

From the director's desk: How and why do we teach white children about racism? It's important that parents and grandparents start these conversations, because if we don't talk to children about racism, they will be unprepared when they encounter it. They may be embarrassed or unsure and say nothing when one of their peers denigrates another. Or they may try to go along with racist behavior because they want someone to be their friend. Knowing what is right and being prepared to defend it are critical skills that grow with coaching.

May 28, 3 p.m. “But I Don’t Feel White” **In-person Workshop**

Join us for an in-person workshop on the library lawn co-led by Bonnie Betters-Reed and Glynis Hart.

Guided by the recent book by Fern L. Johnson and Marlene G. Fine, this collaborative workshop will provide a safe environment for participants to discuss experiences and explore issues surrounding race.

Chairs will be provided, but feel free to bring your own. Masks are recommended.

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To the Trustees of the Wilmot Public Library,

I like libraries. Correction: I *love* libraries. As a librarian, my mother surrounded me with books from a young age. Much of my childhood was spent in a library; after school, summer reading programs, then on to studying at the university library. I have endeavored, to the extent possible with the pandemic, to impart the same love of books and libraries to my children.

As a book lover and author of several articles extolling local libraries, including Wilmot Public Library (WPL), I never thought I would have to sit down and compose a letter expressing my sadness and utter disappointment at library programming.

My disillusionment with Wilmot Public Library began last summer (2020) with reading the following words from the Director in the WPL newsletter:

“How and why do we teach white children about racism?”

Please read this sentence twice. Is there a word that makes this very sentence racist? Yes, there is: “white.” The inclusion of this word implies that no other race can be racist. This is, in itself, racist. Wouldn’t it be wiser to teach all of our children, regardless of color, to be kind? To be aware of bullying behavior whether it is initiated due to hair, skin, eye color, social status or whatever the cause may be?

To be honest, I’ve have no inclination to step foot in the library since reading this sentence. However, I chose not to write or speak up at the time because I hoped this was a momentary lapse in judgement as a result of the racial chaos being spread throughout our country.

Unfortunately, after reading this month’s upcoming workshops (especially “But I Don’t Feel White” in person workshop), I am certain this this is not a lapse of judgement, but an intentional politicization of our public library and tax dollars for the purpose of perpetuating a social narrative that is both unproven and highly controversial: that white people are oppressors and inherently racist. I shouldn’t have to point out that this presupposition and propagation thereof is also Marxist and racist.

When Benjamin Franklin and his counterparts rather accidentally founded the first library which then grew into the lending systems we know and love today, it was not done with the intent of spreading a narrative. Rather, the purpose was to allow all people, regardless of income, to have access to books,

thereby improving the literacy and education of Americans. I believe that should remain the goal of libraries. There are many books that I find unappealing for a variety of reasons gracing the shelves of libraries. However, I suspect others might not like the books I keep in my home either. A library should be a repository of a wide variety of books on a wide variety of subjects (even books about race that I don't agree with). This arrangement is fine, as libraries (at least historically) have not made a point of selectively advertising certain themes. However, that has changed in both the promotion of books and library programming.

I have yet to see in the programming or the book recommendations anything about Christianity, Catholicism, immigrants or their impacts on the founding and establishment of this country. Please keep in mind that large numbers of your patrons are, indeed, Christians. Instead, programming and purchases are blatantly capitulating to the social justice narrative and pushing all manner of feminism (except authentic feminism), gender identity and racism.

For a moment, I will put aside my personal feelings about the programming and pivot to why I will not be taking my children to the WPL any time soon. I'll lay out the likely unfolding of my arrival upon seeing a sign that says "But I Don't Feel White" Workshop.

Child 1: "Mommy – how can you feel white?"

Me: "I'm not sure sweetie, but I suspect this has something to do with Black Lives Matter and the divisions being widened in our country."

Child 1: "But you told me that the color of our skin doesn't matter. It's our words and actions and how we treat others."

Child 2: "Am I white?"

You can use your imagination with young children, but I can tell you that within a few feet of entering the library, my children are now:

- 1.) Aware of their color of skin and
- 2.) Wondering if it is somehow indicative of how they should feel.

Congratulations. My young, innocent children have just become the victims of racism (assigned value based on the color of their skin) on their way to pick up Curious George.

I am not certain if this capitulation to mainstream narrative comes from a desire to appear "with it" or perhaps a genuine personal desire to make the world a better place, but the role of a public library is not to be the town moral compass, nor is it to presume and impose values on its patrons.

In the immortal words of Martin Luther King Jr, "*I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.*"

Incidentally, I do have four children and I too wish them to be judged by the content of their character and not by their “whiteness.” I truly believe that Dr. King would see WPL’s programming as regression for mankind. To him, all men were created equal; both black and white.

I respectfully ask for a response to this letter. I am not alone in this opinion and have already talked with several other families and can assure you, none of us have an intention of remaining silent any longer. Our request is simple: keep the racist, social justice material where we are able to access it *if and when* we want, rather than as a crusade which will force, and often inappropriately so, conversations with our children who are perfectly innocent and UNracist.

Sincerely,

Brianna Marino