

As a former teacher, school district communications director, current equity trainer, and current doctoral student at the University of Oregon, I can testify to the necessity of providing our students with our history, meaning African American history. It is all of our history. Columbus was not an explorer. Columbus was sent on a mission to commit genocide. You can't "discover" a country that is already inhabited. This, along with the other fallacies like the US as a meritocracy and the myth of boot straps, must be addressed and properly taught in our public schools. African American contributions to literature, science, medicine, and culture are currently minimized or ignored. Without positive representation, every student only gets the perspective of the victor.

According to a long tradition of social and psychological research, Black students create their identity in opposition to white teachers because white teachers do not see Black students as successful, valuable, or worthy. Implicit and explicit bias are always working against Black students. To address this issue, we need the Oregon legislature to direct our teachers to counteract the detrimental culture in which Black students live. Black students need role models from literature, history, science, math, and every other walk of life in order to develop positive self-esteem. We need to see ourselves as heroes and heroines and we need our white teachers to step in and learn with and from Black students.

In process, we will interrupt the detrimental process called color blindness, which holds systemic and institutional racism in place, and finally allow and encourage teachers to have the race conversation in their classes. This is the only way we will be able to learn to honor each others' experiences and build our cultural literacy in order to break the hold racism has on this country.

Please pass this legislation.

Humbly submitted,

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