

Yvonne Bruce
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Testimony: SB 83

To the member of the Ohio Senate:

I have been an instructor of English at multiple colleges and universities in Northeast Ohio for twenty years, including, at different times, the University of Akron, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland State University, and Cuyahoga Community College.

I'm writing today to express my strenuous objection to SB 83, currently in Senate committee, designed to nip in the bud some imagined "woke" agenda being perpetrated by an imagined left-leaning educational cabal.

In my many years of teaching, I have never once met another faculty member devoted to teaching an "agenda" other than that related to their specific discipline; neither have I witnessed any faculty member attempt to persuade a student of the superiority of any theory, idea, identification, or position that was not firmly grounded in scientific method, historical record, or documented evidence or attempt to "inculcate any social, political, or religious point of view."

Don't take my word for it. Take the students' words. Just this spring semester, in my general education course called "Migration, Displacement, and Identity: Remaking Self and Home," we read, among other texts, *Passing*, Nella Larsen's novel of African American women passing as white in 1920's America; *No-No Boy*, John Okada's novel of a young Japanese American man trying to readjust after time spent in an internment camp and then prison for refusing to serve in World War II; and numerous works devoted to 19th century U.S. westward expansion, including Andrew Jackson's 1830 address to Congress in response to the Indian Removal Act of that same year and reports from different actors involved in the resulting Trail of Tears.

My students' responses? "I wish we had learned some of this stuff in high school." "The only thing we learned in grade school and high school about Native Americans was Squanto helping the Pilgrims." "I heard about internment camps but didn't realize how much they disrupted people's lives."

These are typical responses to the material. Students are hungry for the truth, and for different writers' and thinkers' interpretations of the truth, and they understand that they need not agree with everything we read and discuss, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't be able to decide for themselves.

I invite any member of Congress, any parent, any Republican, any concerned citizen into my classroom at any time. I have nothing to hide and no agenda to push. And as I said at the beginning of my testimony, I don't know of any other faculty member whose experience is different.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Bruce