

Dismantling White Supremacy in Education Part 1

Why hugging out racism in education just won't cut it | Laura Mae Lindo | TEDxKitchenerED

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tifJEIYkuYI> (March 19, 2020 [22:26 Mins.])

Nigerian born Laura Mae Lindo is a member of (Ontario) Provincial Parliament for Kitchener Center and the first Black person elected at any level in the Waterloo region. As part of her official role, she has been listening to and addressing racism in education. In the Peel School District, she heard about a 7th grader “who says that every single day that they go to school they hear the N word.” She polls Black students at a conference and finds that half of them hear that every day at school. She describes the anti-Black racism that is rampant in schools, and efforts by students to address it. The mainstream news was not covering school racism; racism in schools is not newsworthy. However, schools and district were speaking out; she heard over and over, “racism is not welcome here,” but wondered, if racism isn’t welcome, “Where are the resources to stop it? What are we actually doing on the ground to demonstrate to Black, Brown and Indigenous students, to Black Brown and Indigenous educators... that racism isn’t welcome here?” She ponders the irony that the system spends far more time letting white people believe that racism is not welcome or is not a problem, than in letting students, families and staff of color know that we see “racism at crisis levels.”

We can’t address racism if we do not talk about the problem and listen carefully to the stories of Black, Brown and Indigenous people. “When there’s no sense of belonging and no sense of urgency, cycles of racial injustice continue.” Racism doesn’t happen in a vacuum. Look at the larger community, where there is racism happening there, it is in the schools as well. She describes how elders in communities—who have been activists for decades—are fighting for inclusion of all identities in the curricula. Conversely, many efforts by schools or systems are trying by “hugging out racism” through statements that indicate racism is unacceptable. These statements never actually address racism or take seriously the stories of Black, Brown and Indigenous students or staff. She calls on her largely white audience to mobilize their privilege—understanding that when Black, Brown and Indigenous do that, they are overly monitored and sidelined. She leaves the educators with this message: “You got this... When someone comes to you and they say, ‘I’ve had this experience, this is racist,’ you say ‘Sure, okay, how are we going to fix it?’... Remember that if you do not stand for something, you will fall for absolutely anything... Invest in education in a way that ensures that we take racism seriously as a crisis, we can and we will do better.”