



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 24, 2023**

**STATEMENT BY BARBARA R. ARNWINE, ESQ., PRESIDENT & FOUNDER OF THE  
TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE COALITION DENOUNCING THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED  
FLORIDA BLACK HISTORY TEACHING STANDARDS.**

“It is reprehensible to teach anyone that enslaved Africans benefited from slavery by gaining skills. This defies the historic fact that Africans were targeted for kidnapping and enslavement because of their high levels of skills as teachers, agriculturists, fishermen, horsemen, tailors, seamstresses, warriors, iron workers, wood carvers, medicine healers, pharmacists, herbologists/herbalists, chefs, artists, midwives, and so many other skills that were critically needed to build the economic power of the United States.” Barbara Arnwine, president, and founder of TJC, said. “Tellingly, there’s no mention of teaching how the unpaid labor and brutally enforced regime of slavery benefited the White slave owners and all of their employees and descendants for generations, including present day. Besides planting and harvesting, there were numerous other types of labor required on plantations and farms. Enslaved people had to clear new land, dig ditches, cut, and haul wood, slaughter livestock, and make repairs to buildings and tools. In many instances, they worked as mechanics, blacksmiths, drivers, carpenters, and in other skilled trades brought from their homeland not learned in captivity.”

These standards literally spit on the graves of those murdered during the Ocoee White-led race Massacre instigated to stop Black people from exercising their constitutional right to vote. To say that any actions Black people took to defend themselves and save their lives from this violent White mob is the equivalent of blaming a rape victim for forcibly resisting rape.

A month ago, TJC and partners held the 15-city Stay Woke, Florida! Rolling Protest which inspired and supported tens of thousands of Floridians to resist the ugly racist policies already burdening the state. We will join again with Floridians to resist the DeSantis Administration’s imposition of White Supremacist views, brainwashing, and indoctrination. We call for the immediate elimination of these disgusting and erroneous teaching standards.

Specifically, we call for organizations and people from all races to join together in supporting freedom schools and supplemental alternative teaching opportunities to promote the truth about the vicious, ugly, exploitative, and evil nature of American Slavery and American race massacres.

The only way America can ever achieve reparatory justice is by first teaching the truth. Truly, the truth shall set us free!

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*Founded in 2015 by Barbara Arnwine, president emeritus of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, the Transformative Justice Coalition is a nonpartisan 501 (c) 3 organization that seeks to be a catalyst for transformative institutional changes that bring about justice and equality in the United States and abroad. Learn more at [tjcoalition.org](http://tjcoalition.org).*