

I am in support of SB 683. As an attorney, a mother, and a late learner in life of the racist history of our country which intentionally enslaved, oppressed, marginalized, and harmed through color of law people of color, I can absolutely state I would have done better if I had known better early on in my education about these facts.

I have read a great deal in the past 8 years about these topics, and have listened to many podcasts, authors, and speakers instruct on what is needed to make opportunities for those we have harmed and to learn what it means to make reparations, amends, and heal as a country. One thing is clear, without a reckoning and apology, through proper education, proper instruction, and proper integrity in our system of education, we can never advance past a racial hierarchy established to benefit privileged white males. We are no better than the educational systems and texts we choose to adopt for the education of our students. The public good demands full transparency and a true history of our racist past and present.

I graduated from high-school in 1980. At the time of my graduation, of all the Government and American History courses I had taken, the textbooks I read and was instructed from, none of them mentioned the persistent racism our country, and there was only one chapter devoted to slavery, noting it was gone and everything is equal today through Constitutional Amendment. It saddens me to know that I did not learn so that I could properly act on knowledge about all of the ways we as a country remained steadfast in harming people of color into the present in the laws, incarceration, policing, redlining, local housing restrictions, offers of government grants, municipal codes, and other structures of our society our tax-dollars fund. When we choose to silence voices that make us uncomfortable in our privilege, we also choose unknowingly to hinder creativity, common advancement, brotherly love, compassion, and growth for all of us in our society which depends upon everyone having a stake in the improvement of our society to flourish. Without teaching where we went so very wrong, we can never right this ship.

Some of the books I have read that impacted me the greatest I include below, because as legislators examining the need for this change in curriculum, self education about this important topic before prescribing what should or should not be taught to young minds and learners is essential:

Color of Law, by Rothstein

How to be an Anti Racist, by Kendi

Slavery by Another Name by Blackman

The New Jim Crow by Alexander

History of White People by Painter

Indigenous People's History of the United States by Dunbar-Ortiz

Between the World and Me by Coates

The best part about adopting an honest curriculum that teaches the successes and failures of our country is it allows each student and teacher to learn, engage, and talk about painful and uncomfortable topics in a setting designed for learning and growth. If we don't teach our students how to reckon with conflicting feelings of loss, entitlement, fear, hope, and empowerment through democratic change and participation, we will always be a country held back by our own fears clinging to an inaccurate and harmful past, and perpetuating this harm into the lives of future generations. There are so many learning modules already developed by non profits and other school districts that we do not need to re-invent the wheel in Oregon, we just need to be willing to travel down the path of honest teaching of our history and giving voice to the voiceless, and memory to those we choose to forget because past history "feels" uncomfortable to talk about. Discomfort is the place where growth happens. Let Oregon be the State that chose temporary discomfort over perpetual oppression by adopting a policy of teaching an accurate history of the racism our country engaged in and continues to engage in to this day.