

Why Black History Month is Failing Our Students (*Or*, Black History Month All Year)

**A Discussion with:
Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance**

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The Birth of A Story (or Commentary)

[Article Link](#)

- A professor's inspiration
- An educator's learning
- Leadership means vulnerability
- We're always growing
- Something's wrong

Why Write about Racism and Black History Month?

- I wrote this piece from my personal experience to model vulnerability and being a lifelong learner on a journey of personal and professional growth.
- There is an *unintentional* fundamental flaw in the way many children learn about racism.

“I sure am glad we don’t have racism anymore.”

- When we present racism *exclusively* in a historical context, we risk leading children to believe the problems of racism are completely in the past.
- This mistaken belief robs educators and students of any opportunity for present-day change, which is the reason we teach.

Curriculum Violence?

“... curriculum violence occurs when educators and curriculum writers have constructed a set of lessons that damage or otherwise adversely affect students intellectually and emotionally.”

—Stephanie P. Jones, Teaching Tolerance, 2020

Acts of Omission

Curriculum violence also occurs through the omission of students “seeing themselves” in their learning and the intentional or unintentional omission of instructional materials that aim to meet this goal.

Intentionality

Intentionality is not a prerequisite for harmful teaching. Intentionality is also not a prerequisite for racism.

—Stephanie P. Jones, Teaching Tolerance, 2020

Teaching from Multiple Perspectives

- Those who commit acts of racism ultimately sacrifice their own sense of belonging and community. This is why it's important to teach about racism from multiple perspectives.

What Next?

- Examine your personal beliefs
- Reflect on your professional practice
- Review your curriculum and materials
- Look for “small wins”
- Increase opportunities to discuss and embrace diversity.
- Speak about racism, equity and social justice in **both** historical and present terms.
- Racism can sometimes appear less “concrete” in the present day, and this is abstract for children. Keep conversations developmentally appropriate.

This is hard work!

- Discussions about racism can be difficult and uncomfortable.
- Nobody's perfect.
- Try something!