



DEI Work is the Responsibility of Everyone, Not Just White Educators

By Educator Barnes – February 21, 2021

Diversity, equity, and inclusion work has gone into overdrive since the social justice protest happened last summer. At times, it seems like the work only needs to be done by white educators. This is not the case. We all have biases, and we all have blind spots. We cannot move forward until people acknowledge this point.

A few educators shared an [article](#) with me about a principal in Tennessee. The principal chose "All Lives Matter" as the theme for her school's Black History Month. The principal is Black. "Shawnta, how can a Black educator do this?" This incident did not shock me. It did disappoint me, but I know everyone is on a different part of the journey in this work. Unfortunately, some educators don't want to start.

The principal claimed she got the idea from a school mural that said, "Where Every Child Matters." She evolved that statement into "All Lives Matter" for Black History Month. Let me get really real for a moment. I do not understand how a Black person does not understand or know that "All Lives Matter" is a direct pushback to the Black Lives Matter movement. I do not understand how she would not have known this would be seen as offensive as a theme especially during Black History Month.

Nonetheless, this situation reminds us that we all have to do the work. DEI is not solely on the back of white educators.

At a bare minimum, people should run their ideas by someone who has a critical eye and who is not afraid to tell the truth before the ideas are executed. This will help avoid the harm and hurt that comes from these situations. Last, restoration must be part of the work. Missteps will happen, but there has to be a way forward. Hopefully, this principal will do more than change the theme and apologize; hopefully, she will critically look at the systems in place that led her to find herself in this situation in the first place.