

"Racial justice means that the barriers to justice, access to education, housing, employment and public services are removed and remedied to people of color and indigenous peoples. As a white person, I have not experienced racial bias, but I have witnessed myriad small and large barriers for people of color to these institutional resources and supports that, for white, folks, is an assumed resource. Most notably, I have witnessed the stark difference between white folks view of Vermont as their state, a white state, and the view and experience of people of color that Vermont is, as one friend puts it, "as dangerous feeling to me today, as my father experienced traveling to the south in his youth." This view means that every example of how the intentions of legislation not enacted, every student of color expelled from public schools here, every data point that confirms racial disparities in policing, means Vermont is relegated to the terrible presence of white supremacy. In this sense, Vermont has a lot to do in order to counter this historical and current reality. This state will not have an economic renaissance until these issues are resolved and we can confidently report that we have the mechanisms in place to respond to bias, and shift this state from norms and attitudes that limit our growth and welcome to all. This bill means that the attention needed will be paid to the changes we MUST make in our state to end generations of racial norms that reflect racism and segregation as good things. We know they are not. Let's be proactive to counter that history. Say yes to these bills moving forward."

Victoria Pearson, East Montpelier