

Shmanners 489: Black Innovators

Published January 29th, 2026

[Listen here on Maximum Fun](#)

["Shmanners Theme" by brentalfloss plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy!

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy!

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners!

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette.

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove!

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you? Are you staying warm?

Teresa: I am, thank you.

Travis: Excellent. It's cold out there!

Teresa: It is. In our neck of the woods.

Travis: Oh! In our—in a lot of necks!

Teresa: [chuckles] Of a lot of woods.

Travis: Of a lot of woods! The woods, it is a hydra, for it has many necks.

Teresa: But you know, even though it's cold, I have stuff that I'm looking forward to!

Travis: Hey, can I tell you, I know that you meant that as the segue, but I should hope so!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I hope that it being cold doesn't mean like, "And there's nothing for me in the future."

Teresa: No, but guess what happens this week.

Travis: Hm... February?

Teresa: Uh-huh.

Travis: And it's a fun month to spell because there's a sneaky R in there?

Teresa: [chuckles] No.

Travis: And you're like "feb-ru-ary."

Teresa: Bridgerton is back.

Travis: Bridgerton is back, and Valentine's Day—

Teresa: Well, sure, yeah.

Travis: I'm sure you and I, at about 9:30PM on the 14th will go, "Oh! Yeah, Happy Valentine's Day, yeah."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Sorry, I didn't even—oh, yeah—"

Teresa: No, our children will not let us forget.

Travis: It's just that Terese and I express our love to each other every day, every day is Valentine's Day, and our anniversary, because we often forget that too.

Teresa: That too. [chuckles]

Travis: It's such a trope of like, "Oh, the husband always forgets." But what—I remember one time I was signing a permission slip for Bebe, and put the date on, and I was like, "10-6... oh! Hey!" And like woke you up and I was like, "Hey! It's our anniversary!"

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: And you were like, "Oh, okay, cool!" I think that was number nine.

Teresa: I was sleeping?

Travis: No, it was like first thing in the morning.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: And it was like when you came downstairs—

Teresa: Oh.

Travis: Because I was filling it out before school.

Teresa: Oh, okay, then why did you need to wake me up?

Travis: I don't know, that's just what I said. I yelled upstairs, "Mother!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Do you know what today is? Why, it's Christmas day! Take off your stocking cap!"

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: "'Tis our anniversary!"

Teresa: Okay, all right.

Travis: "Shall we get the fatted goose from the butcher shop? The one as big as me?"

Teresa: I'm looking forward to Shmidgerton coming back.

Travis: Oh, sure.

Teresa: I don't—have we discussed season three yet?

Travis: No.

Teresa: No, so we need to do season three. Which is good, because I don't like the whole like "spoilers" whatever thing. So, I'm glad that we're going to do season three now, and then after all of season four is out and taken care of, we can take care of season four.

Travis: Okay, great!

Teresa: But I want to watch season four with you.

Travis: Also, I mean, as long as we're recapping kind of side things we do, Shmidgerton we do, and Shmanners. But Bake On big news—

Teresa: Oh, that's right!

Travis: Is that Nigella's coming on instead of Prue Leith—or not instead of, Prue Leith has—

Teresa: Dame Prue Leith has decided to focus on other things, mainly. She mentioned her garden. But, you know, she put in her time. She did like nine seasons, I think she said?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So, you know, happy trails. I hope that she, you know, gets a well-deserved rest.

Travis: We're gonna have so much to talk about on Bake On.

Teresa: We are.

Travis: So much to talk about when we do Shmidgerton episodes. But none of that is what we're talking about today!

Teresa: [chuckles] No, it's not.

Travis: Because also, February is Black History Month.

Teresa: It is! And we—

Travis: And we have tried to do like biographies and highlight things throughout Black History Month, and culture and history and stuff. So, today's no different.

Teresa: No exception for today. We are going to talk about—

Travis: What is today? Hold on.

Teresa: Black innovators.

Travis: I want to see when this episode actually comes out. This might actually be coming out before Black History Month starts.

Teresa: Well, but we can celebrate black innovators anytime.

Travis: That's true. That's true.

Teresa: That's true.

Travis: Because black history is American history. You know what I mean? It's all the time.

Teresa: Anyway, all right, so, here are some little snippets, little biographies of some black innovators that you probably didn't learn about at school, but you should know about.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Are you ready to get started?

Travis: Oh, me? Yes.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Hold on.

Teresa: School's in session.

Travis: Hold on. Now.

Teresa: Here, school's in session. But not our kids.

Travis: Ah, no, this is a horrible—yeah, if—

Teresa: Not our kids. [chuckles] They are not at school.

Travis: Ah, man, when—so, because of like all the snow and ice and cold and everything, they've been announcing school was out like... instead of like waiting the morning of—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Like letting us know way before. And I think it was Tuesday, no, Monday, when I told the kids like, "Oh, yeah, there's no school tomorrow." They were like, "We're off! It'll just be a day of rest!" Or something like that. And all I could think was like, "But that means we're on..." [chuckles]

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: But when you're off school, we're on school, or whatever, it's—*ugh!*

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Sorry—

Travis: I love my kids so much.

Teresa: Sorry about that tangent. All right, first we're going to talk about Frederick McKinley Jones.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: When I was reading this biography, I was like, oh, yeah, this is a story that we've heard about. An orphan who was raised by a priest, dropped out of high school, didn't graduate, had an incredible mind. I was like, okay, well, this is something that we hear about a lot. This person lived before World War I.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, not only is this a story that we've heard about, this is a story that predates a lot of the other stories we've heard about in this way.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, even though he was already like always tinkering with something, and taught himself all about electronics, pre-World War I, this was when he went into the army, right? And his mechanical skills were so strong that he was promoted to sergeant, and spent the war working as an electrician and serving as an instructor to other soldiers about all things mechanical. Again, when I think of this kind of like innovation, I think at least World War II. This was—

Travis: Well and you're thinking about like—

Teresa: This was before that!

Travis: Like electronics? You're thinking—

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: Well, actually, I think of Iron Man, but that's a different thing.

Teresa: [chuckles] Okay.

Travis: All together. If I'm being honest, part of my brain got stuck when you said he was always tinkering with things. And then I was like—

Teresa: Oh, and that's when you thought about—

Travis: No, I was like, I want people to say that of me.

Teresa: That you were always tinkering?

Travis: "Travis was always tinkering." I like that phra—tinkering, because it implies a certain amount of pointlessness, right? Where it's like, he's not building things, he's not fixing things.

Teresa: He's tinkering.

Travis: He's tinkering. He's just kind of poking at it going, "I don't know, what does this do?" I love that.

Teresa: Due to his deft skill with wiring specifically, Jones was the reason that his particular camp in World War I—

Travis: Yes, mm-hm.

Teresa: Had electricity, telegraph and phone services, which were wild luxuries—

Travis: And cable TV.

Teresa: When most—

Travis: He got cable TV from the future!

Teresa: No. [chuckles]

Travis: It was incredible!

Teresa: Most World War I camps were a collection of barely held together tents. We're talking trench warfare here, right?

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: You don't seem impressed.

Travis: No, it's amazing! It's just that you've really hit it, you—I want you to know, you're talking about it like it's like 1650—

Teresa: No!

Travis: And he's like, he's running electric lights up in town.

Teresa: [chuckles] Okay.

Travis: It's incredible, yes, it's absolutely incredible. It's just that you I believe are so flabbergasted by the very idea that it's hard for me to be as—

Teresa: You can't match.

Travis: As whelmed by it as you are, yes.

Teresa: I see, I see, okay, all right, let—I'll bring it down then. All right, after the war, he continued to follow his talents. He returned to his town to build a transmitter for a new radio station, developed sound equipment for the movie industry, and his legacy as an inventor would be solidified one hot summer night in 1937. He decided while he was driving home—

Travis: Why did you say it like that?

Teresa: 1937.

Travis: No, it was the hot summer night part.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: It made me—

Teresa: Well, because it's important. It's important.

Travis: Okay, it's just that it made me think of, there's a Neil Diamond, I believe, live show album called Hot August Night.

Teresa: Oh, yeah?

Travis: And then there's also like [sings] hot summer night.

Teresa: I mean, yeah, yeah.

Travis: It's just, you said it like you were about to tell me about a speakeasy you went to.

Teresa: [chuckles] No.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: It is important because driving around in the sweltering heat gave him an idea for some sort of portable cooling system, so that people could deliver perishables without worrying about them spoiling on the journey.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: In 1940, he patented a vehicle refrigeration system that opened up the *global market* for fresh produce, and also opened up new frontiers in medicine. With portable refrigeration, blood and vaccines could be shipped further distances at safe temperatures, so Jones' invention literally saved lives.

Travis: Yeah, man! Yeah, listen, he wired up his World War I camp, that's awesome. He invented the refrigeration truck, is huge!

Teresa: And there's more. Before his death in 1961, he earned more than 60 patents, including portable X-ray, medical radio communication system—

Travis: What?

Teresa: And an early version of the snowmobile.

Travis: Whoa!

Teresa: I know, right? Pretty awesome.

Travis: That's such a wide variety of stuff, right? To not have just like, "Yeah, I'm specialized in this one thing." Refrigeration truck, portable X-ray, early snowmobile, what was the other one?

Teresa: Oh, medical radio communication system.

Travis: This is what I'm saying, is this is a guy who could do it all, and I don't know, wire stuff up real good.

Teresa: In 1991, he post-humously—

Travis: Posthumous... po... oh, no, now I'm thinking about it.

Teresa: Posthumously, is that correct? Is that better?

Travis: Yeah? After he died.

Teresa: After he died, he became the first African American to receive the National Medal of Technology.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah, totally. And I didn't even mention—

Travis: He invented all the good stuff. What?

Teresa: He was born in Cincinnati.

Travis: Was he?!

Teresa: [laughs] It seems trivial. And I mean, it is, but—

Travis: No! That's quite important. He was a son of Cincinnatus.

Teresa: Indeed. So, if you are—if you want to learn more, dear listeners, here's some great sources. One is, I've Got an Idea!: The Story of Frederick McKinley Jones, by Gloria M. Swanson and Margaret V. Ott. It's technically a book for children, but that doesn't make it any less informative.

Travis: And depending on how intelligent the child is, any book is a book for children, really.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: I read The Stand—no, not The Stand. I read The Talisman when I was 11.

Teresa: Mm-hm?

Travis: By Stephen King. So, you can read anything—

Teresa: You can.

Travis: If your dad thinks nerd stuff is fine for some reason.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Oh, it's for nerds, so it's—yeah—"

Teresa: "It's okay."

Travis: "It doesn't matter how old he is."

Teresa: And you can check out, on PBS, there is a Prairie Public shorts episode on Frederick McKinley Jones.

Travis: You should check that out.

Teresa: You should.

Travis: Person at home!

Teresa: And support PBS.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: All right! Would you like to hear about another one?

Travis: Yeah, I would.

Teresa: All right. We have Althea Gibson.

Travis: I love that name. Althea is one of my favorites.

Teresa: It's a good name. She was a sports legend. Before Venus and Serena Williams were even like crawling around in diapers, she was running—

Travis: When they were babies, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: You're not making wild claims about—

Teresa: No, no.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: When they were children, and I'm saying before that.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: Before them, there was Althea. So, she grew up in Harlem in the 1930s and '40s, and it just so happened that her particular block was designated as a police athletic play area. So what that is, it is where the NYPD blocks off traffic to the street so that there is an area for children to play.

Travis: Okay... that both like conceptually—

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Makes sense, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Especially during a time when green spaces weren't really a thing, especially in, you know, parts of town that were not, you know, cared for and funded the way that they should have been. But also, what a wild thing to be like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, let's block off the street and let the kids play for a while." And then to—okay. It just conjures the time that I thought was like only from like movies like *Newsies*, you know where it's like—

Teresa: Oh! Yeah.

Travis: "And then we'd go in the street and play sick ball." And all of a sudden you're like, "Cool, okay, sure you did." [chuckles]

Teresa: [laughs] And it turns out, one of the things that she was quite good at was paddle tennis. In 1939, she won the title of New York women's champion in paddle tennis competition that made all of her neighbors go, "Dang, this girl is good," right?

Travis: Well, yeah. It would be wild if she won the thing and all of her neighbors were like, "Eh, I don't think she's that good."

Teresa: Well, that's important, because they believed in her so much that they took up a collection to send her to get proper tennis lessons. So, by 1941, she had entered and won her first tournament, the American Tennis Association New York State Championship.

Travis: Where is this movie? Where is this movie?

Teresa: I don't know, man.

Travis: This is inspire—this is—they got together, took up a collection to send her to tennis lessons. First of all, fascinated by that. I want to watch her take tennis lessons in some proper establishment that they had to raise money for. Then she goes on to win the tournament? Come on!

Teresa: She won again in the girls' division in 1944 and 1945. And after, she did lose the final in 1946, she returned the next year. And then 10 years after that, where she won the women's title straight for every time. So, kept winning it the whole time.

Travis: Incredible.

Teresa: So as you can imagine—

Travis: After a while, it's just like, "Yeah, I just win this."

Teresa: "I just win this. This is mine."

Travis: "That's what I do. Somebody build like a tennis robot for me to compete against so that it's fair."

Teresa: [chuckles] Well, speaking of fair, because for black community members it is not usually fair, segregation barred her from participating in national events.

Travis: Oh, well, we don't curse on this show, but I would curse right now if we did.

Teresa: You would curse. After intense lobbying, she became the first African American to compete in the US National Champion for tennis, which is a precursor to the US Open. So, in 1956, she was the first black player to win a Grand Slam tournament in the French championship.

Travis: Ah, yeah.

Teresa: And the next year, because she keeps winning, she was the first black champion in the entire 80 year history of Wimbledon!

Travis: Incredible.

Teresa: Incredible. And when I compared her to Venus and Serena, I feel like—

Travis: I also for a second—it took me a second to remember what Wimbledon was, because my brain filled in a type of cheese.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I knew that wasn't it. That's Wensleydale.

Teresa: That's Wensleydale. [chuckles]

Travis: That's Wensleydale, is what that is. But my brain, it, like a bike chain, it missed a gear for a second and I was like, "What? Oh, yeah! Big tennis deal, yeah."

Teresa: What it must be like to live inside there.

Travis: It's wild, man!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's wild. I told you this morning, I saw a box of safety pins and I thought it said "salty pines."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And even after I figured out it didn't say "salty pines," my brain was still stuck on the phrase "salty pines." Like, what would that even be?

Teresa: What would that be? [chuckles]

Travis: For like five minutes. It's truly magical in here!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I wish more people could see it.

Teresa: All right. She received the trophy from Queen Elizabeth II, obvs, herself.

Travis: Yeah. That would be wild.

Teresa: Obvs. [chuckles]

Travis: "So then this ghost queen comes to me..."

Teresa: [laughs] By the time she had retired from tennis, she had won 11 Grand Slam titles and was the world's top-ranked female player.

Travis: Incredible!

Teresa: And after that, she went on to play golf and have a really great golf career. [chuckles] I mean, it was amazing, right?

Travis: Yeah! That's incredible!

Teresa: If you would like to find out more about Althea and her golf career, the biography *Serving Herself: The Life and Times of Althea Gibson*, by Ashley Brown. Also, there's another children's book about Althea Gibson, *The Story of Tennis' Fleet-of-foot Girl*, by Megan Reid and illustrated by Laura Freeman.

Travis: And we're gonna take a quick break for a word from another Max Fun show, and we'll be right back!

Teresa: Right back!

[theme music plays]

Ella: Hey, Alexis.

Alexis: Hey, Ella!

Ella: What animal has the most teeth?

Alexis: I would guess a shark.

Ella: A snail.

Alexis: No, snails don't have teeth.

Ella: They have thousands! And they are freaky looking.

Alexis: No, I don't want that to be true, okay?

Ella: [chuckles]

Alexis: Did you know that the hippocampus in your brain is named after the half horse, half fish sea creature found in Greek mythology?

Ella: I didn't know that, but we're meant to be doing animal trivia, and hippocampus isn't a real animal.

Alexis: Well, that doesn't matter on Comfort Creatures.

Ella: You're right, it doesn't matter at all. [chuckles]

Alexis: Comfort Creatures is a cozy show for lovers of animals of all shapes and sizes, real and unreal.

Ella: If that sounds like your cup of tea, then join us every Thursday for new episodes on maximumfun.org!

[break]

Kumail: Are you a celebrity? Are you searching for meaning, connection and a little levity these days? Hi, I'm Kumail Nanjiani, actor, writer, and yes, a celebrity too. And I've got four words for you; Bullseye with Jesse Thorn. Are you tired of junkets? Red carpets?

Sick of the endless spicy snacks you have to eat? Do you want to connect with someone who gets your work, and laugh with you a little? Join me, André 3000, Tom Hanks, Tina Fey and many more, and become a guest on Bullseye with Jesse Thorn, from NPR and Maximum Fun.

[break]

Travis: And now we're right back!

Teresa: Here we are!

Travis: See? I told you.

Teresa: You were not fibbing.

Travis: Not this time.

Teresa: [chuckles] Yes, okay—[chuckles]

Travis: That got you, huh? Still thinking about salty pines?

Teresa: No, I'm thinking about Wensleydale. [laughs]

Travis: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's fair.

Teresa: [chuckles] Okay, whew... Bessie Coleman, Elizabeth was her given name, Bessie for short, was born in Texas, where her parents were sharecroppers. Bessie was the 10th of 13 children. So, very full family life.

Travis: That's a lot of children!

Teresa: And at 23, Coleman moved to Chicago to live with her brothers, and it was there that she first heard stories that made her want to become a pilot.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: Yeah! Military men were returning from World War I at this point, and she was fascinated by all the heroic exploits that she would see in the papers of these flying aces, right?

Travis: Like Snoopy.

Teresa: Yeah, like—no, yeah, like Snoopy. Exactly like Snoopy.

Travis: Snoopy was a World War I flying ace. People would often say he was the Red Baron, but no, he fought the Red Baron while riding on the Sopwith Camel. He was the World War I flying ace.

Teresa: Yes. I'm surprised that you know so much about Snoopy.

Travis: I was—

Teresa: I've heard that you're... that you're not a fan. [chuckles]

Travis: It's not that I'm not a fan of Snoopy. This gets blown out of proportion.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: I don't get what the big deal—like, Snoopy is fine, Right? I just don't think he's as storied as—like, I like Snoopy. I played Snoopy in You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown. I love Snoopy. I just don't think he's as big as like your Bugs Bunnies or your Mickey Mouses.

Teresa: Okay, all right, yeah. Sorry, I—

Travis: No, I'm sick—

Teresa: I didn't—I didn't mean to bring—

Travis: I'm sick of this!

Teresa: Up something that was—[chuckles] that was so tender for you.

Travis: I'm trying to do my job! I'm trying to do my job here. Can we—

Teresa: I'm sorry.

Travis: Can we cut?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Can we cut for one—

Teresa: No, you can't say—don't do that. Don't do—

Travis: No, don't cut, Rachel. It's fine...

Teresa: All right. There was one problem. Flight schools in the United States would not allow Bessie to study because she was black and a woman.

Travis: Yeah, I was gonna guess that. Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah, yeah. So, what did she do? She worked two jobs and learned French and went to Paris, where she enrolled in the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale.

Travis: If you hadn't included gone to Paris, and you were just like, "So what did she do? She worked two jobs, and she learned French." That'll teach 'em! [chuckles] I didn't know where the rest of it was going! "And she put those two jobs and French together, and that's how she knew how to fly a plane." But she went to France, and they let her learn. That makes a lot more sense.

Teresa: They let her learn. She arrived in France on November 20th, 1920, and by September of 1921, she flew back to the United States herself.

Travis: Boom.

Teresa: Making her the very first black woman, not only with a pilot's license, but an international pilot's license.

Travis: Incredible.

Teresa: Get 'em. That's what I say.

Travis: [spoofing a French accent] Incredible.

Teresa: Mm-hm!

Travis: Is that it?

Teresa: Incroyable.

Travis: Oncra... uncroyabl?

Teresa: Something like that. Incroyable!

Travis: Let's just pretend I said it right.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay, she was a media sensation, right? Because she was a big deal. She did a great job. She had been denied aviation training in the United States, and was now performing packed air shows all over the country. It was truly stunning. She could do loops and figure eights and all kinds of aerial stunts, right? This is when she started to get the nickname Brave Bessie, or even, I mean, another nickname was Queen Bess, I think that's good, but I like Brave Bessie.

Travis: That's a good one, yeah.

Teresa: And she knew she was popular, so much so that she refused to fly in air shows that didn't allow black attendees.

Travis: Good job, Bessie! I like that!

Teresa: Mm-hm. And she constantly encouraged other black aviation enthusiasts of any gender to fly. She was like all in, she was like, "You can do it—I did it, you can do it. Let's get you doing it." And at one point, she had an injury that left her with a damaged plane and a broken leg. And she continued, even while healing, to accept speaking engagements about black

aviation, and even opened up a beauty shop to begin raising money to buy herself a new trick plane. So, she was like part investor in that, right?

Travis: I like that.

Teresa: Unfortunately—

Travis: Oh, no.

Teresa: April 20th, 1926, Bessie Coleman was practicing her act in Jacksonville, Florida, when her plane, which was being piloted at the time by her mechanic, which was a normal thing, regular thing, the plane flipped during a dive, and Coleman fell and died.

Travis: Oh, no.

Teresa: At 34. She had so much more life to live.

Travis: So young, yeah!

Teresa: Yeah... She accomplished so much in such a short time and is—it's really tragic, you know, but that stuff is dangerous. She knew going in that it wasn't, you know, wasn't something that was gonna be a walk in the park all day.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: So, it last—it left a lasting impact on the world. Shortly after she passed away, a black World War I veteran created the Bessie Coleman Aero Club. He and countless others dedicated their lives to teaching black Americans how to design and fix and fly aircrafts. And many places around the country have been named in her honor.

Not to mention, 1995, the Postal Service issued a stamp with her likeness. Alex wanted me to mention that her favorite honor is that the very first black woman to ever fly in space, Dr. Mae Jameson... Jamison, sorry, carried Bessie Coleman's picture with her to space during a NASA mission in 1992.

Travis: That just choked me up.

Teresa: I know, what an honor, right? To be remembered that way.

Travis: That's very sweet.

Teresa: So, here are some more books, if you would like to look into her some more. We've got *Fly High: The Story Of Bessie Coleman*, by Louise Borden and Mark K. Kroger. We've got the Cradle of Aviation Museum website has a great biography on her. And if you live by the Frontiers Flight Museum in Texas, there's a whole exhibit on her amazing life featured there until May of 2026.

Travis: Awesome.

Teresa: Really cool. Here is someone that, having been taught about Martin Luther King Jr, right? I thought that I understood the scope of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s kind of like circle of influence. But I had never heard about this other black person.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: Bayard Rustin.

Travis: Okay?

Teresa: Rustin was not only one of the principal organizers of the March on Washington in 1963, but he was also one of MLK Jr.'s civil rights allies who assisted with the bus boycott in Alabama. And he had a lot to do with the shaping of King's views on nonviolent resistance. Having wrote in a letter to a colleague, King said, "We are thoroughly committed to the method of nonviolence in our struggle, and we are convinced that Bayard's expertness and commitment in this area will be of inestimable value."

Travis: Okay, cool!

Teresa: I had no idea. I had no idea that this person was included in this movement. And this wasn't even the beginning of his illustrious career as an

activist. He was taught by his grandmother the Quaker value of peace, and that would guide him for the rest of his life. After he spent two years in jail for being a conscientious objector to World War II, he planned the journey of reconciliation, which served as a blueprint for the freedom writers in the 1960s. It's also worth mentioning that he and his team not only organized the March on Washington, they did it in about two months.

Travis: That—okay.

Teresa: Which is mind blowing.

Travis: A huge undertaking.

Teresa: Absolutely. And the reason why we've never heard about him is because he was an openly gay man in the mid-20th century.

Travis: Oh. Well, that sucks.

Teresa: Yeah. And when you are black and openly gay, it seems that that's kind of, I mean, erasable from history. So, that's why we wanted to include him today.

Travis: It's very important.

Teresa: He refused to hide his sexuality, and was often relegated to behind the scenes to help, because homosexuality was considered a crime at the time. And was officially a crime in the US until 2003, by the way. Just gotta throw that in there. And he seems to finally be getting a piece of the credit that he rightfully deserves. In 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom officially pardoned his homosexuality charge from 1953. And in 2013, Barack Obama awarded him... post-humously—

Travis: Nailed it. I think? Yeah.

Teresa: Posthumously!

Travis: Yeah, there it is.

Teresa: There it is. Sometimes they're the words that you only read and you don't say.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Anyway, the Medal of Freedom to Rustin's longtime partner. So, he gave it to him. So, his legacy deserves credit that his life refused him, which I think is a really great thing that we are doing for a lot of these.

Travis: Trying to.

Teresa: Trying to.

Travis: In small part, you know what I mean? We do what we can, but there's so much more information out there, and the best thing people can do is educate themselves about it, and seek out the information and look at these stories and see what other stories there are out there that they don't know.

Teresa: And if you would like to learn further, we've got *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*, by John D'Emilio, *Troublemaker for Justice*, by Jacqueline Houtman, Michael G. Long, and Walter Naegle, and *Unstoppable: How Bayard Rustin Organized the 1963 March on Washington*, by Michael G. Long, illustrated by Bea Jackson. There's also a documentary, again on PBS, I think it used to be available on Netflix, but I'm not sure anymore, called *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*. Amazing, right?

Travis: Yeah!

Teresa: I'm so glad that we take the time every February to do this, and I hope that it encourages our listeners to also seek out information like this.

Travis: And we want to say thank you to our editors, Rachel and Gino.

Teresa: All right.

Travis: Thank you to you both. They didn't like both work on it together, it's just we've taken on a lot more projects as—over at McElroy HQ.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: And so now Rachel and Gino are both editors, and they take turns. So, thank you to both of you. We couldn't do the show without you. Thank you to our researcher, Alex, without whom we could not do the show. And thank you to you for listening! You know, we could do the show without you.

Teresa: I wouldn't want to.

Travis: No! Because I'm dropping hilarious quips left and right, and I need to get these out to the people.

Teresa: You need somebody else besides me to laugh. Is that what you're saying?

Travis: No, it's just you don't always laugh at the really funny stuff I say. You go like, "Okay." You know what I mean?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I need people laughing!

Teresa: I'm trying to do a show here.

Travis: Yeah, I know. And also, you have to deal with it 24/7.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Oh, there's new merch over at the McElroy Merch Store. There's... we've got a new Miggy Mackerel hoodie, and a new like camo hat with an insignia of Miggy Mackerel on it that says, "Today is a good day to watch a fish die." So, if you want to get that. It's from McElroy Family Clubhouse, if you haven't watched it. But that's over there at mcelroymerch.com. What else, Teresa?

Teresa: Well, we always thank Brent 'brentalfloss' Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also,

thank you to Bruja Betty Pin-up Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

And as always, we are taking your topic submissions, your questions, your idioms, send them on over! If you have a black innovator that you would like us to take a look at, we would love for you to send that information to us, shmannerscast@gmail.com. And say hi to Alexx, because she reads every single one.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us, so—eh? That's going to do it for us! So join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners... get it?

["Shmanners Theme" by brentalfloss plays]

Maximum Fun.

A worker-owned network...

Of artists-owned shows...

Supported directly by you.