

PARENTING DECOLONIZED PODCAST



Parenting Decolonized Podcast EP #55: Why You Need to Supplement Your Child's Education with Kaya Henderson

Yolanda Williams: (0:00:00) Welcome to The Parenting Decolonized podcast. I'm your host, Yolanda Williams, entrepreneur, conscious parenting coach, and single mom to one amazing toddler. I'm on a mission to help shine the light on how colonization has impacted the black family structure. If you're a parent that wants to learn how to decolonize your parenting, you're in the right place. Let's do this.

Welcome back to the Parenting Decolonized podcast. I'm your host, Yolanda Williams. And today I have with me, Kaya Henderson. Thank you so much for joining me today.

Kaya Henderson: Thanks, Yolanda. I'm excited to be here.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. I'm excited to talk to you about this subject, something that is really important, especially right now, it's going on in history. So first of all, can you do a brief intro?

Kaya Henderson: Sure. My name is Kaya Henderson. I am an educator. In fact, this is my 30th year in education. Most people know me from my time leading DC public schools, where I served as chancellor. I was Deputy Chancellor for three and a half years, Chancellor for six years.

So in leadership for just about 10 years at DC public schools where we turned around what was the lowest performing urban school system in the country. And now I started a company two years ago called Reconstruction that teaches online classes in African-American history and culture to students and families all across the nation. And yeah, I'm a magical black girl.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Kaya Henderson: I love to travel and I love to dance. I am a Cancer.

Yolanda Williams: Okay, it's cancer season right now. Well, you know what, I am so appreciative of the work that you do. So, you specifically your business is reconstruction.us or .net that is the URL of Kaya's business and this is a homeschool curriculum?

Kaya Henderson: No, it is actually a supplemental curriculum. So we mean it to be not school, right? We mean it to be learning for learnings sake. We mean it to be about the development of our young people's identity, and culture and history and literature. Because school doesn't teach everything that our young people need to know, especially when we think about building strong black young people.

Frederick Douglass, it's easier to build strong children than it is to repair broken men. And you know, when we look at what we asked schools to do in 180 days, and seven and a half hours, we ask schools to do a zillion things. And schools are not systems that were built for our kids, right. I presided over the school system in the nation's capital. And so I know how school systems work. I started my career in New York City public schools.

I know how school systems work. And I know that communities, from Chinese people to Jewish people to Greek people don't rely on schools to teach their kids who they ask and what their history is, right? These are systems that are not intended to develop strong black children. And so for us, this was you know, I say all the time, this is Hebrew school for black kids or Chinese school for black kids, drawing on our deep historical precedents like citizenship schools, post emancipation, or like freedom schools during the Civil Rights era. Like this is us reclaiming our history of teaching ourselves, and teaching the next generation, not just academic stuff, but cultural stuff, right? We don't live near our extended families anymore. So our young people don't know how to make macaroni and cheese. They don't know how to make –

Yolanda Williams: [Inaudible] (00:04:06).

Kaya Henderson: So we thought by using technology, we could bring these kinds of classes and experiences to young people outside of the school context, again, because lots of our young people don't have positive experiences in school. So how do we create a space, an educational space that is just for us, that's designed for us, that creates a space of belonging for us that kids would enjoy and parents would feel happy sending their kids to? So yes, some homeschool families use us but school districts use us and schools use us in their after school program [Inaudible] [00:04:50] summer school program, Parents can buy classes directly, right? We work with community based organizations, churches, girl scouts.

Yolanda Williams: I love it.

Kaya Henderson: Wherever black kids are they can get on Reconstruction and take a class. (00:05:00)

Yolanda Williams: You know, it's so powerful to because what we're seeing right now so you know, I started getting my TikTok [Inaudible] [00:05:06] and I had been coming across some of the like weird stuff. I'm just like this how people think and one of the biggest and you know, I don't even want to say is TikTok. We know this from our own upbringing, I'm 42. And for a long time, what we were taught as black people is that we don't have a history, like if Black-Americans, African-Americans, we don't have a history, our history is lost. We have a void. And that is so beyond false that I don't even know how to like, just understanding that we were indoctrinated into believing that.

Kaya Henderson: That's right.

Yolanda Williams: Just because we were you know, our ancestors were stolen and human traffic does not mean we don't know ourselves. A lot of us can trace our ancestors. We are Americans, first of all, and we have developed out of all that, you know, pain and angst and trauma, a

beautiful culture that is iconic. We are the world's cultural icons, African-Americans. So for us to really be out here talking about, we're lost people, we have a void. We don't know our history is so false.

Kaya Henderson: Yes. This is why we have to tell our own stories –

Yolanda Williams: Exactly.

Kaya Henderson: We have to teach our kids who they are because the world is going to tell them that they –

Yolanda Williams: [Inaudible] [00:06:21]

Kaya Henderson: – different.

Yolanda Williams: They keep saying, you don't know where you are from. Yeah you don't know where you are from.

Kaya Henderson: A steady diet of negativity, of hopelessness, of a lack of, I mean, they tell us that education is not our birthright, that we don't value education. They tell us that our vote doesn't count. They tell us that, you know, we aren't equipped to lead or to own businesses. And when you deeply look at our history, even our history in the United States all of that is wildly inaccurate.

Yolanda Williams: Wildly inaccurate. But it's like you said it's up to us. That's where I just did the TikTok [Inaudible] [00:06:56]. I just did a one about how I plan on discussing race with my daughter. And it does not start with trauma. It starts with beauty and art.

Kaya Henderson: Yes.

Yolanda Williams: And showing her pictures of Angela Davis, of beautiful black women. I have a black panther newspaper that I found on Etsy that's like, it's so delicate. I can't even bring it up. I want to read it but I can't. That kind of stuff. I have a Life Magazine that has Angela Davis on the front of it. I have all this like this quote behind me is from Belize. That's where she was where she was conceived.

But throughout my whole house is art, is books, all of her, dolls are black. The way that I discuss race with my daughter is through lifting her up, showing her the beauty of blackness, how intelligent we are all of the books that she has, has black women and black boys on them. All of her dolls are black. We sent her blackness up in here. And to me, that is how we start the race discussion and not with well we were you know, a stolen people like absolutely not. We have found that.

Kaya Henderson: That's not just how we start the race discussion. That's how we start the math discussion. That's how we start the science discussion. That's how we start the Shakespeare

discussion. We have a class called Black Shakespeare that we did in conjunction with the Folger Shakespeare Library.

It is the preeminent Shakespearean institution in the United States. And we just won the American Shakespeare Association's Public's award or their Civics award for this curriculum that we created, which looks at five Shakespearean plays through the lens of Africans, or African-Americans or issues that are important to us. And so can you imagine, I mean, a zillion people have encountered Shakespeare in their regular schooling and never attached to it, never whatever. And we have people who are discovering Shakespeare through a black lens, and digging deeply.

I mean, first of all, there's a whole community of shake grace scholars who are people of color who study Shakespeare, they are, you know, at academies and institutions all across the world. And who knew that and we need to show our young people that they are in Shakespeare that they are in, you know, the museum's in Florence, that they are in museums in Africa that they have a place that is beautiful and resilient and excellent and brilliant right here in America. This is how we start every conversation, every construction.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. I love that. That's so powerful. It's so powerful and uplifting to our youth who really need it. They are hearing. We think kids ain't listening to us. And they're hearing these discussions about "CRT" which we know what's not being done in schools, but they know the implications of this there. They hear us adults, arguing that white children need to be protected from the truth. All the while, (00:10:00) they feel the impact of being black all day. We know the stats when it comes to black children. It starts in preschool within being targeted with unconscious biases, right? So they feel all that stuff. Yeah go ahead.

Kaya Henderson: And this is why this space was really important. This is why we decided to not try to rewrite the curriculum that is in schools, but to teach this supplementally because they need to be in a space where they feel affirmed and loved and belonging. And I mean, you've seen enough hot mic incidents during the pandemic, where, you know, white teachers think that they are off camera off, you know, Zoom, and they say terrible things about our kids. And so, you know, when we started this, my partner says, oh, we're going to develop this great curriculum, and we're going to do it in schools.

And I said one of the reasons why we're not going to do it in schools is because I don't trust people to deliver this in a way that is affirming and uplifting for African-American kids. We want to be very cautious about who is teaching our kids. We want this space to be a space of belonging. So we have our classes are totally synchronous, right? So they are online, but they are in real time. It's a tutor, who we call a Reconstructor, who has a meeting with 6 to 10 kids. And we teach everything from academics to cultural stuff to whatever.

Yolanda Williams: I saw a cooking class. I thought that was amazing. Yes.

Kaya Henderson: We have a series of cooking classes called cooking for the soul where you learn the history of five soul food dishes, and then you actually learn how to cook them with an amazing chef from New Orleans or there's a low country class where you are learning the history

of dishes from South Carolina and how to cook them and Caribbean culture, a Caribbean cooking class and West-African, because it's important for our kids to know the role that food has played, the food ways and how food has changed as it's traversed across the oceans and what this food means to us, right? All of this is super important.

And we do it all blackity black. We teach kids how phonics and decoding, you know, with my black is beautiful, right? Like we are teaching every book is about black people. And it's not, it is not trauma-drama, right? This is about our brilliance. This is about our role models. This is about our joy, our excellence, right? We don't, we are not talking about the white man stepping on our neck and blah, blah, blah?

Yolanda Williams: Yeah, absolutely not.

Kaya Henderson: We are talking about what we did in spite of and in fact, that's why we named our company Reconstruction. Reconstruction is the least taught period of –

Yolanda Williams: Oh my god.

Kaya Henderson: – history in the United States. And Reconstruction is incredibly important for us to understand what happened during that 12 year period and what happened right after, right. And so, in the 12 years post emancipation, we, as newly freed people, remember, we were lazy, we were stupid, we couldn't do anything, right. But as soon as they set us free, or let us free or told us we were free or whatever we started 37 historically black colleges and universities 12 years. This is all in 12 years.

We found the 5000 community schools, including citizenship schools to teach people how to read so that they could vote. 500,000 black en voted in the presidential election of Ulysses S. Grant, and he only won by 300,000 votes. So you tell us our vote doesn't count. Our vote counts as the day we got it.

Yolanda Williams: That's why I keep trying to take it.

Kaya Henderson: We own 24% of the farm owned, not share crops all they wanted to, they want to tell you that we were slaves, and then we were sharecroppers. We own 24% of the farmland in the United States post emancipation. We created businesses. We incorporated towns. We started banks, right? We were crushing it 12 years, just 12 years. And white people were like, wait a minute, hold it, hold it, hold it, hold it. This is not what is supposed to happen.

Yolanda Williams: That's right there. I just want to zero in because I have a very, I have a large white audience. And I just want you all to understand, like, we don't talk about this from a black perspective, but I just want the white audience understand that little snippet white people looking at us and being like, you guys aren't supposed to be successful. You were not human just a minute ago.

Kaya Henderson: That's right.

Yolanda Williams: So now you're here and we can't have that shit.

Kaya Henderson: And so you see the rise of black codes. You see the institute Jim Crow laws, you see the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. All of this is in direct response. You see poll taxes (00:15:00) and literacy tests at home. All of this is in direct response to 12 years of us being free and getting our whole entire lives. And so we need to help our young people understand that our history here is not just about slavery and civil rights. We have a history of creating our own and doing for ourselves. We have a history of land ownership here. We have a history of educational self determination here. We have a history, this is, this too is part of American history.

Yolanda Williams: Yes it is.

Kaya Henderson: And we thought, every time somebody sees our company on a T-shirt, or has to write our email address, they are forced to ask themselves wait Reconstruction, why Reconstruction, and to revisit this time of incredible prosperity and success for black people in America that we just gloss over in our history books.

Yolanda Williams: I mean, so if you all understand what's happening now, is mirroring what happened back then. Right? Because just like kaya said, after those 12 years, well during the 12 years, we saw the rise of all this terrible, inhumane racial anti-blackness violence. We see that happening now. We saw the white lash after President Obama was elected and it's still continuing now. Because it is again, you're not supposed to be here. What do you mean, black women are some of the most highly educated people in the United States? What are you talking about? You're not supposed to be here.

You're not supposed to be doing well. What do you mean black women aren't because I'm keep saying black women, because we are the shit. What do you mean that we keep? We are the like, number one people who are creating small businesses like, what are you all talking about? It is in direct response to the A, black women showing up at the polls. We show up and we show out like no other to try to save this country soul, okay. Every election, we're not supposed to be here. That's what it's going on.

You all don't even know that it's going on. But that's the underlying, the undercurrent of what's happening is just mirroring what it is because it never was addressed. It was never addressed.

Kaya Henderson: And when you think about all of this stuff that shows that how depressed kids are, and how hopeless kids are right now, how kids are facing more mental health issues than they've ever faced in their lives, you've heard the phrase, you know, when America catches a cold, we catch pneumonia, right? Our kids are dealing with even more than regular American kids are. And so it's important to teach our young people this thing, this ain't the first time that the police have been, you know, brutalizing us.

And we've overcome that. This isn't the first time that they've changed the rules on us to not allow us to do the things that would help us get free. But there are periods of history and people in history who worked around, worked over, worked under and came out on top, like understanding our history of resilience, our history of excellent –

Yolanda Williams: Resistance.

Kaya Henderson: We've been here before, right? We are, I'm 52. So I just got 10 years on you. But like, you know, we missed the Civil Rights movement, we miss people, hosing our ancestors down and putting dogs on [Inaudible] [00:18:28] but you know, my older folks are like, hey, this ain't nothing new, right? We have been here. And we have survived this. We have to teach our young people that this ain't nothing new. We've been here. We've survived this. We've overcome this.

We've thrived. And so we're going to point you to those examples and teach you how to learn math, by looking at the great entrepreneurs and blackness, and helping to, you know, simulate starting a business so that you can do what they've done, right? We're going to teach you by helping you solve problems. You know, one of my favorite math lessons that we have is around planning for a breakfast program for your community.

And we teach our young people that the Black Panthers started the first breakfast programs, feeding programs in the United States, right? And so you got to plan, you're running a site, and you have to plan for how many kids are coming, how many kids are registered, how many kids might come? How many lunches do you need? How many, you're doing –

Yolanda Williams: A lot of math.

Kaya Henderson: It's a lot of math. You're solving problems for the black community. I'm teaching you how to code by helping you develop apps for nonprofit organizations that are serving the black community, right? I'm teaching you, you know, how to write poetry by looking at five African-American women poets from Phillis Wheatley to Amanda Gorman, right like I am, you know, I like black

Yolanda Williams: Our lens are black. The lens.

Kaya Henderson: We have got 150 different class. (00:20:00) I'm teaching you how to step because that is part of our history and connecting it to South-African gumshoe dancing. And we get to do that with step Africa, which is the only professional step company in the world like, these are our people. And when our young people see black people step Africa right now is in Denmark or somewhat Slovenia, right? Teaching people, our history and our culture. This is the expectation. The expectation is not second jeans, because that's what they teach you in prison. The expectation is cultural icon, fashion, you know, creator, mathematician, physician, university president, scientists like these are –

Yolanda Williams: Yes community leader.

Kaya Henderson: These are people.

Yolanda Williams: I want, you know, we look at history, and we see, like you said, how we have overcome a lot. Sometimes I think about, especially after Juneteenth with one of the recurring thoughts in my head was how confusing, terrifying, but also like, just this mix of emotions of like joy and fear and anger and all these things. Because now, after all these hundreds of years, I

have my freedom. Well, what, but with no support, like, understanding that they had zero support and yet and still, yet and still, we had things like, you know, Tulsa. We had the people in New York that is now known as their central park. All these beautiful neighborhoods, Seneca village.

Kaya Henderson: We teach about Seneca village.

Yolanda Williams: Yes.

Kaya Henderson: We teach about mounds something in Mississippi, right? There are all of these free black communities where people owned land and businesses and we're like, you know, we got to do this ourselves.

Yolanda Williams: We're going to do it ourselves and my friend, Crystal Menzies. It was on here, and she spoke about the Maroon colonies, which I hadn't, I had no, you know, I was raised in California. But she was saying all throughout the United States, there was Maroon colonies before she said that I was like, what the hell is, I started Googling while we were on the podcast channel. Okay.

And I just started learning about Reconstruction, I want to say in my 30s, and that pissed me off, that was literally not I mean, when I say it was like, slaves were freed. Civil Rights, like that whole era is completely forgotten and erased. And it's for this reason, but also it also, I think, also, it was because of the immense amount of domestic terrorism that took place during that time as well. Excessive violence.

Kaya Henderson: I mean I will tell you my experiences, I didn't learn about the history of Haiti, until I was in my late 40s. And I took a trip to Haiti. And the question I kept asking myself is, why can't Haiti get it together? Like, why is it always you know, why is it the [Inaudible] [00:23:00] whatever and the other thing that I knew about Haiti was that it was the only successful slave rebellion in the history of the world, and had not connected the two things until I got to Haiti, and began to understand the history and how the world literally sat down in a room, the Americans, the British, the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, the French, and said, this cannot happen anywhere else. And so we will debilitate Haiti so much that it cannot recover so that no other colony ever thinks about uprising. And that's what they did, including making Haiti pay the French.

Yolanda Williams: Still today.

Kaya Henderson: [Inaudible] [00:23:44] if the payments have stopped now, but it was until the 90s. It was until '94, '95 and literally the payment was more than the gross domestic product of Haiti. I mean, and the implications for the United States such that those people who lost land that, the French who lost land, and you can't see my air quotes, the French who lost their wealth in Haiti, where did they move to the next closest French colony which was what? Louisiana.

And those people fresh off of their slaves getting up on them were like, you know what, we are going to make sure that this doesn't happen again. But when you look at why American slavery in the South is so brutal, it is because these French people designed and engineered new

implements to torture and to literally make sure that the Haitian Revolution did not happen again. We don't connect these dots.

Yolanda Williams: On purpose it was designed that way.

Kaya Henderson: On purpose. But best believe we have a class called protests and movements at Reconstruction that looks at five different protests and movements from the continent (00:25:00) to Haiti to the United States so that our young people understand that this stuff is not serendipitous. This is by design. And unless you understand the history, you don't understand what's happening to you right now. Because it's a lot of the same thing.

Yolanda Williams: You know what I'm listening to you and I'm thinking, also, just how if we don't, as adults, because a lot of us as adults don't know this information, right? I remember speaking about some stuff on my page. And so many people were like, I never knew this. I never knew this. And I'm just like, it was purposely kept from you for a reason. And I'm thinking about, even when we started talking about Cuba. We started talking about all the different Latin America -

Kaya Henderson: Latin American and Central American countries.

Yolanda Williams: Yeah, talking, and just looking at things that are happening even now I mean, you start to, I started connecting dots. And I used to just be like the U.S. man. There's blood, U.S. blood everywhere, all across the place. And we have been indoctrinated to not ask questions to not to really just rely on what we are being told and not ask why is that country like that? Why are they keep up overthrowing these? Why do they keep having civil unrest? And we don't, most people don't understand that the U.S. has played a major roles in a lot of these countries downfall or appraisal.

Kaya Henderson: But this is why it's important, like, I love that your podcast is called Parenting Decolonized because colonization is about lack of self determination. It is somebody else imposing their will, their values, their culture on you. And I think about decolonizing education, right? Not just taking what the system gives you. But real self determination, real liberation is about teaching our young people this stuff that nobody else is teaching, right? And parents have a significant responsibility here. And this is where, you know, I challenge our community, I think parenting is hard. And we're so tired like, it's sometimes it's the best we can do to get our kids fit.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. And that's by design, too.

Kaya Henderson: And, and keep them safe and whatnot. But the truth of the matter is, the education system is built on the expectation that educators are the experts, that parents are supposed to drop their kids off in kindergarten or first grade, we know what's best, and we'll turn them out into upgrade and they'll be whole people live. It'll be fine. Ignoring parents key role as kid's first teachers, the people who know their children the best, the people who have a vision for what they want for their kids, and are active participants and co-creators in the ideal educational experience.

And parents have got to demand that role, because education system is counting on you not being engaged. It's counting on you I mean, we everything that I did at DC public schools, I wouldn't do anything major. You know, people would say, well, what's your strategic plan going to look like. My strategic plan, these are not my schools, these are our schools. So this community is going to say what it wants from DCPS.

And that's going to be my strategic plan whatever the community tells me. if we want to change report cards, because we don't think they're good. We're going to ask parents in the community, what do you want to see in report cards. If we're going to close schools or open schools are going to ask parents what do you want to see, and that we can't rely on a leader who happens to value that to see our community as valuable and brilliant and bright and equal to, you know, the expertise that educators are bringing, that doesn't happen often. And so parents have to demand a role in their kids education. Parents have to supplement their kids education, because even when you ask schools to do it, you see what's happening across the country. You haven't been paying attention to school board elections.

So we've elected a whole bunch of people to school boards, who don't share your values and they are making out what your kids are learning, about what your kids are not learning. And you know, we're behind the eight ball. How did this happen? How have they been in these books is because we have not been active the way we need to be and everybody don't have to run for school board. But everybody does have to pay attention to what their kids are learning and make sure that they are intentional about supplementing their kids experiences with the things that are important to them. I saw homeschoolers.

She looked like a white presenting Latina and she was just talking about how she did a thing and she was like public school parents and she was like begging on the wall and they were frantic. And then she was like, and now homeschool parents in their little bubble and she had like headphones on and she was so content and I was just like girl (00:30:00) [Inaudible] [00:30:03] we cannot do that. I plan on unschooling my child. I still plan on advocating for children in the public school system. It is not okay for us to be in our bubbles. I don't care if you're homeschooling or in public school. We have to advocate for the children, for the educators who are trying to make a difference in the school system. We cannot be like, man, I'm homeschooling, that's the only way forward and then leave these other kids in the dust that's not community, that is –

Yolanda Williams: This is also a lack, you don't know your people you don't know your cultural. We are not individual Americans taught us rugged individualism. America has taught us pull yourself up by your bootstraps is what you do in your own individual merit. That's not who we are as of [Inaudible] [00:30:48]

Kaya Henderson: No we are community based people.

Yolanda Williams: We are collective community. This is the only way we have survived is by taking care of one another. So for you to say, I'm just going to make sure that me and mine are good. That's actually not even reflecting black culture.

Kaya Henderson: Listen, you know, that was it was only one, but it was one black woman in my comments. And she was the one fighting for this person to be in a bubble. I was like, sis, that's colonization. And so I have just been looking at because one of the things that I fight against having decolonized in the name of my business is people who were just like, hey, colonization means I mean, decolonizing means land back.

But yes, it does mean land back back and it also we have to also discuss the psychological impact of colonization, like that's where it's, of course, your land was taken, land was land back, I'm all for it, right?

Yolanda Williams: That is the least of the damage that land is the least of the [Inaudible] [00:31:48]

Kaya Henderson: No, the psychological, and emotional impact on through the generations. So what I just learned is a term called medicolonism [ph] and this is a guy and I believe he's in Egypt, but I'm going to put this link in the show notes, because it's so good. I never thought about it like this. What he says is, part of medicolonism is contested reality and memory. I'm just going to read this real quick. The contest over reality and memory becomes the most intense and conditions of oppression were both reality and memory distort to preserve the status quo of domination, exploitation, medicolonism in the way I define it enlarges the distortion of events in memory, because written history is mostly about the valor and benevolence of the European colonizer.

Students continue to learn this history in school. Libraries preserve it's. Statutes freeze it in time in public and professional media disseminated. In short, the worlds of things and people exude, reflect and perpetuate the story, story of the European colonizer. And it's still happening. So we are still being colonized in our minds if we are not careful, if we're not doing what Kaya is saying, which is taking control like not relinquishing it because we're so tired because I'm telling you right now, the feelings of hopelessness that we have as adults, and as parents, the tired the feelings, it's just like, I can't do this no more. That is all by design to. Capitalism and white supremacy delusion is meant to crush –

Yolanda Williams: Exhaust, exhaust distract.

Kaya Henderson: Distract, all of it. It is doing his job. So we then have to figure out like, how do I resist in order for our children to learn this information from us. And so if you have time to do it, something like Reconstruction.us, okay, it is here for you. Because a lot of us don't have time to do it. We got to work, you are tired. But you can say you know what I don't know. And you might not even know the information because we don't know it a lot of us. So go to an expert, or who can point you to the direction of a bunch of experts who can give your children and you because I want to take some of these classes chat. I want to, I want to learn some of these recipes. Okay.

Yolanda Williams: We have classes for families and our cooking class was the first family class that we did. We have book clubs and adults have said, you know what, I want to read this book with a bunch of other adults. We did a great book club not too long ago on Between the World

and Me [Inaudible] [00:34:29], you know, kind of letter to his son making sense of the world and all of its craziness. And we had parents some had read it before, right? Some had never read it. But what they said to us was talking with other black parents about what you're saying to your young people in this particular moment, was catalytic for us.

Kaya Henderson: Yes.

Yolanda Williams: And so, you know, we we not only work with individual parents, we work with whole communities. We work with a community with, the black community in Pittsburgh, (00:35:00) and we did what we call soul food summer camp for them last summer, where for a week, every night they took the cooking class for five days. And every night, kids and parents were cooking together and learning together. And those parents said to us, like, we don't do this with our kids at all. Grandmas and grandpas were coming, you know, to participate and have a Facebook page. 400 people were posting videos of their kids cooking and family interacting and stuff. And that community said, look, we want more of this right? And so they take our courses ongoing. They've taken our we have a course called a safe space for spades, right?

Kaya Henderson: In fact, I don't know [Inaudible] [00:35:48]

Yolanda Williams: Because here's the thing, if you didn't learn spades, first of all, you need to learn spades. I need to learn.

Kaya Henderson: But nobody wants to teach you.

Yolanda Williams: [Inaudible] [00:35:57]

Kaya Henderson: We create a safe space for kids to learn spades. We've got you know, steam courses where kids are creating things. We've got history. We did a history of black Pittsburgh with that group. And so you know, it's about students, it's about families, but it's also about reinforcing community, because that's who we are as a people.

Yolanda Williams: So as we wrap this up, is there can you give the people like maybe like three tips, I always surprise my guests because I never give them questions, you all. So they always come up with stuff on top of their heads. But like three tips on how if they are unable to like to do what you do, like reconstruction, by the way, how much are the courses generally.

Kaya Henderson: Courses are for regular just families going on to the platform, 100 bucks for a course each course has 10 classes, 10 sessions, Host [Inaudible] [00:36:57] session.

Kaya Henderson: \$10 a session. It's eminently affordable, and if you can't afford it we also have scholarships available. So you just look at that [Inaudible] [00:37:07] because we don't want money to keep this our folks. Three tips, I would say the first thing is like, read, read, read with your kid, to your kid, and reconstruction.

And we have, we put out for free, a great black books list, which is a list of books that your kids should be exposed to at every grade level, there's something for everybody. Like you need to surround your kid with the stories of our people and our culture to help build a strong foundation.

The second thing I would say is pay attention to what's happening in your kids class, ask questions. I mean, one of the things, great things about the pandemic is parents got a front row seat to see what was actually happening in school. And they were shocked and amazed at how school was not meeting many kids needs. And we need to harness that and stay in people's business around schools.

We can't just expect that school is going to do what we want it to do. We have to demand what we want for our young people and fight until we get it. And then the third thing that I would say is, you know, go to the family reunion, go visit the aunts and uncles, connect with the cousins. Like our family and our community bonds are really-really important to everybody. I mean you don't have to teach your child everything. The encounters with other folks like us don't forsake the calling together at evokes like you need your kids need to be exposed to black people and you know, we get a lot of kids who come from predominantly white schools taking reconstruction classes because they don't see themselves in the curriculum and there's a whole bunch of research that shows when kids see themselves in what they're learning when they see other people who look like them.

The learning is accelerated. The engagement is higher. The competence is higher, the leadership is higher. All of these things and so this you know, idea of, you know, the bubble –

Yolanda Williams: The bubble, you are going to burst that bitch I am sorry.

Kaya Henderson: Yes we need to draw on the strength of a black community that has brought us over all of this garbage for generations. And we claim that.

Yolanda Williams: Yes. Thank you so much for that. I am all for it and I will be looking up how to tick a few of your, my daughter is four. She shingles sit with me right now which is also [Inaudible] [00:39:44]

Kaya Henderson: Look at our kindergarten through second grade reading curriculum is super good. And it is for the babies, right?

Yolanda Williams: Okay. I am going to check it out.

Kaya Henderson: [Inaudible] [00:39:54] yeah.

Yolanda Williams: And I'm going to also hit you up about possibly doing something with the Parenting Decolonized community, (00:40:00) because I'm pretty sure after people listen to this, like they're going to be like, How can I be down. So how can they be down? Where can we find you mean?

Kaya Henderson: I mean you can find me I'm on all the socials on Facebook. Kaya Henderson, there's two of us but one has on a yellow jacket that you can find me on Facebook. On Twitter, at Henderson Kaya. on Instagram, I'm Kaya Shines. I do a podcast weekly called Pod Save the people that comes out every Tuesday. You can get it on Apple, Spotify, wherever you get your podcasts and that is weekly commentary on news and culture and sports and whatever, whatever

with three other awesome co-hosts. And yeah, I'm around. You can Google me Kaya Henderson. You can find me, you can email me directly at KayaHenderson@reconstruction.us.

Yolanda Williams: Does reconstruction.us have it's own website I mean on social media?

Kaya Henderson: Yes.

Yolanda Williams: Okay.

Kaya Henderson: Absolutely. Reconstruction is on Facebook, on Instagram, on Twitter on TikTok. Did you hear me say I'm not on Tik Tok? I mean, I'm on Tik Tok.

Yolanda Williams: Listen.

Kaya Henderson: There's one more rabbit hole for me to follow me down. But I'm glad you did. Because you just going to hit me up with whatever I need to know.

Yolanda Williams: No, I mean, it's yes, that's just really me trying to get over my video shyness. But, no, this has been amazing. I'm so thankful for the work that you're doing. And, you know, when I think about all these people whom I'm coming in contact with. And, you know, we talk about how the systems of oppression are designed to keep us down, to make us hopeless, to make us tired.

But I'm thinking about all the people who are tired AF, but are still willing to like, put this out there because we know that is necessary for our children, myself, all the black parents and coaches, all the black educators doing this type of work. And I'm so thankful and happy for our kids, because I just feel like we are really working hard to give them a much more black future. Black and bright and excellent future and also redefining what excellence is because for me black excellence is really rooted a lot of it in capitalism, and respectability politics, I don't do none of that.

But I feel like as we learn about who we are as a people, and really embrace that we are not a broken people. We are not void of anything. We have a rich and beautiful culture that we should be so proud of and as we teach that to our kids, I wish I had this growing up, you know. And so thank you so much. Before we end, I asked everybody the same question. What does decolonizing parenting mean to you?

Kaya Henderson: Decolonizing parenting to me, means you being in charge of what your kids learn and experience, not leaving that up to the systems, the institutions, the media, the inputs that kids interact with on a day-to-day basis. But it really is about being intentional about the kinds of kids you want to raise and how you raise them and assuming responsibility for that.

Yolanda Williams: And as you say that what comes to my mind is children, especially black children, the rate of suicide has increased exponentially over the past few years for black children. And some men on Twitter was talking about how a lot of that is race based, how a lot of that is because of how they have been treated in schools and the race they experience and the curriculum, the violence experience outside of school.

But I also truly believe that how we parent them plays a part in that too. So we have to understand that these children need a safe space. Reconstruction.us is a safe space, home should be a safe space. School should be a safe space. But if they don't have school of safe because we can't control what's going on in that school. Right? We know that most teachers are white women, we know that, and that even is even in predominantly black spaces. A lot of teachers are white women, even though they might have the best intentions. Sometimes they can still be really harmful.

So we can't always protect them from that. But what we can do is offer them really affirming supplemental education at home, as well as a safe space to ask questions to be themselves to show their full range of humanity and emotions and be able to show that they matter. Like we show them that they matter and that their education matters. Their mind matters, their culture matters. Like it's really on us to help our children not feel so hopeless because that's what's happening right now.

Kaya Henderson: Yeah, [Inaudible] [00:44:48]

Yolanda Williams: All right. Yeah. Well thank you so much again for joining me today. This was a lovely conversation. Thank you all for listening. Please make sure to leave a rating and review and let me know what you think about this episode on social media. And until next time, you be conscious. Thank you. (00:45:00)