



## A Reconsideration of ‘Too Many Graduations’

May 25, 2022 by Educator Barnes

Last weekend, I facilitated a training about embedding diversity, equity, inclusion, and access into all that an organization does to move beyond checklist actions. Whenever I facilitate a

training or a professional development, I share stories of my experiences and where I have failed to hit the mark. After the training, a participant thanked me for my transparency.

Life is a journey, and I try not to surround myself with only voices who believe everything that I believe. I am also willing to reconsider topics or, at the least, be open to nuance and various perspectives. I did this when it came to school supplies. First, I was 100% for community supplies, and then when COVID-19 happened, I shifted my stance.

I am at a crossroads again. In 2017, I wrote "Too Many Graduations" where I asserted that we are simply over-celebrating students. Specifically, I said, "I believe we are creating a culture of children who expect to be celebrated all the time for everything — being praised for doing what is expected." Like the COVID-19 pandemic shifted my thoughts on school supplies, it also was a factor in shifting my thoughts and beliefs about graduations outside of the end of high school or the end of college.

For the past couple of weeks, I have seen preschool, kindergarten, and 8th grade graduation pictures. Later this afternoon, my 5th grade twin sons will participate in a 5th grade graduation/celebration. My children as well as children across this nation and around the globe have been robbed of parts of their childhood. Activities were canceled and school was shifted online. Although teachers did the best they could, it just wasn't the same.

I am not against celebrating children, but I want children to have intrinsic motivation and be proud of completing milestones whether or not anyone celebrates them. I know this is a skill they must have to be a successful adult. Now, I believe we can push for both, and it does not have to be an either/or situation.

What pains me most is the fact that I had to revise this piece to note the privilege I have to be able to complain about or wrestle with these thoughts which now seem trivial. Parents whose children attended Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas had their school year come to an abrupt halt due to a school shooting that ended the lives of 2 adults and 19 children. These children were robbed of all future celebrations or graduations.

Personally, I am still pained and full of sorrow about the shooting in Buffalo, New York where people who are Black, just like I am, were targeted and killed because of their race.

I do not know what is going to happen tomorrow. I wish there would be no more school shootings and future days filled with sorrow. All I can do now is sit at my twin sons' 5th

graduation filled with gratitude that my husband and I can be there. Whether we have too many graduations does not really matter when you put it into the context and perspective of school shootings and a global pandemic. Hold your children tighter. Tell them you love them. Make every minute count.