

## **Black History Is Not Optional**

We, the undersigned Montessori leadership organizations in the United States of America, are responding to the [recent actions](#) of the leadership of the Maria Montessori Academy in North Ogden, Utah, which allowed parents to make the decision regarding their children's participation in Black History month activities, as well as the entitlement of the parents who demanded such an option be given.

### **We Name**

The contributions, experiences, and history of Black people in the United States have consistently been whitewashed, overlooked, forgotten, discounted, and erased. Black history must break out of the confinements of Black History month and be fully integrated into literature, art, science, music, history, and other disciplines. Allowing parents to opt out sets the clear and dangerous precedent that the rich and robust history of Black Americans (and by extension other marginalized Americans) can continue to be ignored.

While the decision has since been rescinded, the fact that parents felt entitled to opt out of Black History Month content is yet another painful reminder that Black voices are consistently silenced by White voices and that White privilege often manifests in threats, bullying, and intimidation.

### **We Confess and Commit**

When events such as this expose the prevalence of racism and White privilege, it is easy to call it out. It is harder to acknowledge that the situation in Utah is a mere reflection of the daily happenings within each and every one of our national Montessori organizations. We owe it to ourselves and our communities to be transparent about that and commit to liberatory change. While our organizations have taken on a number of initiatives around diversity, equity, and inclusion, it remains far too easy for our members and stakeholders to opt-out of anti-bias anti-racism training, examination of our materials and practices through an anti-bias lens, and engagement with and inclusion of BIPOC individuals and perspectives within our Montessori community.

### **We Invite**

It is tempting to simply vilify the parents and leaders at this school in Utah, but similar situations happen at schools that are not committed to an anti-bias anti-racist learning environment. Such a commitment means White people must do the continuous work to understand how their biases manifest and how they participate in racist systems. This work cannot be sidelined any longer and it never ends. We invite you to reach out to any of the undersigned organizations for assistance and collaboration as we ourselves continue to undertake this work. It is incumbent upon us as leaders and educators not only to educate children about the history, accomplishments, perspectives, and experiences of Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other marginalized people, but to walk with and educate parents as well when they request policy and practices that do not align with the educational goals and philosophy of Montessori education.

Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI)  
American Montessori Society (AMS)  
Association Montessori International/USA (AMI/USA)  
International Montessori Council (IMC)  
Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE)  
Montessori Educational Programs International (MEPI)  
Montessori for Social Justice (MSJ)  
National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS)