

Written Testimony

My name is Elaine Richardson. Today, I am a professor of education and literacy studies at The Ohio State University. I was born and reared in a Cleveland, Ohio ghetto in the sixties. My mother was a Jamaican immigrant, and my father was a retired musician and tailor's assistant. They were hard working Black people who believed in the American dream. The environment we lived in was filled with many hardworking Black people making an honest living; but poverty is a social condition that breeds crime, desperation, and illness. Our community was neglected by society and written off. By virtue of being a "regular" Black, poor girl-I was a target for many traps in a non-insulated American ghetto environment. I had a hard journey learning to love myself and becoming empowered in the knowledge of who I am, my culture, who my people were, our hard-won triumphs. That happened through Black history and education courses I was introduced to at Cleveland State University.

Forcing people to homogenize and to conform to archaic ideas of who they are, or their worth is inhumane. Equity is concerned with honoring the humanity of every human being such that they can reach their fullest potential. Equity is about undoing the dominating worldview of elite white male patriarchy, which discounts, circumvents, and exploits the lives of diverse people for the enrichment of corporate elites, not the greater good. Equity is about creating a society where diverse people and their cultures and histories are not "othered" and erased. In fact, the history and culture of white male supremacy should not be erased. It should be taught as ideologically and politically motivated, because it is. It should not be taught to the exclusion of other people's cultures and histories. It is one thing for the state to be ill-informed. It is not. Scholarship has made clear how genocide, enslavement and settler colonialism have decimated and displaced people, their lands (even through redlining, gentrification and other practices), and sacrificed people's futures for the systems established by white male patriarchs, systems of social inequality, racism, and capitalism. These interlocking systems have wreaked havoc on our environment in so many ways. The state's promotion of SB 151 and SB 83 demonstrate blatant resistance to an equitable society, oppression of LGBTQ+, and people of color. These bills seek to halt social visions for equity and democracy won through civil rights movements. These bills institutionalize bigotry. They take us backward and heighten dissention and diminishment of human rights. We should be doing everything we can to value and heal people so we can build back better a world of social equity and wellness for all.