

Hello. I have had the privilege of being a toddler teacher in an Early Head Start Classroom and am currently an Early Head Start home visitor. That means I work with magnificent toddlers. During my career in early childhood education, I have mainly served black and brown families. I love my profession. There is nothing I'd rather do than help teach young people how to be the best versions of themselves, stressing self-acceptance and kindness. At the age of 24-36 years old the primary learning that goes on in the classroom and at home is social-emotional and linguistic. I take pride in teaching children to express themselves, modulate their emotions and explore their world with wonder. I am so grateful to these youngsters each and every day for reminding me of the majesty that constantly surround us. However sometimes I think to myself, am I teaching these wonderful youngsters skills that will serve them in the life that lies ahead of them? Will feeling they have a right to hold their heads high, express themselves and be themselves mean that they will anger a police officer and end up in prison, beaten up, or worse? Should I be teaching them instead to shut their mouths, hide their true spirits and hang their heads low so they can survive the justice system? When I think of the one time I was arrested in Portland it makes feel even more weary of what I need to think about when influencing the neuro development of young black and brown children. In the one instance when I was arrested, I was behaving as I always do around police officers as a white person, only this time I was with black people in a primarily black neighborhood. I walked away from a police officer and within seconds, I was in the back of a police car in handcuffs for "interfering with a police officer" and I spent the night in jail. I was shocked at the escalation by the police in a completely nonviolent situation, over getting my car towed. I hope that with the passing of HB 2169, I can teach my toddlers of color to express themselves and love themselves without worrying that I am putting a target on their body that will cost them their dignity, their freedom or their lives. Thank you