Dear Education Leader,

As a member of this community, I am deeply invested in the education of our youth.

Because they carry our future within them, we have a responsibility to ensure they are well-prepared to live and thrive in a diverse democracy.

This preparation should include a thorough understanding of our nation’s foundation. Sadly, a recent report by the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance project found that our schools are doing a poor job of teaching the history of American slavery, the important role it played in shaping the country and all the ways it continues to impact society today.

Teaching about American slavery is hard. But if we are to confront our continuing racial inequalities, we must do a better job of teaching this crucial piece of U.S. history to our students.

The reality is that most high school seniors graduate not knowing that slavery was a central cause of the Civil War. If slavery is mentioned at all in elementary school, it’s often in the form of “feel good” stories concerned with the institution’s end rather than its persistence and legacy. The enslavement of Native Americans, essential to the formation of all European colonies in what is now the United States, is completely ignored in both primary and secondary instruction on the subject. Meanwhile, teachers and experts agree that textbooks and state standards present an incomplete picture of American slavery and do not offer enough support to teach it more thoroughly.

I’m reaching out to you because I believe our K-12 school system can and must do better.

Teaching Tolerance provides crucial guidance for schools through its *Teaching Hard History* project. This collection of resources includes frameworks for teaching American slavery in grades K-12. It offers key concepts that teachers and curriculum designers everywhere can adopt, ensuring that students will graduate high school with a full understanding of how the world in which they now live is influenced by the past. Among other resources, Teaching Tolerance also offers a text library with more than 150 primary and secondary resources that teachers can use in their classrooms to present a diverse range of voices and experiences of enslaved people. Professional development tools for educators, including a podcast and videos to help fill in their own knowledge gaps, are available as well. These materials and more can be found at: [www.tolerance.org/hardhistory](http://www.tolerance.org/hardhistory).

Please consider supporting teachers in using these valuable resources by Teaching Tolerance. I also urge you to support other initiatives, including developing strong state standards for teaching American slavery, providing professional development for teachers and other measures to encourage robust teaching and learning on this subject in our classrooms.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,