

Dear Committee:

I am writing to express my firm opposition to SB 683.

This bill needs to be called out for what it is: A move to mandate the 1619 Project curriculum (or something basically identical to it) across all Oregon schools. The 1619 Project is a faulty and limited telling of historical events designed to fit a particular narrative and further a current political agenda. How do we know this? It's primary author, Nikole Hannah-Jones, said so in her own words on July 27, 2020 on Twitter:

"The fight over the 1619 Project is not about history. It is about memory. I've always said that the 1619 Project is not a history. It is a work of journalism that explicitly seeks to challenge the national narrative and, therefore, the national memory. **The project has always been as much about the present as it is the past.**" (emphasis added)

Whether it would be the 1619 Project curriculum or something similar to it, this bill is about furthering a present political agenda rather than truly educating our students about the past.

This agenda is built on the framework known as Critical Race Theory, and this theory is interested in dividing people along racial lines into oppressed and oppressor groups. Critical Race Theory teaches students their group identity is more important than their individual identity, and thus, individual choice and agency are eclipsed by group identity and where that group ranks on the hierarchy of oppression. This teaches students of every race to see the world through a framework of oppression and division rather than one of opportunity and unity.

NO ONE is arguing students in Oregon should be presented with a "whitewashed" history that ignores the many racial injustices which have been perpetrated throughout American history. This approach would be wrong and incredibly dishonest. However, we *already have* curriculum which teaches about racial injustice in Oregon schools. So, what then is the purpose of implementing this curriculum?

I reiterate: the purpose of introducing this curriculum is to further a current political agenda. It is not meant to educate or empower students, but rather it is meant to indoctrinate students into a divisive ideology. I strongly urge the members of the committee to oppose this bill.

There are other options for teaching a true history which does not omit the atrocities of racism, but also shines a light on inspirational people of color throughout our history. The 1776 Unites project (created by a diverse collection of African American voices) has created curriculum which "offers authentic, inspiring stories from American history that show what is best in our national character and what our freedom makes possible even in the most difficult circumstances. 1776 Unites maintains a special focus on stories that celebrate black excellence, reject victimhood culture, and showcase African-Americans who have prospered by embracing America's founding ideals."

I would strongly encourage the members of the committee to oppose this bill and look at alternative options such as the 1776 Unites curriculum for teaching a balanced and honest approach to American history.

Thank you,
Betsy Kost