

- Speaker 1: Hello and welcome to The Decipher podcast. This podcast is hosted by William and Mary staff members who are committed to student success. We all know that this year has been unlike any other and our hope is that this podcast provides a fresh perspective on the challenges our students are facing.
- Speaker 2: Navigating college life is no walk in the park and being a William and Mary student in 2020 is no different. Join experts from around campus as they discuss ways to decipher common college experiences.
- Speaker 3: [00:00:30] What I would like to do is start off by asking you both to introduce yourselves and talk a little bit about your work and your role and then we'll get more specifically into the One Book, One Community initiative. If you all don't mind introducing yourselves and sharing a little bit about what you do.
- Melissa Simpson: You want me to go first?
- Speaker 3: Yeah, you go.
- Melissa Simpson: Hi, I'm Melissa Simpson. [00:01:00] I am the adult services director at Williamsburg Regional Library. Part of what I do is adult programming, which is how Jamie and I started working together. One of the programs that we started last year was one book, one community, which was a partnership with William and Mary to select a book for the college students and faculty to read and the public in the community history. Last year, we did 20 oranges there, and this year we've selected [00:01:30] Jason Reynolds, Stan.
- Tami Back: Hi, I'm Tami Back. I'm the communications director for William and Mary libraries. I oversee communications, social media, PR, marketing events. I partnered with Melissa and her team over at the Williamsburg Regional Library on a community program. We wanted to find a way to bring the broader ways to our community and [00:02:00] our William and Mary campus community together for a common reading experience. That's how we decided to do the One Book, One Community program.
- Speaker 3: Great and I think that's fantastic. I love the idea of a common read and having something that's can be shared amongst different people. It's actually really common and higher end to have that first year book, right? So like as part of their orientation experience, all of the students have read the same book and [00:02:30] can then discuss it. And not only does it provide opportunities to kind of model academic discussions, but secretly we are getting them to communicate and build connections and relationships with their peers and you get to read a book, right?
- So it's like all sorts of different layers packed in there. So I like the idea of taking that and really almost, amplifying it to this level where the whole Williamsburg community can also participate. So I know you all said, this is the second year of doing the one book, one community. How did you all pick [00:03:00] the book

for this year? So first, what is the book for this year? And second, how all, how did you all come to, to pick that book? Yeah.

Tami Back: For this year is stamped racism. Anti-racism in you by Jason Reynolds and Abraham X Kendi. And how did we choose it?

Melissa Simpson: We started meeting in the summer. Okay. Tammy, and several of the adult services librarians, and with all of the events that were going on in the summer with George Floyd and the black lives matter movement. And [00:03:30] we wanted the book to be something that was relatable and dealing with some of these social issues that we were seeing in the community. And we actually looked at several different titles that were written by black voices and immigrants. And just to kind of see what was out there and stamped sort of Rose to the top. It is a junior non-fiction book. So it's a little bit less intense than Dr. [00:04:00] Candies stamped from the beginning.

That is like a gazillion pages long. So we thought it was more approachable to look at stamped that Jason Reynolds remixed, but it dealt with all of those histories that people hear all the time in school and maybe didn't hear the full story. So it was kind of addressing social issues that we saw happening live every day. And then the idea of how do you make this accessible in a way that the college and the community [00:04:30] could grasp something and learn from it.

Speaker 1: Right. I like the fact that you all looked at what was happening kind of in our larger community, in the United States. And you all were able to kind of identify something that could actually be of service, right. You know, this is a problem that we are facing. Let's learn about it, let's discuss it. And let's provide this opportunity for folks to delve into it in a more meaningful [00:05:00] way, I think is great. Can you all talk a little bit about some of the events that are going along with the one book, one community initiative?

Melissa Simpson: So we started about mid January and started programming one outside speaker a week to come in and talk, the community programs are open, it's all virtual, so anybody can come. And we've had Dr. Natalia Haskins from the layman Mary school of education. Talk about how to talk to your kids about [00:05:30] racism, Bill Sizemore, who is a local author, and did some genealogy research into his own family's slave holding history. He spoke about that and actually had one of the descendants of, of one of his family slaves joined that conversation to talk about what it was like to find these, these connections and talk about what those roles were as holder and slave. We had [00:06:00] someone from the voices for Virginia children come and talk about racial trauma and kind of identify it and help people not only address it, but perhaps heal a little bit from understanding why some of these issues cause trauma and have to deal with that.

And then of course coming up is going to be Jason Reynolds talking about the book and why he wrote it or rewrote even Kennedy's book and why he got

involved [00:06:30] at this level of trying to teach young people about anti-racism and what we can do for all of that. We still have a few more programs after Jason Reynolds. He is speaking on Monday the 22nd at seven o'clock on believe in Mary's YouTube channel. And then we'll have a couple more programs after that. But basically it's my staff talking to people in the community and trying to look at the topic of racism and anti-racism from different angles [00:07:00] and just providing people an opportunity to, to talk about it in these virtual environments.

And I forgot we had Barbara Hamm Lee from WHRV come and lead a dialogue on race. And that was more of a relaxed conversation with her asking questions and the audience participating in one of the librarians on asking questions of her. So it's really been well attended, and we've been really pleased with the response that we're getting from the community, but there's just so much [00:07:30] out there and you can get from several different angles.

Speaker 1: Right? And I love the fact that you all are engaging different, looking at different angles around the issue of racism and engaging different experts to talk about those topics, especially the idea of what does that trauma look like? And how to deal with that, how to talk to children about it. I know that's been a very popular or become a very popular topic. How do we make this digestible and understandable in a way I love that [00:08:00] the fact that you guys have kind of die from a lot of different angles to learn more about this.

One of the things I did when I asked for our students, is how could they get a copy of the book? We want them to participate. We want them to get involved. So what is the easiest way for them to get their hands on it?

Tami Back: I would say the easiest way for them to get a copy of the book is to visit swim library and check out a copy. We've been giving away [00:08:30] free copies through our social media accounts, our Facebook page, the library's Facebook page. So they can always look out for that. But the probably the easiest way is to check out a book from, from swim library. They also can check out books from Williamsburg regional library. So that's an option as well.

Melissa Simpson: That's right. We also have eBooks and downloadable audio. They may not even have to leave wherever they are.

Speaker 1: [00:09:00] Which I will say that's been my quarantine purchase as I broke down. And I finally bought a Kendall and I love the Libby app. Like I'm on there all the time, putting old things and getting that's. I feel like out of all the different hobbies and habits you could pick up in quarantine that's a good one. And I'm very appreciative of the Williamsburg regional library for indulging me on my reading habits this past year.

Melissa Simpson: It's really nice to be able to add more books. It's like collection online.

- Speaker 1: Yes. And [00:09:30] the audio is great too. That's I've got two little guys and sometimes I'm tired of talking by the end of the day. So it being able to utilize the audio books is really helpful. It's a nice cheat. Well, is there anything else that you all would want to share or want people to know about this initiative?
- Tami Back: I think we're just really excited to bring together the community and students and high school students while you were married students, families, [00:10:00] and to bring them together, to have these conversations around these really topical issues and to provide outlets, to think deeply about these issues and to discuss them. And we know that race and racism and anti-racism are topics that people are talking about and that we should be talking about. It's not an easy topic. Some of these conversations are not easy to have, [00:10:30] but we should be having them. And we're excited to be a part of the effort to facilitate these conversations.
- Melissa Simpson: It's been a little disappointing not to be able to plan things in person. I mean, obviously COVID, it's affected so much of what we're doing. And so I'm a little bit sad that we can't have these conversations face-to-face and, and it's, it's going to be a different experience to hear Jason Reynolds on my computer screen versus in person on a stage. But I [00:11:00] think that there's so much information out there that we can share through this virtual medium that I think it's still like, like Tammy said, these are important conversations we should be having, and I'm hoping people will tune in so that they can wait for that next time when we can all meet in person, but take the time now to, to participate as they can, what we're offering.
- Speaker 1: Well, and also, maybe these are good opportunities because of the virtual nature of everything to do a little bit more introspection. And self-reflection, [00:11:30] since we aren't necessarily able to engage in conversations the way we would prefer face to face.
- Melissa Simpson: And we'll do another title next year, I'm assuming that William and Mary will continue to want to partner with us. We've loved it. And so next year we'll have another title then hopefully it will be as thought provoking and the causes many great discussions as we've had so far.
- Speaker 1: No, I think this all sounds great. Thank you so much for doing this. And I hope it all goes really [00:12:00] well and hopefully you'll have some phenomenal attendance. I know I'm excited.
- Tami Back: Well, thank you.
- Speaker 1: Thank you so much for tuning into this episode of the decipher podcast. For our show notes, please visit our website, [decipher.blogs.wm.edu](http://decipher.blogs.wm.edu). Take care.