



## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF HAWAII  
STATE CAPITOL  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

March 12, 2014

Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi  
State of Hawaii, Department of Education  
1390 Miller Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Cease and Desist Implementing Teaching Tolerance Materials in DOE Schools

Dear Superintendent Matayoshi:

Thank you for taking the time to call me last week Thursday regarding my concerns about Perspectives for a Diverse America (PDA), a curriculum designed by the Teaching Tolerance (TT) section of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). Based on my conversation with you, I believe that you are being underserved by some of your staff, to the extent that you are not being adequately informed of the more troublesome aspects of Pono Choices, and now the TT and the PDA.

I would like to request the names of the SPLC representatives who visited our islands and offered to give Department of Education (DOE) teachers the \$250 stipends for attending the "Teaching Tolerance" training and for implementing SPLC materials in our schools.

For the following reasons, I am also requesting that the DOE cease & desist from implementing any TT or PDA materials or curriculum in DOE schools:

(1) The stipend arrangement that is accompanying the PDA curriculum has tainted the process.

As you know, I am concerned about the ethical propriety of both (1) the free SPLC training provided to teachers and (2) the \$250 stipend that the SPLC plans to provide to teachers for both attending the training and implementing the PDA curriculum in public schools.

I am unaware of any circumstance under which a private, nongovernmental entity can make such large, direct payments to teachers without running afoul of ethical standards. It would be equally troubling if the Tea Party or the conservative Focus on the Family were allowed to similarly influence public teachers and educators in their decision-making regarding curricula.

Representative Bob McDermott  
(House District 40 – Ewa, Ewa Beach, Ewa Gentry, Iroquois Point)  
415 S. Beretania Street, Room 330, Honolulu, HI 96813  
Phone: 808-586-9730 – Fax: 808-586-9738 – Email: [repmcdermott@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:repmcdermott@capitol.hawaii.gov)



(2) The TT and PDA materials reflect a one-sided view of life.

The curriculum gives us several different scenarios to ponder in its *Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education* booklet. In one scenario for grades K-2, a Christian girl speaks about her church camping trip; the scenario is treated as a positive one. In the very next scenario (again, for grades K-2), we see the following dialogue:

"What did you do last weekend?" Kevin asks Lisa.

"My moms took me to the zoo!" Lisa replies.

"You have two moms? Do you call both of them Mom?"

"I call them Mamma Kendra and Mamma Sam," Lisa says.

The curriculum assumes that children in grades K-2 will have the maturity to deal with lesbianism the way they would deal with different religions. And while Christians are given some welcome in grades K-2, matters are quite different by the time we get to grades 6-8, as this following *Critical Practices* scenario shows:

Patrick is being raised in a very strict and exclusionary fundamentalist Christian home.

Though he remains very devout, he has begun to reflect on some of the values and practices of his faith community. Troubled, Patrick talks to his history teacher, Mr. Sanderson. He has learned in class about all of the different belief systems that make up our country. He enjoys the company of friends from different religions and likes learning about their beliefs, but he worries that it makes him a bad Christian. Patrick and Mr. Sanderson talk through his questions, and Patrick decides that he can be a Christian and befriend and learn from people of different religions as well.

(Emphasis added.) Nowhere in the PDA and TT materials is any other religion stigmatized in such a manner. As I have noted before, the SPLC has already demonstrated a bias against conservative Christians by labeling the Family Research Council a "hate group"; the above example shows that their bias is not limited to just one targeted organization.

Among the recommended "central text" stories designed for children in grades K-2, we find *Z and Vielpunkt*, a story about homosexual penguins, which reads in part:

Every year, Z and Vielpunkt watched the other penguin partners get their nests ready for the eggs that one partner of each pair would lay. Z and Vielpunkt got their nest ready, too. They lined it with sticks and feathers, and they waited for an egg. But male penguins can't lay eggs, so Z and Vielpunkt's nest stayed empty.

I note that during last year's special legislative session on SB1, when opponents of that bill expressed concern that same-sex marriage would lead to the teaching of homosexuality in schools, you informed the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*:

For the record, the DOE does not have marriage as a lesson in its curriculum.



Clearly, the *Z and Vielpunkt* story is in violation of at least the spirit of your comment. Another "central text" is the K-2 story *10,000 Dresses*, about a boy named Bailey:

When Bailey woke up, she went to find Mother.

"Mom, I dreamt about a dress," said Bailey.

"Uh-huh," said her mother.

"A dress made of crystals that flashed rainbows in the sun!"

"Uh-huh"

"And I was wondering if you would buy me a dress like that?"

"Bailey, what are you talking about? You're a boy. Boys don't wear dresses!"

"But...I don't feel like a boy," Bailey said.

"Well, you are one, Bailey, and that's that! Now go away and don't mention dresses again!"

Later in the story, Bailey's wish to wear a dress is affirmed by a friend. While I support the rights of parents who wish to teach their own children about alternative identities, I find it presumptuous to assume that children as young as five are ready to be taught that it is okay to disobey their parents about clothing and to reject their natural body parts.

(3) Too many parents will want to opt-out—but the nature of the TT's teaching methods makes that impossible.

The TT's problems stretch further beyond self-contained stories and ethical scenarios. It is the very purpose of the TT to integrate an "anti-bias" framework into schools. The TT goes far beyond merely teaching that girls can be plumbers or that boys can be librarians; its "anti-bias" viewpoint attacks biology itself, as its article on *The Gender Spectrum* shows:

In the parlance of gender development, sex exists between your legs—it's your biology, your chromosomes, your anatomy. Gender exists between your ears—it's how you feel about yourself.

The above attitude is reflected in the supplemental content, *Want to ensure your classroom and school are inclusive of all families?*, which encourages teachers to:

Review your books and curriculum materials, and make sure they include many kinds of families, not merely those with one mom and one dad.

How many classic works of literature will be censored—or worse, "corrected"—in order to live up to this standard? Further, another portion of the TT website, *Toolkit for "Gender Spectrum"*, encourages a "gender neutral" day, even for grades 3-5:

Gender-fluid young people navigate a variety of gender-specific spaces throughout their day at school. From seating charts based on gender to dress codes and roles in school activities, we ask students to put themselves into boxes labeled "girls" and "boys" all the



time. To break away from these boxes and labels, consider hosting a gender-neutral day in your classroom.

TT and PDA materials are not traditional "curricula" in the sense that they start on day "A" and end on day "B", creating a clear situation in which parents can opt their children out. Given the plan for TT to radically transform the language and activities used in our schools, parents will have no idea how and in what capacity TT will be implemented in the daily classroom. How, then, will parents who adhere to a traditional view of sexuality be able to "opt out" of classwork when gender fluidity is routinely preached throughout social studies and English courses?

(4) Local parents can do it better

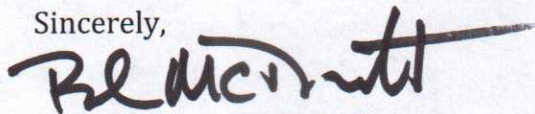
Hawaii, over the years, has become home to a vast array of people of numerous races and religions. Our lands have become more beautiful with Hawaii's unique brand of home-grown diversity. This racial and cultural harmony stems naturally when people realize that it is in their emotional, financial, and familial best interests to get along on these tiny islands in the middle of nowhere.

Ironically, however, the SPLC is an Alabama-based firm with little apparent historical ties to Hawaii. Does the SPLC understand how Frank DeLima can make jokes about "Glenn Miyashiro" and "haoles talking all night in Kailua", yet, without contraction, warmly embrace Japanese and Caucasian people? I doubt the SPLC has a clue. Yet, the SPLC is ready to judge and correct local families on their tolerance credentials—this is lopsided and frankly arrogant thinking.

As I did with Pono Choices, I will assert that local parents should and must be consulted not only on the implementation but on the development of any "tolerance" training. Their values—whether right, left, or center—must be taken into account. Thus, DOE complex areas should invite Hawaii parents and guardians to brainstorm and have direct input on how controversial issues regarding homosexuality, religion, and culture should be addressed in school curricula, materials, and lessons. Only then can true tolerance prevail.

I thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob McDermott", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Representative Bob McDermott

cc: All BOE Members, c/o BOE Chair Don Horner