

My name is Cassie Wilson, I'm 22 years old, and I'm writing in support of SB683 which requires school districts to provide instruction on racist history of this country and state..

I attended Oregon schools, specifically Gresham-Barlow schools K-12, and while I learned a lot in my time there, since graduating in 2016 I have learned just how much I didn't learn in school that I think I should have but instead have had to teach myself.

Often, when the history of racism is taught in school it is whitewashed. We learn about slavery, segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement like it was long ago. It's taught in a way where it sounds like the Civil Rights era solved racism. I think it's important for students to recognize that racism is a systemic issue that their peers live with and experience. We can't just listen to the I Have A Dream speech while we color a picture of MLK Jr every year. We need to be taught how racist decisions of year's past have directly influenced and created the systems and ongoing discrimination that exist today.

Right now there's a disconnect that was made obvious to me when someone who went through all the same schools as I did said that racism isn't a problem anymore and that the past is the past and should stay there. Students graduate high school without understanding of the real history of our state and country and how it shaped our community and how it continues to oppress our peers. Teaching about racism is a human rights issue, not a bipartisan political issue. Students need to learn about anti-racism and how to practice allyship. Students are the future and this bill and anti-racist education will make our communities safer and more inclusive to empower young people to begin dismantling these oppressive systems and avoid building new ones that replicate that oppression.

I actually reached out to my former school district about this very issue last summer and they said they would love to take on these subjects, but were waiting for guidance and support from the state.

Now is the time.

Please support SB683.