

Dear Ms. Doody,

I appreciate your prompt response to my letter of concern regarding the Wilmot Public Library propagating Critical Race Theory through its programming, particularly through the recent workshop “But I don’t feel white.”

In your letter, you stated that this was an invitation from the neighboring church centering on the book “Let’s Talk About Race.” However, you neglected to include the second line of the title: “a guide for white people.” Allow me to share with you direct text from letstalkrace.com (the book’s website):

“White privilege. White fear. White guilt. Ingrained, systemic racism is being revealed and yet many white people have been unable or unwilling to talk about it. The conversations need to start now. Let’s Talk Race confronts why white people struggle to talk about race, why we need to own this problem, and how we can learn to do the work ourselves and stop expecting Black people to do it for us.”

This is the very embodiment of Critical Race Theory, which divides groups by color and assigns characteristics based on that color while insisting, as the book insinuates, that the pigment of your skin can, inherently, make you an oppressor. This is racism in its most basic and pure definition. The definition of racism does not change or vary based on what group is being segregated and marginalized. Despite your statements to the contrary, the inclusion of this material into any programming promoted and coordinated by Wilmot Public Library is both advancing a social narrative and a racist one at that. The current political climate and media narratives may wish to convince us all otherwise, however swapping one form of racism for another does nothing to bring society together, but rather serves to widen the very social, cultural and racial divides that this “literature” would profess to explore.

While I’m glad that the Newsletter prompted you to read Ruby Bridges, allow me to share my perspective. Ruby Bridges was required reading for my elementary school and, rightly so I believe. It was one of my first exposures to the depiction of what it was like during the very tumultuous times of desegregation. Although many of the details have blurred over time, several scenes remain etched in my mind of what racism really looks like. It is a worthy read. That said, seeing the word “white” included in “How and why do we teach white children about racism?” stood out to me as a painfully ironic example of reverse racism. Frankly, if I hadn’t already read the book, the phraseology of the newsletter would have ensured that I never would have, as I find it difficult to accept recommendations under such blatant racist commentary.

I am glad that you were able to read some of my previous writings as it would serve to illustrate that I am very supportive of social diversity and find that all lives have inherent value and contributions to the greater good. As such, I have not included many of the worthy programs hosted by Wilmot Public Library in my expression of disappointment – only that which I find wholly inappropriate and divisive.

I also want to take this opportunity to clarify my reference of Christianity in my first letter. As you likely have concluded, I am Christian as are many patrons. As relevant as we might find library programming on a book such as 7 Secrets of the Eucharist or 40 Anti-Catholic Lies, I don’t believe that a public library

is the appropriate venue for such programs. A library exists as a service to its town, while a church is a social organization that one can choose to join or not. Since one church has asked to have joint programming, will this be extended to all religions and topics they wish to proffer? Will there be limits? How will that be decided? Again, however fascinating I may find it, it is not the role of the library to promote or promulgate ideology of any sector. Having the material available as a resource should someone ask to check it out is quite different than overtly promoting and advertising it for families and children to see.

My deep desire is that Wilmot Public Library will be a place that I feel comfortable taking myself and my family in the future; a desire echoed by several other families that have reached out to me. I love libraries. I love their sense of community and I love their promotion of the arts and culture. However, racism is not culture and should not be included in programming under the guise of a social justice education.

Perhaps you might be asking, "What exactly does she want?" Allow me the liberty of answering. My family and others are simply looking for the library to remain a place of neutrality, especially at a time when social and religious battles are playing themselves out daily in society. We should be able to read a library newsletter without seeing a reflection of controversial narratives (especially Critical Race Theory). We should be able to take our children to the library without having signage and book displays forcing conversations about race, gender and sex. Allow parents to search out these materials when we choose to have these conversations with our children. We know them best. What one child may be ready to address at 5, another may not be able to process until 10.

I sincerely hope that my children will be afforded the opportunities to visit libraries and explore as I was lucky enough to experience, which was at a time when sensitive titles were treated as such – made available but not showcased. And, because I believe that experience and the resources offered by libraries to be of importance, I will continue to pursue this issue as it would be a travesty and a great irony for any library to alienate its patrons and admirers while perpetuating a mission of false social inclusion.

Sincerely,

Brianna Marino