

I am writing to you as a resident of Jackson County to express my full support of SB683. It is important for the predominantly white citizens of this state to understand our history of government sanctioned systemic racism and deliberate disenfranchisement of African Americans. The purpose of this is not to divide us but unite us in a common understanding of our history so that we do not repeat it and so that those who have not been negatively affected by racism can understand the point of view of those who have.

The fundamental problem that I see in most well-meaning white people is that they lack a true understanding of all the things that hold their African American neighbors and friends back. They incorrectly believe that if you work hard you will be rewarded prosperity and that there is something wrong with those people that somehow can't achieve it. We need to build a common understanding and empathy so that together we can work to make our country a better place for everyone.

Children are not born racist but they do observe racist behavior from their parents and learn from them. Our state is in danger of having a significant portion of our population becoming radicalized white supremacists. A state with such deep divisions will only become more difficult to govern. We need to address this issue early with children in schools so that they don't grow up with a false sense of superiority and lack of empathy for anyone unlike themselves.

The fact that we even have to legislate something like this is appalling to me. Refusal to teach facts about our history smacks of the worst kind of censorship and ignorance. Will we also eliminate evolution from our science teachings in an effort to appease radical Christians? Will we also stop teaching about the Holocaust?

Teaching our children about the mistakes of the past is an important step towards a brighter future. Once students understand the history of racism against African American people, that provides a base from which to teach anti-racism skills: The ability to recognize racist policies, ideas, and acts, and then to formulate corresponding anti-racist policies, ideas, and acts. This would be a very positive thing.

I urge you to support SB683 and make every effort to move it forward.