

Jada Hamilton

Professor Perez

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Racial Disparities in Education

First I would like to point out that this class was a great experience. I enjoyed learning about the history of America in an unbiased way.

A perspective that I've gained during this course is the racial disparities in education. Specifically the way history is taught in the school system tries to alter students' thinking about this country. Students think that America is the best country ever and the ones with the highest morals. I know because I once thought this way. That perception wasn't changed immediately but it was altered throughout time. I wasn't naive to this country's history with people of color. I was however not aware of the whole truth and depth of the effect that race has on this country.

It starts with the information being taught in the classroom. Students are mostly told what to think about history rather than learning the history and forming their own opinions. The textbooks and curriculum doesn't evolve with the world and new research that's founded. Overall US History, Social Studies, and World History should accurately reflect the world that was and is now. It is a shame and disservice for the students to be blindsided and naive when it comes to the history of race in this country. "Racial bias in history textbooks and curricula is a persistent problem. Often, teachers in US history classrooms downplay or overlook racism. Many attempts at teaching America's racist history fall woefully short, such as when a fifth grader in New Jersey was "sold" in class at a mock slave auction, or when a fourth grader in Wisconsin was asked in a homework assignment to "give three 'good' reasons" for chattel

slavery.” (Education, 2021) There are teachers that are aware that history books and curriculum isn’t accurate and up to date. They’ll still teach all the sides of history and give students a rounded education. There should be more but it shouldn’t be like this at least it doesn’t have to be. “History educators are acutely aware that history taught as an uncontested body of positivistic knowledge with a canon of given factual information can promote prejudice, bias and bigotry – it can ultimately fuel civil and international conflict and violence.” (Vella, 2020) There can be an honest school system with a respectable history curriculum. Students can go into their history class and not feel attacked or inferior.

Growing up you felt the tension of race when it’s talked about in class but you can’t put your finger on it. Students tease you and make fun of you based on your appearances and you start to have insecurities. The teacher gives you a very empathetic look when discussing slavery and the civil rights movement. You question the pity but you also become so angry. You’re so angry for something that happened and then you grow up and realize that it’s still happening. I don’t think that race will ever not play a part in how I overall feel about this country/ world and how I feel in it. Students should feel their feelings about it because it is the reality of this country and the world.

One of the realities of this country is the history of slavery and its effects of today’s society. A false interpretation of slavery is that 1619 was the year that the first slaves came to America. Enslaved Africans arrived in North America in the 1500s, despite 1619 being marked the arrival of the first captives in Jamestown Colony. This is just another example of America trying to cover up the wrongs in history instead of acknowledging it and learning from it. Learning this in class I was overwhelmed with sadness and confusion. Those human beings were treated like they were worthless and their history couldn’t be written correctly. I am aware that

slavery was a huge economic boom for not just America but the whole world. The sad thing is that nothing was learned or empathized for the lives tortured and lost. Learning that slaves most likely came earlier than just 1619, just makes me not trust the history guidelines in the education system more. “Virginia colonist John Rolfe documented the arrival of the ship and “20 and odd” Africans on board. His journal entry is immortalized in textbooks, with 1619 often used as a reference point for teaching the origins of slavery in America. But the history, it seems, is far more complicated than a single date. . . European trade of enslaved Africans began in the 1400s. “The first example we have of Africans being taken against their will and put on board European ships would take the story back to 1441,” says Guasco, when the Portuguese captured 12 Africans in Cabo Branco—modern-day Mauritania in north Africa—and brought them to Portugal as enslaved peoples. (Ponti, 2019)

In class when the Cooks came to speak to us they mentioned a lot of good points that still stay with me. First the husband mentioned that there are racial hierarchies in France and everywhere in the world. They’re just based on different values or standards. Next, other countries have different policies and beliefs. To France they’re a socialist society whereas the U.S is a very individualistic society. Another thing I learned is that the education system is different everywhere in the world. Mr. Cook mentioned that their French friend thought that it was ridiculous that a teacher has to filter what they say when teaching something that needs to not be filtered. Everyone has a different opinion about the N-word and who should say it and when it should be appropriate. I happen to agree with Mr. Cook’s friend, it’s just a word that was used derogatorily to put down a group of people based on their skin color. It is also just a word that needs to be taught and not sugar coated. This is just a small example of the many filters and blinders that the US government has on its citizens through the school system. It is disappointing

that people think this way and want to force people to do the same. “How could a teacher possibly discuss slavery, the Holocaust or the mass shootings at the Walmart in El Paso or at the Sutherland Springs Church in my district without giving deference to any one perspective?” one Democratic lawmaker asked, per Dallas News.

Instead, how can a system equip teachers to teach the difficult things in history without any bias? If the system actually cared about teaching students without pushing someone else’s beliefs on them then they would’ve changed the educational system that is equipping the people with the ability to teach. There are tough things that need to be discussed and teachers should be able to teach the content. It is crucial to give the students all the information they need to know in a way that students feel challenged, not uncomfortable. Speaking of uncomfortable, I found an article that explained, “The bill, SB 3, removes requirements to teach about [civil rights work by Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Martin Luther King Jr. and Frederick Douglass](#). Works by women’s suffragists are also no longer required to be taught. The Republicans’ bill also removes requirements to teach “the history of white supremacy, including but not limited to the institution of slavery, the eugenics movement, and the Ku Klux Klan, and the ways in which it is morally wrong.” (Zhang, 2021) To think that this is even in question just shows that there is fear in education. The same reason why books are being banned is the same reason why there is a filter in education content. There is power in education and in knowing that the government has been in the wrong. For me as a future educator I have a sense of responsibility to stay in tune with the current world problems and again give my students a well rounded education.

Learning that the Immigration Act of 1965 was to help eliminate race discrimination in immigration made me feel good. There was a sense of joy learning that America was the ‘good guy’ once again. Isn’t that the false narrative though? “The bill will not flood our cities with

immigrants,” lead supporter Sen. Edward “Ted” Kennedy (D-Mass.) told the Senate during debate. “It will not upset the ethnic mix of our society. It will not relax the standards of admission. It will not cause American workers to lose their jobs.” (Kennedy, 2019) This basically assures the people of America that their jobs and livelihood won’t be affected by immigrants. It feels like the US put up this front that they want to help and eliminate race discrimination but they actually don’t want to. The US wants their resources and jobs strictly for Americans only.

When learning about the American Dream I believed that people wanted to experience the wonders of America. I thought that America was a great country and there are so many freedoms. As I grew up I realized that it wasn’t the same amount of freedom given to everyone. In school there is a certain persona that is painted about every country you learn about in World History. We have this false narrative that everyone in the world wants to come to America and live out the dream. There are a lot of countries that are better than the US and people are perfectly happy in their native country.

Like the exercise we did in class to open our minds to the stereotypes we put on people. There is a lot of racial trauma that every race goes through in America. I have a lot of sympathy for all groups of people. African Americans can view their skin tone and facial features as unattractive (monkey or big nose). It is really hard to succeed and they often feel they’re at an immediate disadvantage. They feel they’ll only amount to be a famous ball player, musician, or rich drug dealer. Asians are seen as a “Model Minority.” They’re super smart, focused, and don’t cause any trouble. They’re English isn’t the best and they’ll probably work at a nail salon or small convenience store. They’re claimed to all look alike (small eyes). Latino/ Hispanics are known for most likely being here illegally. They will be a janitor or doing some inferior low

paying job and they're really attractive. Everyone can make a difference if they're given the opportunities, resources, and proper education.

I think that America accepts the various religions that are in the country and allows people to have freedom of speech. Some people disagree with separating church and state but I think that the lines have been blurred. When we learned in class that slave masters changed the wording in the Bible to further convince slaves that they should obey their masters. Going to church was a very important and symbolic thing for African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement. People who discriminate and vote against LGBTQIA+ rights because of their beliefs. Many other examples like this show that religion does play a part in America and law making.

The church played a big part during the Civil Rights Movement. I think that watching the livestream Sunday Services was very beneficial during Covid. I think that the church isn't as aggressive with racial injustice anymore. Guest speaker, Dr. Jennifer Jones- Austin, mentioned that the church could do more with reconciliation and I agree.

I overall believe that the school system can improve to better the education system and give students a well rounded education with well rounded teachers.

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