



## Everyone Is Responsible for Teaching Black History

February 8, 2022 by Educator Barnes

When I was a school administrator, I was at one of our weekly administrator meetings and a fellow administrator asked me, “What should we do for Black History Month?” This bothered me to my core. The principal had one Black parent and one white parent. I suppose since both of my parents are Black, I was the perfect person to ask. The truth is that I was not. Black History Month should not be carried on the backs of Black people; it is everyone’s responsibility.

I paused and took a deep breath. Then, I shared how I could share ideas, but everyone should share ideas. I do not mind helping others learn and improve. I do not mind talking about Black history and heritage. However, I do mind when non-Black people choose not to research Black history on their own.

If an educator agreed to teach in a school where there are Black children, that educator has agreed to be knowledgeable about the history of Black people. Some people might refute this point, but I assert that is because they do not want to do the work or are uncomfortable with doing the work. That is an individual problem those people should address with a quickness. Let me go further. I also assert that if there are no Black children in a school, the teacher is responsible for knowing and teaching Black history.

Black history is American history. The reason there is a Black history month is that history books do not include Black history as it should be included. Black history is more than slavery and the Civil Rights Movement.

If you are a non-Black educator, before you reach out to your Black colleague or Black friend (and if the Black person wouldn't invite you to his or her home, you are probably not friends), you should do your own work first. This makes it a conversation rather than a knowledge hunt that you didn't compensate the person for.

At times, I have found Black history month exhausting because I feel like I am doing all the work. I want to work with other educators to ensure Black history is part of the curriculum in February and throughout the year. I do not want to be seen as a free resource that is ripe for the picking.