

HB7082-Tamara Alexander

Dear Members of the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Tamara Alexander. I am a student at Central Connecticut State University from West Haven and I am a member of SEJ (Students for Educational Justice) who supports Bill 7082 with SEJ's amendments. This bill is important to me because I have witnessed first hand the injustice of the educational system during my K-12 experience.

Before high school, I went to Harry M. Bailey middle school. My 8th grade teacher, Ms. Blanco, had a strong personal vendetta against Christopher Columbus and was the first one to tell me that he did not discover America. She was the first one to put a crack in the window of delusion. It shocked me because he wasn't portrayed as a heroic man with his very own contagious jingle that states, "...he sailed the ocean blue in 1492". In reality, he was a man who caused the deaths, murders, rapes, and enslavement of millions of people. I found out about the horrific effect of Christopher Columbus's voyage later on in my sophomore year of high school. The history books nor Ms. Blanco never dove deep enough into the topic to scoop out the truth and serve it on the platter.

For me, the sugarcoating of the lies didn't stop at Christopher Columbus. It made its way into the telling of African American history as well. I was always told that slavery happened, that it was bad, and here are the typical heroic black figures who survived that "rough" period in American history. As a black woman, I was taught that MY history began at slavery and ended with the civil rights movement. There was no magnifying of the gruesome killings of MILLIONS of African Americans or talk about the history of Africa BEFORE European explorers came to town. I was never taught the events that led up to people of color still facing institutional racism till the present day.

*The History of Race and the History of Racism in the United States* should be a part of the curriculum because we need not deprive anyone of the truth. Young people of color should know about influential figures such as Ida B. Wells, Thurgood Marshall, Dr. Charles Drew, and Sojourner Truth. Second, it would mean a lot to many kids in the long run. If you go to a classroom that has a majority of young people of color and ask where they came from then the majority of African American students probably wouldn't know. I was one of those students and am still trying to figure it all out today. So please, educate these kids so they can grow up into adults who are ready to face racial inequality head on. It only takes one individual to start a ripple in the community and that person is you.

Sincerely,

Tamara Alexander