

WYF_Ep92_BestOf_CareyLatimore

Rasool Berry: [00:00:00] Hey y'all, it's Rasool Berry. Thanks for joining me on this special *Best of Where Ya From?* episode. We went back and selected some of our favorite conversations to share with you so that no matter when you started listening to *Where Ya From?*, you could check them out. Today, I wanted to share our episode with Dr. Carey Latimore from Season Two.

Dr. Latimore was our first Juneteenth episode guest. I got to know him when doing research for the VOICES documentary, *Juneteenth: Faith and Freedom* from Our Daily Bread Ministries. We became fast friends, so when we started doing Juneteenth episodes, I knew just who we needed to talk to.

The way Dr. Latimore's own life story intertwined with Juneteenth just shows how much the holiday isn't some abstract ideal, but a very real experience for many. We were deeply saddened by his passing on July 26, 2022, a month after this episode originally aired. To honor his legacy, we knew we had to share this [00:01:00] episode one more time. So thanks for listening, and enjoy this *Best of Where Ya From?* with Dr. Carey Latimore.

Carey Latimore: Juneteenth is a stone as a memorial. And they took it, and they never forgot it. And the feeling of God being invested in our liberation, and that God cares about us enough that in His time, His place, that this has happened. And so it's the realization of hopes and dreams. This is what the slaves prayed for.

Daniel Ryan Day: This is *Where Ya From?*, a podcast for those who believe it's important to stop and listen before we speak. Join us as we ask another Christian thought leader where are you from, and discover how their life experiences and expertise, even if we may disagree with something they say, [00:02:00] offer us an important perspective that's worth thinking about.

Rasool Berry: Welcome to *Where Ya From?*. I'm Rasool Berry. Have you ever wondered how history has shaped who you are today? Someone once said the past is always present with us. For some of us raised in the same places of our ancestors, that truth is obvious. But for others, we may not immediately see the relevance of the past to the present.

In this special episode of *Where Ya From?*, we will explore the Juneteenth holiday, and why it's still relevant for us today. To do that, we have with us Dr. Carey Latimore. He serves as an associate professor of history and the co-director of the African American Studies program at Trinity University in San

Antonio. He's an expert in African American history in general, in Juneteenth in particular, join me as I asked Dr. Carey Latimore, where are you from?

Carey Latimore: I am from a little small town in Middlesex County, Virginia called Saluda. The county has about 10,000 [00:03:00] people. And the town has about, probably about 600, if that.

Rasool Berry: Wow. Got it. So how do you think that's shaped and informed who you are?

Carey Latimore: Oh, it's immeasurably in so many ways. My ancestors have lived on that land most likely since the end of slavery. I mean, probably before the end of slavery. This is historic land for us. And so, It's shaped it in that way. All the people that I grew up around, my grandmother and grandfather lived right across the path. My great uncles lived across the street.

Everybody that was around us, they were either close kin or not-so-close kin, but everybody was kin. So it's had an impact on that way because everybody was your family, your community. My best friend lived right down the street, most likely my cousin too. And, you know, when people know each other for generations, I think it develops a closeness between people.

So it's not just that I knew my best friend. Well, my father knew his mother. My grandfather knew his [00:04:00] grandfather and grandmother. So it just goes back generations. And so you feel protected and you feel that these people care about you in a special way, because they know you in a very special way. Because they know who you are, they know where you come from and they have hopes for where you're going.

Rasool Berry: Ooh, this is good. So you get the, where you're from vibe all from the beginning, right? That's. . . you grew up with that value there in place, that where you're from matters.

Carey Latimore: Even the church that I grew up in, you know, that was an old family church. Our ancestors have gone there since, you know, it started. Right after slavery, our church started in 1866. And so your ancestors get out of slavery, they help start a church. You got the graveyard and all your ancestors are in the family graveyard. And so it's just a home feeling. All the people that go to that church, they too are your family. So they lead you, they guide you. It was a great experience for me because you know, that's your community. It's who you are.

Rasool Berry: So speaking of who you are, another thing I noticed [00:05:00] about your name is it has that roman numeral four at the end. Tell me a little bit about the significance of that roman numeral four after your last name.

Carey Latimore: I'm the fourth in the line of Carey Latimores. My great grandfather who was born in the 1870s was Carey the first. My grandfather born in 1911 was Carey the second. My daddy born in 1934 is Carey the third. He's still alive. And I'm going to throw another one at you. My second sister is also named Kerri, but spelled a different way.

We like Carey's in my family. The funny thing about it is when I was growing up, my grandfather lived right across the path. My father was with us. My sister was right there. So none of us ended up being called Carey because when you call Carey, you get everybody. So we all had a separate nickname.

Rasool Berry: So were you like your father where people say, man, he just like his daddy, or were you different? Give us a sense of how the family dynamics, and even birth order worked.

Carey Latimore: You know, being the third and the baby, and the only son, there's a [00:06:00] special resonance that they have about that person who carries the family name. And so for my family, that name was special. So people would tell me you follow in the line of three great men. And you have a legacy to follow. Because my great grandfather was a wonderful man.

I mean, he was the first in his family to know how to read and write. And he ended up owning land and he became a respected member in the community. My grandfather, the same. My father was a magistrate, but he was also a fabulous boat repairsman.

So these were men who took consideration of their families. They took it very seriously. They took fatherhood seriously. But they were also respected in the community. And they were men that people would say that if you shake their hand, you know, they meant it. And so their word was their bond. And so, you know, we weren't wealthy, but they were people who were men of honor.

And so that's what I always wanted to be, is somebody that people would say you fall in line of these three great men. And I know that I [00:07:00] don't live up to the things that they did, and the things they went through, but it's my hope and my dream that people would say that you're worthy of that name.

And so I always grew up wanting to be worthy of the name that I was so fortunate to inherit. And I knew the things that they went through too. It was not

easy growing up in a rural area as black men in that time period. But they did it, and they didn't run away from it. and they accepted it.

And so it was a wonderful experience But also one that I felt a responsibility But I think that's a good thing though.

Rasool Berry: It is. But I can also feel the weight of it.

Carey Latimore: Yeah, and for some folk that name is big, you know, you got that name.

Rasool Berry: Mmm, gotcha. When was the time when you realized that there was something unique about the skin complexion because of some of that history that caused there to be an added weight or responsibility. Do you remember a scenario that you could kind of share and unpack that became real to you?

Carey Latimore: I remember when I was in elementary school, I think it [00:08:00] was first grade, And we were having a party at a house. And my grandfather, I remember, he was so nervous because he was afraid that a lot of the kids would not come.

And I didn't know why he felt that way. But it was later explained to me that it was because white people may not come, and that was what he was used to. He was fearful of that. And so that was the first time that I ever heard of some kind of, you know, the racial strife. And then I started to see things on my own.

Rasool Berry: So what ended up happening? Did they come?

Carey Latimore: Most of them came, and so it was cool. And you should also know, That my school district did not desegregate until the late sixties.

Rasool Berry: Mm-hmm.

Carey Latimore: My sisters were born in still segregated schools districts.

Rasool Berry: Mm.

Carey Latimore: So I was the first one in my family to actually start in integrated school settings. So, all of my teachers basically came from segregated [00:09:00] schools in the earlier years. My mother taught in segregated schools, and then sometimes my father would tell me things that he couldn't walk on one side of the street when he was a kid. Because if you

walked on one side of the street, they would yell at you and call you an in and this and that and get off that side of the street.

So, it was a rough time for my father and grandfather and grandmother. And segregation was difficult. It was difficult to find work. My grandparents, sometimes they worked in people's houses. They also were farmers. And when they worked in people's houses, they worked in white people's houses. So that wasn't always easy either, but they held firm.

You would see the one white church on one side of the street and the black church on the other side of the street. And I had questions about why that was. Later on, I found out why that was. Why are all the people in my church black? Why are people in my friend's church all white? So you see it because you're living so closely together. But [00:10:00] you don't have those explanations and understandings yet.

Rasool Berry: Interesting. Tell me a little bit about the spiritual side for you. Like you mentioned that your family had been a part of this church community for over a century. But when did that become a real vibrant personal thing for you, not just based on your name and your family, but for you personally?

Carey Latimore: I was baptized when I was six. But then I think it really became personal when I was in high school and the first couple years of college. In early high school, your parents can't make you go to church. So they didn't make me go to church. And I was like, I'm not going, I'm going to stay home. And so I kind of stayed home.

And some people may be like, well, why didn't your parents make you? They were not that kind of parents. They wanted me to make choices on my own. And they felt that if they pushed me, I would reject. And then when I went to college, I left and I dropped out of my first college within a month. So I was a college dropout, and I felt [00:11:00] bad because of that.

I felt ashamed. And so I came back home, and I really got into my faith. And that church, those family members around me, those cousins, those fictive kin, they encouraged me so much, it was so special that I felt the love of God like I was a little kid again. And I felt the Spirit of God in that place because it was like my ancestors, my loved ones, and my family encouraging me to get back up again.

And then I became a deacon in the church later on, and then a minister. And so it really galvanized me because that encouragement that I got in the church. They weren't pushing me away. They weren't saying, you disappointed us. They

were saying, you're going to do it. Take your time. Trust in God. Get back in this choir.

You sing that solo right boy, you know, you out of tune. But you know, that's when that faith became real to me. And then I started to [00:12:00] tie it historically that it's like, wow, there's this legacy here in this church that's part of me. And they too experienced difficult times, and they overcame those, and I can do the same thing. So it all tied together nicely when I was in my late teens and early twenties.

Rasool Berry: Okay so, but like, give us a little bit of the teenage Dr. Latimore. Like what was your personality like? What were you into? What were your interests?

Carey Latimore: The teenage Dr. Latimore was just, you know, this is the early nineties. So I was into all kinds of music and it wasn't the kind of music that my mother wanted me to be into. Like she wanted me to be into. You know, the gospel and the, you know, Kirk Franklin was coming out in a few years, I think, 92, 93. And she wanted me to be into that stuff. The Andre Crouch, and the Hawkins. And I was into Snoop [00:13:00] Dogg, and I was into Dr. Dre. I was into 2 Live Crew. Even Nirvana, I was into that too, because that was coming out then.

So I liked all of that kind of music. I really love LL Cool J. It was a booming time for music in the late 80s, early 90s, and that stuff was slamming. And so I liked that stuff. And my mother was a musician. I give her credit. She never tried to stop me from listening to that but she would make me play it for her.

So I'll tell you a funny story. Back when 2 Live Crew was out, as nasty as they want to be. . .

Rasool Berry: Yes.

Carey Latimore: When that dropped, I wanted it, but you had to have an adult that would get it for you because when you go to the record store, they made you have an adult with you. And I couldn't find an adult. So I asked my mother to go with me.

And she said, if you let me listen to this on our way back, because I was in such a [00:14:00] rural area, it took us an hour to get to where a record store was.

Rasool Berry: Wow.

Carey Latimore: So, I had to take it right then. We had a whole hour that I was listening to 2 Live Crew with my mother coming back home. And so I remember us pulling back into the yard and it was just like this quietness when the car turned off.

Rasool Berry: Hold on, hold on. There's a few levels. We got to build this story up. Some of us are listening to this and you've only ever downloaded music on your mobile phone or device. So you have no idea what it was like in the 90s to have to actually physically go to a place in order to get it. And then that was when the parental advisory label was being taken seriously because that didn't just come out. And so it wasn't just some little indication that there was some salty language on it. It was actually a barrier to be able to purchase said music.

Carey Latimore: And then the front of the cover of *Nasty as They Want to Be* was rough, too.

Rasool Berry: Oh I know. I'm getting there. I'm getting, this is what I'm [00:15:00] trying to build this out. And if I had like a list of like the top groups that I would never want to actually be in the company of my mom while I was listening to it, Two Live Crew was probably in the top three all time. I mean, it was raunchy. And so I'm just kind of impressed with the audaciousness of you to be like, yo mom, come, come with me to go 2 Live Crew.

Like that, that you really was into this. Like, like that was a big deal. That must've been so awkward. Was that awkward listening to it on the way back?

Carey Latimore: You know, I was so young and dumb. I didn't really think about that until that car turned off, and there was just this silence. And my mother took a deep breath and I said, what did you think about that?

And she was like, had a good beat. But son, we need to talk about some of this [00:16:00] language up in here. Don't you go around there talking about this. And I was like, Lord, she said, but I'm not going to prevent you from having this. Because you're going to get it out here anyhow.

But she said, I want to educate you on what you're listening to. And you remember how you were trained. Remember how you were trained to speak to women, and how you were trained to speak to other people. But I'm not going to keep you from having this.

Rasool Berry: Wow. That was a pretty enlightened way of approaching that.

Carey Latimore: My mother was pretty radical.

Rasool Berry: Got it. Were you studious at that point? Did you know that you would be intellectually stimulated?

Carey Latimore: Oh, no, no. I was in the music. I played the trombone, and I thought I was going to be a music major. But as far as grades, I did enough to get by. So I was the kind that would see myself through college. I mean, see myself through high school. C,

Rasool Berry: C. The letter C myself. Ah, that's good. See for

Carey Latimore: C for Carey. I see myself through high school.

Rasool Berry: [00:17:00] Okay.

Carey Latimore: So I was right in the middle. I was average. I never really worked that hard. I never thought about what I was going to be in high school, and I think that was probably a product of the late 80s, early 90s, too. I never thought that I'd reach to be 30 years of age.

I think a lot of Black men, wherever they grew up at that point in time, probably didn't think we were going to reach 30. You know, because we saw a lot of murders. We saw, you know, even in my town, I knew people that were killed. Young people that were killed. These were the crack years too. And crack hit my county around the late 80s, early 90s. And so we saw those things. I think it had an impact on our perception of long-term goals. So I never really developed long term goals when I was In those earlier years of high school.

Rasool Berry: Wow. So now this is interesting because at one point when you're younger you felt that burden, that weight of your name. But then by the teenage years, maybe as in the partly a desire to maybe shirk some of that [00:18:00] responsibility, you kind of just get into being an average mediocre kind of student.

And then you mentioned that you go to college and things don't turn out too well. What was your mindset when you went to college, where'd you go and what happened there?

Carey Latimore: I went to Hampton University.

Rasool Berry: Okay.

Carey Latimore: It was a school that my mother went to. The school that my grandfather went to. And so it was kind of where I thought I should be. And I

think I was expecting everything to just kind of work out. I was kind of a person outside of music, everything gonna work out, I'll get my C's, I'll do whatever, I'll make it. And I wasn't mature at that time either. I liked all this music, but I was a country boy. And going to college is an experience that you better be mature.

And I wasn't. I never really left home too much. And so, it was kind of a contradiction of meeting people from so many different places. And, for some of them, I was just a country boy. [00:19:00] I spoke a certain type of language with a certain type of accent. And then academically, I don't think that I was ready to do the kind of rigorous work that was expected and required.

If I could go back, I would do fine. But at that point in time, it was the wrong time. I was the wrong person. And it was the wrong situation. I was becoming somebody that I didn't want to become. I didn't know who I was when I looked in the mirror. And I just was unhappy. And so my mother wanted me to stay, but my father said, our son, something's not right and he's coming home. So my father came and he started packing my stuff up. He said, my son's out of here, because he was fearful of what might happen.

Rasool Berry: And how long had you been there?

Carey Latimore: Two months.

Rasool Berry: Wow. So it was pretty quick.

Carey Latimore: It was quick.

Rasool Berry: Knowing the sense of responsibility that you had about your name and legacy, and even [00:20:00] knowing that your grandfather and mother had gone to the school, what was that like to be even driving down the road with your dad knowing you're going to have to face this community, and not have the same outcome that you wanted to have when you came there just two months earlier?

Carey Latimore: It was hard. I'm not gonna lie, it was hard. I didn't quite know what to expect. I knew my father was very supportive. I knew my mother didn't want that to happen. But I also knew that I don't think that I would have survived had I stayed there at that point in time. For reasons that I didn't even quite understand then. It took years for me to understand later that there was probably some depression issues going on at that time, too.

I'm sure that there were. I also knew that I felt I had let people down. And that was the hardest part, going back home. And when you live in a rural area, you know that there are people who never leave that area. And you see them, you don't want to be one of those people that doesn't [00:21:00] leave the area.

They're just talking about high school football games and how life used to be. And I knew that I had to start over again. But I didn't quite know how. And I didn't know what my life would be like. And my father was like, well, I can help you get a job around here and, you know, it'll be okay. And so that's when that faith thing came in.

But also it's when I got serious about things, cause I knew I didn't want to fail again, and I felt like I had failed. And so I got serious about work. I went to a community college and I got serious. And so I was studying ways that I had never studied before.

Rasool Berry: Wow. I know you mentioned the community part was important, but what was it that you discovered with your faith, or about God in particular in that season that was so helpful and meaningful to you?

Carey Latimore: When I felt that I was worthless, I felt that He loved me, and that He had never left me or forsaken me. And, you know, when I would go to that [00:22:00] church, I felt that love of that community. They never judged me. And just reading those stories of Joseph, reading all those historical stories.

If you want to hear about. . . , it's in the Bible. If you want to hear about overcoming things, it's in the Bible. So everything I was going through, I could feel some of those things in the stories in the Psalms. You read some of the Psalms, you feel that there's some depression going on there. You feel as if somebody's struggling with something, struggling with where they feel God wants them to be, you know. Or Jacob wrestling with the Lord, you know? You feel the struggle thing happening.

Rasool Berry: Yeah.

Carey Latimore: I recognize that I didn't have to be perfect. I could fail and come back and that that was part of life's experiences, and if those experiences make you strong. All these people had their issues. And I was like, wow, I got issues too. And then you tie that together with the community and the feeling, the warmth and it helps you get back up. [00:23:00] And then, you know, when my mother told me, yeah, you're home now, you're going to have to get a job. And so I got a job that was paying me \$5.50 an hour and I thought that was

good. And I recognized that that was not what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. That makes you study too.

So all of those things in line with each other took a kid who was kind of crooked in many ways, and it made me want to be better, and to want to fulfill some of the things that I wanted to do. But also, outline things that I wanted to do for myself. And that was important too, because I think one of the reasons why I probably fell a little bit in high school was because I was trying to live up to other people's expectations.

I really never wanted to go to Hampton, to start off with. But I felt it was a responsibility. So that too was part of it. I didn't know how to explain that. And sometimes we do things that we feel are expected of us. I think as African Americans, sometimes we have these legacies that are expected of us. We're supposed to think this kind of way. We're supposed to act [00:24:00] this kind of way. I think that's too heavy a weight sometimes for us to carry.

Rasool Berry: Yeah. It's beautiful to hear that transition from the name being a burden, to it being a blessing, in the sense of like, this is something given to me, but I don't have to live up to this thing.

Carey Latimore: I can be my own Carey Latimore. The way that Carey wants to be, not the way that I think my great grandfather wanted me to be.

Rasool Berry: Right. So what did that immediately look like? That discovery of what you wanted to be?

Carey Latimore: It was a discovery in who Carey was. Finding out and exploring what Carey liked, that I could like that music and not be ashamed of it. You know, maybe I don't want to go into music like my mother. I loved history. History was what I wanted to do. I wanted to teach history.

Rasool Berry: When did you discover that you loved history?

Carey Latimore: Always, even when I was in middle school. I was a kid who would be reading encyclopedias when I was in elementary school. I'd be reading dictionaries. I [00:25:00] was a nerd. That's what I really loved. But I never really thought of going into it because I was good at music and I love music. I thought that that was the pathway. I didn't see a lot of black people into history, into reading that much. Although my family, they love talking about history, I never saw historians work other than the social studies teacher. And so, I got into it. I was like, this stuff is fun. This research is fun. I'm loving this stuff. that helped me learn more about who I was, but learn more about who I wanted to

be. And then you tie that in with the Bible kind of stuff. And you look at the Bible from a historical point too, and it's like, wow, this is a whole new world opening up for me. And I'm loving this. I'm loving the reading, you know, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings. Those are historians who are writing that because they're using the historical method. Because of that arc and they're critical thinkers.

You're looking at people like David and they're [00:26:00] evaluating him critically. And that's so deep. And when I was getting into history and learning about the historical method, that was deep too. And it wasn't just names and dates, it was so much more. And so, I was like, this is what I want to do. And this is who I want to be.

Rasool Berry: Dr. Latimore struggled with his identity and the weight of history, but eventually he had a chance to get to know who he really was. Not only did he discover himself, but he also learned about a significant day in history known as Juneteenth. We'll hear more about that next on *Where Ya From?*

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Thank you for your help, and keep listening for more of *Where Ya From?*

Rasool Berry: Welcome back to *Where Ya From?*. I'm Rasool Berry. And in just a moment, we'll continue our conversation with Dr. Carey Latimore. Before we do, just a quick reminder that the show notes are available in the podcast description. They not only contain the talking points for today's show, but some links to learn more about Dr. Latimore and his book, *Unshakable Faith*. We're also excited to share the trailer of for an upcoming documentary about Juneteenth hosted by me and produced by The Voices Collection at our Daily Bread Ministries. You can find these links in the show notes or by visiting wherelyafrom.org. That's where y-a from dot o-r-g. Now let's get back into our conversation with Dr. Carey Latimore on this episode of *Where Ya From?*

Rasool Berry: Tell us a little bit more about why that's an important connection for you of bringing the biblical text up till today, but then also looking at today or the past 50 years, or 150 years, in the context of what happened maybe 2000 or 3000 years ago.

Carey Latimore: I see myself as bi-vocational in a sense. My ministry experience and my historical training are two pieces of me that sometimes we separate. We're not forced to do it, but sometimes we do it. And so I go to school and I teach history. I go to church and I talk about God. And I've always felt that those two things are linked because it's who I am. I'm both of those.

And so my faith impacts the way that I look at history and the questions that I bring. My historical training impacts the way that I read and interpret the Bible. I believe that the Scripture is [00:29:00] God-bound and that it is inspired word of God. But I'm not gonna lie, I read it as a historical text too.

And that illuminates it with me, because you can build the ties. You know, it's not just reading about somebody in the past. You can look at it and say, this is happening today. And one of the things that we're always taught about history is that history repeats itself. And you can see it. You can see the stories of slavery in the Bible, and the stories of what black folk went through.

And it's not just slavery in the Bible, but the struggles that the children of Israel had, and eradicating themselves from that mentality, in a sense. And you see that almost in the reconstruction period for African Americans. How can I not pull that tie out? It would be wrong for me to not do so, and to be built from it. And then to look at a person in the present or in the not-too-distant past, and how they were interpreting the Bible and working with the Bible, maybe [00:30:00] using spirituals and things like that as inspired words and feelings of the Bible, like a Harriet Tubman. My training helps me see that, but that's a training both as a Bible believer, and also as a historian. I think it's a very natural fit.

Rasool Berry: Yeah. This is really interesting because this blending together or this way of understanding the Bible as a historical document and understanding the people were seeing themselves as capturing history, right? We got the chance to get to know each other in a talk over the Juneteenth holiday. Juneteenth just became an official, you know, federally recognized holiday in June 2021, but has been celebrated for years.

So like, tell us a little bit about what Juneteenth is, its significance to you in particular in light of where you ended up, and then we can kind of use that as an example to think through some of these biblical and historical themes.

Carey Latimore: Yeah, [00:31:00] let me first say that when I first moved to San Antonio, I started hearing about Juneteenth. I had never really heard about Juneteenth.

Rasool Berry: Okay.

Carey Latimore: And so I'm asked to speak at Juneteenth events because when you're a black historian in San Antonio where we got a 6% Black population and there are very few historians, you get called on. And I'm like, Juneteenth? Oh, I'll come speak at your event.

And I'm like, let me look up some Juneteenth stuff to find out what this is. Because in Virginia, we don't talk about Juneteenth. It was not something that I had learned about in my historical training. And so I had to educate myself on what Juneteenth actually was so that I could present Juneteenth to people who knew more about Juneteenth than I actually knew at that point in time.

So Juneteenth is a day in which the Union Army entered Galveston, Texas. June 19, 1865, and that's because the majority of the war was over. Lee had surrendered his forces, but there was still a few skirmishes happening, particularly out in this area. It's not [00:32:00] like Facebook now and you don't have an updated status saying that the war is over.

So they actually had to travel into these hinterland areas and announce that the war is over. But they were also bringing the Emancipation Proclamation with them, which would liberate the enslaved people. And so after the war was basically over, African Americans in Texas were still enslaved. So when they come into Galveston, which is a major port in Texas at that point in time, Houston is not that big of a deal. It's Galveston, and Galveston is a seaport.

And so when they come in, they enter Gordon Granger, who's the commander of the Union forces, announces this at several different places and announces that the war is over, slavery is over, you're liberated. African Americans realizing their dreams, they celebrate, they go to the church, and they spread this word around.

But it's not just in Galveston. Then that word spreads out throughout all of Texas. And so people see that Juneteenth is [00:33:00] one of the Emancipation Days that's announced. It's not the end of slavery throughout America, there are still some places that still have it, and that takes the 13th Amendment, which is passed later that year. But Juneteenth is a special day because that's the day that slavery was basically announced to be over in Texas.

Rasool Berry: Okay. I love the fact that you're like many of us who maybe didn't grow up knowing about or celebrating Juneteenth, but then you, you kind of had to do a crash course cause folks just assumed that you knew what it was. What stood out to you about the history? And then what did you discover and

how did you personally react to it? And then what was the reaction you saw to people around you about this day?

Carey Latimore: Well, the first personal reaction, I'm kind of ashamed to say is like, they get extra work out of you and we celebrating this? And then I started to think about it and to talk to other people and they were like, this is our emancipation day.

And then I thought to myself, I don't have an emancipation day. I don't know when my [00:34:00] ancestors were free because it's very complicated in Virginia, and some of my ancestors were also free before the war. So I don't have a day that I can point to. But African Americans here, they have a day, and some of them will say, my ancestors told me that they were there when this was announced.

It's like, wow, they took this very seriously. And so I think that's when it started getting to me, is how special it was to people who were here, and how they held it. Because it is a gift, because it's about hopes and dreams and optimism. It's a transition, and you know it, and you feel it. And to think about that passing over from slavery to freedom, that's a spiritual thing, too, when you think of passing over. It's like a baptism, in a sense.

That you know that your life is going to change. Regardless of the rights that you may [00:35:00] or may not have, your life is changed from now on ever. The life of your children, your grandchildren will ever change. And you don't know exactly what that's going to look like, but you know, change has come.

You know, we live for moments, don't we? And we remember certain moments in life. I know that there are moments that you remember the time and the date. I remember 9/11, the time and the date. But this is freedom, and this is something that your parents never had.

You've got, nobody can sell my children again. I can be with my family. I might be able to vote. All possibilities are open. And so to have that crystallized in a moment, oh my goodness. I can only imagine the feelings and the hopes, the gratitude. And to think that after this great war [00:36:00] of so many lives lost That this moment has now come.

Rasool Berry: Okay, that's the history part. So then what you're doing *Unshakable Faith* is in your book you talk about the spiritual implications of these things. Help us to understand this spiritual implication of Juneteenth and what that history revealed about the people, what it reveals about God. Just help us understand its importance.

Carey Latimore: Well, you know, the feeling that the enslaved people had was that they were going to be delivered. And they had faith in God, that God would deliver them. You read the spirituals, and *Go Down Moses* way back in Egypt land and they were to all Pharaoh. Let my people go. And we know that enslaved people were reciting this song in the camps during the war.

They knew *Go Down Moses*. They had different interpretations of it, but it's all basically saying the same thing. And I can imagine when General Granger [00:37:00] comes there, some enslaved person there knew that song. And I can think of how they would have felt. Pharaoh, we were let go. And so you're linking those stories in the Old Testament to your experience right now. You can't not do it. And so this was that moment of where it's like you're crossing over that sea into something new.

The Israelites didn't know what they were crossing into, but they knew it was into a new land. And this is the same kind of experience that was being experienced here at that moment, at that time. You know, God tells them to take these stones as a memorial. And God wants us to have our history to remember it.

Take the stones from the bottom of the river, as a memorial. This is where God has brought you. Juneteenth is a stone as a [00:38:00] memorial, and they took it and they never forgot it. And then the feeling of God being invested in our liberation, and that God cares about us enough that in His time, His place, that this has happened.

And so it's the realization of hopes and dreams. This is what the slaves prayed for. We know that they wanted to be free. We see how many of them escaped. We see how many of them went through the Underground Railroad. And we see the resistance to it. And still through this great war, through unimaginable things happening. Lincoln was not an abolitionist, when you think about it. He was an anti-slavery person, but he was not an abolitionist. And initially, he believed that Blacks should be moved out of the country. And then over time, he starts to change. I think that's God working. And so, it [00:39:00] seemed like things were working for their liberation.

The unfolding aspects of it, it seems like it was the right time, and that God finally said, my people are going to be free. That's the connection. And then I think about it; Blacks went to their churches. They started their churches. Many of them were not allowed to have churches. And one of the first things that they did, even before they built their communities, they built their church and that became their rock.

That's their city on a hill in a sense. So you get that aspect that they were building, and being gracious, and not forgetting from whom those blessings came from.

Rasool Berry: I was going to ask you about that too, because you often hear, well, Christianity was used to oppress and to, kind of brainwash and to make people docile. It's kind of interesting to me that you have these repeated instances throughout the country where emancipated people [00:40:00] establish a town and the first thing they build is a church. What do you think is the reason for that, and how does that maybe brush up against that narrative that this was just used as a form of manipulation?

Carey Latimore: Well, you know slave masters had their interpretation of the Bible, and the enslaved people and the free African Americans had their interpretation. And so when you say on one end, slaves be obedient to your masters, slaves were hearing something different than that. They were hearing, God is not a respecter of persons.

When you look back at the historical record, there are certain scriptures that black people were relying on. You know, God respecter of persons. I see that so consistently throughout. Why would they keep repeating that? Because if you were freed or you were enslaved and feeling oppressed, to think that this God, who is bigger than the slave master is not a respecter of persons, that there's no Jew nor Gentile, that we are equal in Christ Jesus, that's powerful.

And in some of the same scriptures, like Philemon, in which, you know, [00:41:00] Paul meets Onesimus, who's in prison with him, who's a slave. And then you've got Philemon, who's his owner. And yes, Paul sends him back to his owner, but Paul says treat him as more than a slave, but as a brother. That's something deep because how do you have slavery if you are referring to people as brothers and sisters?

You don't enslave and you don't oppress people that you see as your equals. How do you have communion with somebody that's enslaved you? Or how do you enslave a person that's sharing something as precious as this with you? And so I think that the enslaved people and black folk saw something extraordinarily powerful in this gospel.

And it's a source of rebellion in a sense. Because they weren't taking up what the masters were teaching them. They were taking up, I think, the essence of the Bible. And so I think black people in their faith were kind of presenting a [00:42:00] mirror and a window into the essence of the Gospels that many people had forgotten or left behind.

Now, remember, the early Baptists and Methodists were much more radical. They were anti-slavery in the 18th century. Very much so. They turned away from that in the early 19th century. Black people were turning that back and saying, return back to this essence. You know, if you read the book of Acts, and I kind of see those things and all the great awakenings that we see of restoring the church back to its historical roots, they're very activists, if you say, in a sense, because they do things differently. And they're kind of radical because they're not comfortable.

And I think that's what black Christianity has provided. Because it's a resistance, in a sense, but the gospel of Jesus Christ was a resistance in a sense to the ideals [00:43:00] of the Roman world.

Rasool Berry: Yeah. That's so good. I hear you going back and forth between the biblical story and the American story. It sounds like you gained an appreciation for Juneteenth. What were the ways that you saw people celebrating it when you got to Texas? And what was the sense of the scope of that day that you saw around you?

Carey Latimore: San Antonio has a big Juneteenth celebration. So it's big, you know, they have this cake that they eat together, and it's a community. And I think that for me, coming from where I came from, community is very important. And seeing different people come together and celebrating and happy, and talking about positive things. You know, I love hearing us talk about positive things.

It bothers me when we only talk about the negative. Because that's so degrading in a sense when we say, God can't do this, you know. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, but we can't overcome this. But at Juneteenth, people start talking about what we [00:44:00] can be, what we can do, what we have done.

It's an inspiring moment because we think of the possibilities. And Juneteenth seems to think about possibilities. It presents hope. It presents optimism. That somehow, someday, God led us through this, and if He can do this, He can still do this. That God is still in the miracle business. He's still working.

He's still actively engaged for us. And so that's what linked me is the community, the faith aspect, and also the history. Because, people start talking about their oral histories and how they learned about Juneteenth, how they used to celebrate Juneteenth. Sometimes you'll hear a story, like I was at one celebration, a man said, My great grandfather was there when he heard this, and he was on this plantation. That's deep, that they kept the story going.

Rasool Berry: The [00:45:00] subtitle of *Unshakable Faith is African American Stories of Redemption, Hope, and Community*. And so that subtitle seems to indicate that you want us to lean into the application of hey, we're not just looking at Harriet Tubman and fawning over her to say that she's some unapproachable hero. But we're also saying that we can learn and be inspired by her in the same way that we can look at Hebrews 1,1 in the chapter hall of faith and see people to go by faith. They did this, so therefore you can do.

Carey Latimore: Absolutely. When people told me your father is a good man, your grandfather is a good man, they were teaching me to be inspired by it. Don't be held back by it, but be inspired. That they were going through difficult times and they found ways to make something.

Harriet Tubman, my God. To think of what that woman went through and the other people that I talk about a Phyllis Wheatley. We don't even know her real name. Phyllis was a slave [00:46:00] ship and Wheatley was the name of the family that bought her. That's what we know. And yet look at what she accomplished. That's something to be proud of.

And that's something that we can use as inspiration in the same ways that people use the stories, as you were saying in Hebrews 11 as inspiration. And we need stories that provide inspiration. Because none of us do anything on our own. We're assisted and we're led and we're guided. And we're helped. Now we have to walk through doors, but sometimes if doors are closed, it's important to know that some people walk through those before us.

And that's what the historical training teaches you. It's horrible when we don't learn from our history. It's horrible when we don't benefit from our history, and it's even a travesty, when we don't learn from the mistakes. God, in the Old Testament, talks about stacking stones. And I heard a sermon one time talking [00:47:00] about stacking these stones. These stones that you have, these rocks. Your history. You build upon it. It's the same thing here.

Rasool Berry: And you refer to Juneteenth as this stone of remembrance. Since it's relatively new for many of us as a holiday, what do you think is the importance? Why should we remember? Why should we celebrate Juneteenth, Black, White, Asian, Hispanic, Latino, Native, anyone.

Carey Latimore: Because when one group becomes free, we all become freer. And so for White Americans and Asian Americans and Latino Americans, this liberation is for all of us because we are intertwined as one people, one body. And that's the religious aspect of it, too. We don't see ourselves as Jew or Gentile, or black or white, although I am black and I love being black. But I

recognize that my existence is intertwined with my brothers and sisters [00:48:00] who are not black, and so their experiences impact me.

When they have something that they overcome. I overcome that as well. When those people came out of slavery at Juneteenth, we all came a little bit out of slavery. We all lost one link on that chain on our way towards a greater freedom. So that's why we celebrate.

Rasool Berry: The past is always present with us. I'm grateful for how Dr. Latimore's love for history has made that truth come alive and has helped me to grasp the importance of Juneteenth. Happy Juneteenth, y'all. This is *Where Ya From?*. I'm Rasool Barry, and remember, it's not just about where you're at, it's also about where you're from.

This show was produced by Daniel Ryan Day, Ryan Clevenger, and Jade Gustafson, and was engineered by Gabrielle Bower and Kevin Burgess. I [00:49:00] also want to thank Maricela and Paul for their help in supporting and promoting *Where Ya From?*. Thanks y'all.

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