

Thank you for taking public testimony on the important issue of educating our children on the history of racism in our state and country. My name is Karen Rue. I am a native Oregonian educated in the Portland Public School system and a graduate of the University of Oregon with a Bachelor of Arts in History. I firmly believe that we all need to know our history or we are definitely doomed to repeat it.

I am opposed to this bill as I believe it is first and foremost unnecessary and secondarily it has the wrong focus, a negative and oppressive focus. I believe our children are currently educated on the fact that racism is a part of our history as a nation, it is part of the history of this state, and is an on-going issue in our society. It would be hard to find a student who is completely unaware of these facts. Our curriculum is not devoid of the explanation of racism and how and why it existed across our country and throughout the decades.

Past legislation at all levels of government and of all types aimed towards easing the burden specifically of Black Americans have largely FAILED. In many instances, the outcome has been counter-productive and has ended up hurting the exact population the legislation aimed to help. The most current example is the effort to Defund the Police. As Cities have stripped their police forces of officers, special crime units and/or have increased restrictions on how Police can interact with the public, sharp spikes in crime have occurred across this country including in Oregon. Who are those most hurt? The poor, the marginalized and mostly minority populations.

Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty" in the 1960's saw little to no improvement in the life of the Black American family. Many have argued the average Black-American family is in worse shape today than it was in the 1960's. Shelby Steele, a Black American Historian, has stated that the "War on Poverty" was oppressive and communicated to Blacks that they were inferior. The goal of eradicating poverty was noble, the outcome deplorable.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you cannot legislate civility and success for all people. You must INSPIRE it. The Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution, the Bill of Rights all contain verbiage and safe-guards for equal opportunity and equal treatment under the law. We need to live up to these documents, not abandon them. They are as relevant today as the day they were written.

The focus of Senate Bill 683 appears to be to further elaborate for our children what is racism and how it has been pervasive and even foundational in our country's and state's history specifically between White and Black Americans. This is a very limited, incomplete and negative view of our country and state's foundation. Your bill appears to elevate racism as a prime motivator and building block of our institutions. Quite honestly I find this idea ridiculous. What is your goal with this Bill? To condemn and depress? To permanently label one as oppressor and the other as oppressed? Has racism not existed between other segments of the population? Does racism not go in all directions? Do you wish to inform children on how to be racist or on how to love their neighbor as themselves? Racism is a part of the human condition, affecting all nations and civilizations across the globe and across the ages. If we are ever going to overcome racism of any and all types, it will be by focusing on the positive stories and methods of those who stood up, spoke up and those who overcame. That is the aspect of the history to focus on. Focus on the attributes you want to instill in our next generation: truth, tenacity, resilience, love of neighbor. Again, we have to INSPIRE the next generation, not condemn it with labels they cannot crawl out from under.

This bill is unnecessary and uninspiring and would have negative repercussions if enacted.

Thank you for your time.
-Karen Rue