

Parents: White Teacher Should Not Teach Black History

Group Of Parents Protest District's Decision

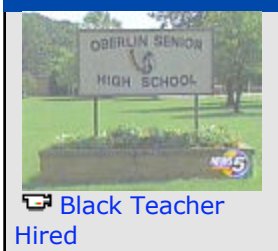
 [Should White Instructors Be Allowed To Teach Black History?](#)

UPDATE: [School Retains Black Teacher](#)

OBERLIN, Ohio, Updated 1:33 p.m. EDT July 28, 2003 -- A group of parents said they will fight a possible decision to allow a white teacher to lead classes in black history at Oberlin High School.

NewsChannel5 reported that a scheduling conflict could cause the district to reassign the black teacher who has taught the course for seven years.

Video



Using a white teacher at Oberlin High School would send the wrong message to black students, said A.G. Miller, an associate professor of American and African religious history at Oberlin College.

"The message is that we are not concerned about the importance of your historical background ... that that is less important than a schedule conflict," said Miller, whose three children graduated from Oberlin High School.

Jaqui Willis, a black Oberlin parent, said the teacher is a role model and that removing him from the class would be detrimental to students.

The parents have protested the move to the school board, but the district's superintendent, Beverly Reep, has not commented on the case. Reep told parents at a school board meeting that scheduling issues would be addressed this week.

Schools and community leaders in the Cleveland area are split over the issue of whether blacks should be the only ones to teach black history.

In Cleveland, white and black teachers teach black history. A black teacher teaches black history at Shaker Heights High School, but a white teacher handles classes on oppression and human relations, both which deal extensively with race relations and slavery.

Little research has been done to determine whether same-race teachers lead to higher achievement by minority students. Ronald Ehrenberg, director of Cornell University's Higher Education Research Institute, said many researchers steer clear of the topic out of fear of being attacked.

Michael Williams, interim director of Cleveland State University's black studies program, said schools should choose a black teacher if that person is most qualified, not just because the teacher happens to be black.

If two teachers are equally qualified, Williams gives the edge to the black teacher.

"That person still has the advantage of the culture," said Williams, who is black. "They understand the nuances of the culture."

Phyllis Yarber Hogan, a member of the Oberlin Black Alliance for Progress, said a white teacher wouldn't be well-suited to teaching students about subjects like slavery.

"When you talk about slavery, students need to understand it is not our fault," she said. "Our ancestors did nothing wrong to be enslaved."

"How do you work through that when the person teaching it is the same type of person who did the enslaving?"

SURVEY

Should white instructors be allowed to teach black history?

- ☐ Yes. As long as they're truthful and fair, I'm all for it.
- ☐ No. I think it sends the wrong message.

Vote

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