

Maryland County Schools Start 'Black Lives Matter Week Of Action' To Encourage Pride Among Students

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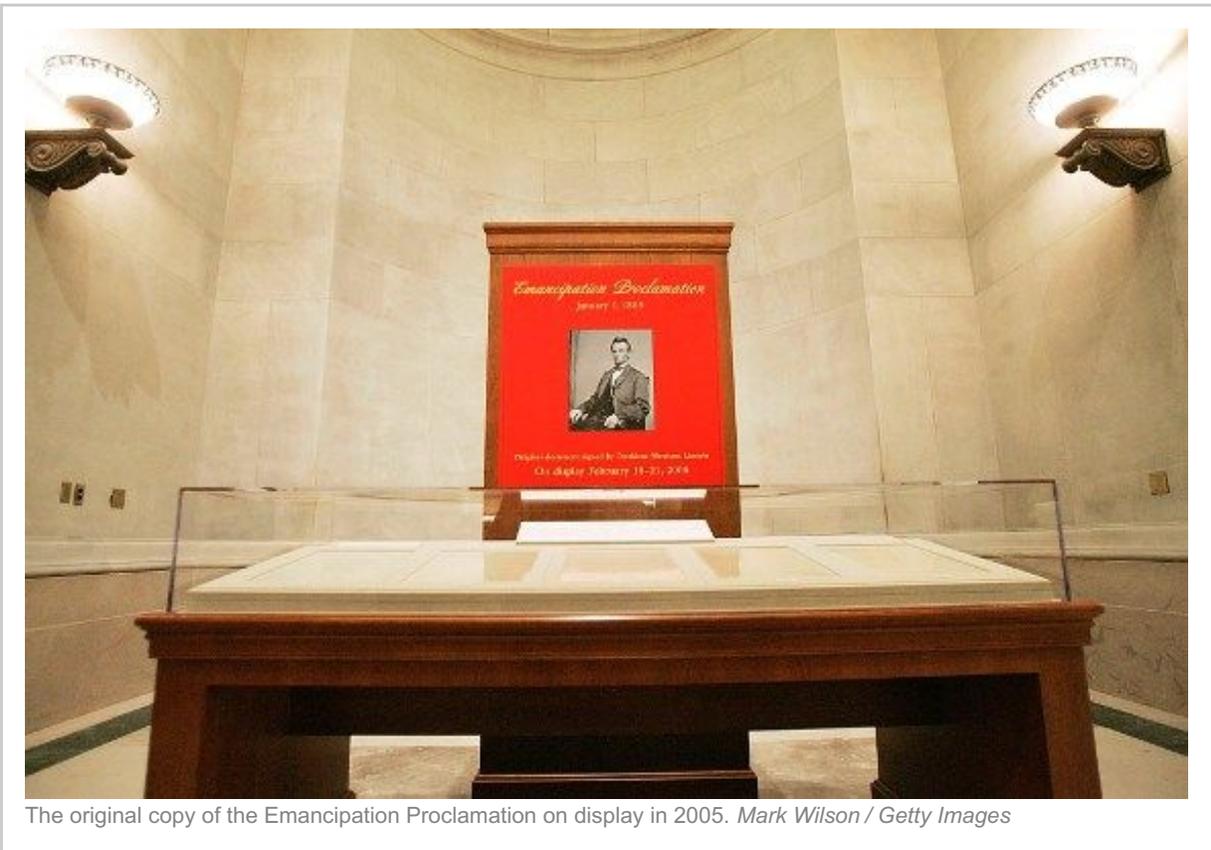
Raychelle Muhammad

A predominantly-black school district in Maryland has voted to start the “Black Lives Matter Week of Action in Schools.” For the week of Feb. 5-10, 2018, students in Prince George’s County are being encouraged to learn as much as they can about social justice through a variety of instructional lessons and other activities. Considering the current hostile racial climate, students will be encouraged to talk about their feelings and opinions on the subject.



Prince George’s County School Board member Raaheela Ahmed told *FOX 5 News* that in a district that is 60 percent black and 30 percent latino, it is important to give students an outlet to discuss what they see and hear daily on social media, in the news, and in their everyday lives. Ahmed believes that the observance is an idea whose time has come. The vote was unanimously in favor of the action.

“I think this is something that our students and our families see every day, especially being a largely minority population,” Ahmed said. “We have 60 percent of our students that are African American, 30 percent that Latino and this is something that they see and hear every day — on the news and day-to-day lives. It’s something that we felt was really needed and necessary at this time.”



The original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation on display in 2005. *Mark Wilson / Getty Images*

Although the week of action is inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, there is no connection to the organization. It is actually part of a nationwide movement. *Teaching for Change* says that there are three demands they are making with the intent of improving the culture and learning environment in the schools. They want to end zero tolerance, replacing it with restorative justice, hire more black teachers, and mandate black history and ethnic studies at all levels in grades K-12.

The movement kicked off in Seattle, but it has since grown to include educators in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, D.C., Detroit, New Jersey, Chicago, and others. While the week of action is set to last six days, it is intended to be a launching pad for conversations and activities that will continue year-round. Teachers and administrators in every participating school will determine how the activities will be rolled out to their students. In the D.C. area alone, over 100 schools totaling some 128,000 students are on board.

Congrats to Vy Duong, a student in our College Access Program, for winning national logo design competition for Black Lives Matter at School!. Her design will be featured on all materials for Black Lives Matter Week of Action <https://t.co/tMW19wzkmZ>

— Philadelphia Ed Fund (@PhilaEdFund) February 2, 2018

Student school board member Amany Paige sees the week of action as more of an exercise in increasing knowledge of self, as well as self-love, as opposed to making a political statement. Paig told *FOX 5 News* that this national observance is about understanding and embracing black culture.

“I don’t believe it is political,” Paige said. “I believe it is a movement to encourage minorities and African American students to be proud of who they are and to embrace who they are because we live it every day. I think that it is important to understand our culture and understand where we are coming from in order to be productive citizens.”

Join @BMOREcaucus to bring Black Lives Matter Week of Action into our schools! Find classroom curriculum resources & participate in events centered around demands for racial justice: <https://t.co/fFsAEouOjm> pic.twitter.com/pQ0U08zYtr

— Teacher Supply Swap (@TeacherSwap) February 4, 2018