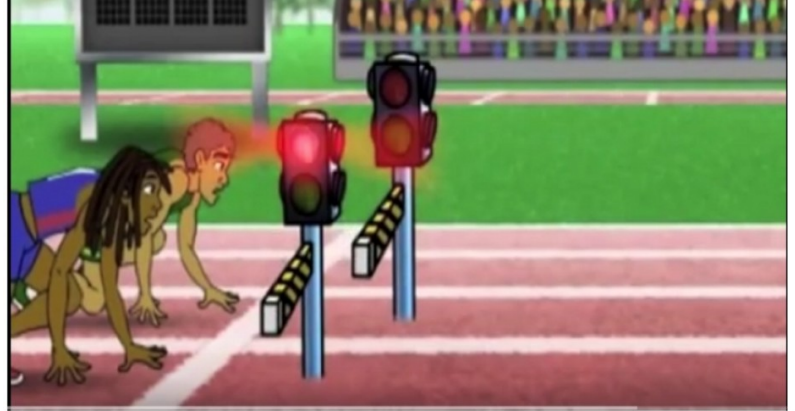




## Virginia HS Cuts Controversial Race Video After Backlash From Parents

Glen Allen High School in Henrico, Virginia, provoked ire from parents after it showed an animated film to its students during two assemblies for Black History Month that portrayed white runners at a significant advantage over black runners. Parents sharply criticized what they dubbed as “white guilt,” prompting the school board to cut the video from its materials and the superintendent to admit that the video was likely not the best way to open up a dialogue about race.



“While we as educators do not object to difficult and constructive conversations about American history and racial discourse past and present, we understand why many people feel this video in particular was not the best way to deliver such an important lesson,” Henrico County Superintendent Patrick Kinsaw said in the statement.

Ravi K. Perry, an associate professor of political science at Virginia Commonwealth University and President of the National Association for Ethnic Studies, told the *Washington Post* that he worked closely with school officials to prepare the presentation wherein the video was shown. He stated that the controversial video was just four minutes of a 30-minute presentation.

Perry asserts that the overall purpose of the presentation was to give students the opportunity to “engage American history through the lens of African Americans and other marginalized groups” and to acknowledge that “we all have multiple identities.”

But critics contend that there were better ways to do that than to select such a divisive video.

The animated video, entitled “The Unequal Opportunity Race,” features two white runners and two black runners preparing for a race. When the race begins, the two black runners are faced with numerous obstacles, ranging from literal blockades and rainy weather, to historical blockades in the form of words flashed on screen, such as “Dred Scott,” “Manifest Destiny,” “Genocide,” and “Segregation.”

Meanwhile, the white runners are displayed carrying dollar signs that continue to increase in size in an effort to highlight “wealth disparities,” which is also flashed across the screen in case the point was not made clear enough.

As the black runners move through the race track, words such as “standardized tests” and “poor schooling” flash on screen and are represented by obstacles including a shark tank and a pit in the ground in which one of the runners falls and becomes stuck.

Other obstacles represented in the video include a shortened lifespan, racial profiling, housing segregation, and “school to prison pipeline.”

All the while, the white male runner is shown on a fast track with the words “privilege” displayed



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 12, 2016

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prominently. The white female runner, though “privileged,” is not quite as lucky as the male runner. She makes it to the end of the race without the assistance of the fast track.

The video ends with the message message, “Affirmative action helps level the playing field.”

The video was created the African-American Policy Forum, co-founded by Luke Harris, who told the *Washington Post* that the video was intended for “elementary and secondary schools or in college studies courses.”

“We found that the video has a huge impact on the people that we’re showing it to,” said Harris, who is also an associate professor of political science at Vassar College. “Most of us know very little about the social history of the United States and its contemporary impact. It was designed as a tool to throw light on American history.”

But at Glen Allen High School, the video has not been well-received by students or by parents. The *Washington Post* reports that the school reportedly received a number of phone calls and e-mails objecting to the video.

Don Blake, whose daughter was present at the school assembly in which the video was shown, said that his daughter should not have been made to sit through that video. “They are sitting there watching a video that is dividing them up from a racial standpoint,” Blake opines. “It’s a white guilt kind of video.”

Fox News reports that school board chairwoman Michelle Ogbun issued a statement in which she apologized to those who were offended and indicated that administrators throughout the district have been asked not to use the video. “The Henrico School Board and administration consider this to be a matter of grave concern,” she said. “It is our goal to prevent the recurrence of this type of event.”

“In addition, steps are being taken to prevent the use of racially divisive materials in the future,” Ogburn added.



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