often feel stuck in one of these stereotypes. Their experiences range from not being given inferior lash glue at an eyelash extension appointment, to avoiding using state healthcare when their daughters need it as not to appear lazy or weak.

It's important to be open to hearing and understanding other people's experiences, even if you didn't create the system that caused them. But that being said, one person cannot speak for a whole demographic. This isn't limited to race – There are a broad range of experiences within the LDS faith, both in and outside of Utah. Think about that and try to avoid conversations that make broad assumptions about people's experiences.

Everyone is always learning – even Dr. Corbin. For a long time, she wasn't sure the best way to articulate why phrases like "I don't see race/color" were problematic, or how to properly define white privilege. The best definition she's found of the latter actually came from a middle schooler from Atlanta, from a school where they teach race, gender, and society classes from elementary school: "White privilege doesn't mean my life isn't hard, but my life isn't harder because of my race." Perhaps "White Privilege" isn't the best phrase and refining the terminology – something like "racial privilege" – would allow people to understand and be more open. Having these honest, nuanced conversations about race are important, especially early on. Children need to learn the bad parts of history alongside the good, so people don't feel betrayed by the truth of history if they only learn about the horrors later on.

Learning and working for change can be exhausting, so Dr. Corbin ended on this note – you can take breaks. There's so much more information in this episode – About Dr. Corbin's childhood in Guyana and experiences in America as an immigrant and a Black woman, racial stereotypes, and an analysis of the Minneapolis Police Department's public relations response to George Floyd's death. You can listen to the whole episode below.

`<iframe src="https://open.spotify.com/embed-podcast/episode/08ycjtMjtaTdB0a9z1oaWM" width="100%" height="232" frameborder="0" allowtransparency="true" allow="encrypted-media"></iframe>`

Nicola Corbin is an Associate Professor in the Communication department at Weber State University who mentors and supports Wildcats on their quest to achieve their educational dreams. She teaches public relations and mass media courses, and advises Ogden Peak Communications, Weber State's student-run public relations firm. Corbin was the winner of the Weber State University's Crystal Crest Master Teacher Award in 2019 and the 2018 Educator of the Year award from the Iota Iota Iota chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity. Her research interests encompass exploring the impact of representations of black women in mass media and popular culture, and critical approaches to public relations pedagogy. Prior to academia, Corbin practiced journalism and public relations for 10 years. Corbin earned her bachelor's degree in communication from Seton Hall University, her Master of Arts in Graphic Communication Management and Technology from New York University, and her doctoral degree in Mass Communication from the University of Georgia.
(Bio from Weber State University)

