

HB7082 - Briyana's testimony

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

My name is Briyana Mondesir and I am a former student of Cooperative Arts and Humanities High school. I currently attend college in Lexington, Virginia. I support Bill 7082, an act concerning the inclusion of African-American studies, with SEJ's amendments.

Racism and race have played formative roles in the construction of the United States and our treatment towards Black and Brown peoples. However, when I was in elementary and middle school, all I knew was that this curriculum that I was taught didn't reflect my life or people who looked like me. Besides being taught just about Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Benjamin Franklin, I was being taught that there were few black success stories and a plethora of white ones. I believed I had to be white male in order to succeed. Since I was not, I thought I was on the track to failure.

This mentality came from a student who is the daughter of Haitian immigrants to America. Beginning in 1791, Haiti raged a successful slave revolt and insurrection against their white oppressors. In 1804, Haiti became the first Black nation in the world. Their triumph over white supremacy and the mistaken inadequacy of Black and Brown peoples, inspired revolts and revolutions around the world, including the United States. However, I only learned small morsels of this information before I took the time to research this history in high school.

I believe Black and Brown children are hungry to learn a full history filled with the incorporation of Black and Brown people, just like it occurred. It is time to stop pretending that the white perspective is the right perspective, that the white perspective is the full perspective, and that the white perspective is the whole truth perspective. Although many history teachers are unprepared, and potentially unwilling, to delve into these harder facets of American history, it is a crime to refuse to not teach students. The effects on them are debilitating, disheartening, and devastating. As well as causes a rift between students of color and their education. For when people don't see themselves represented in their education, then they feel that it isn't their education. Black and Brown students should not have to wait, like me, until they're in college to take African-American or Latinx history. They should already know about the race riots that occurred around this nation in the 20th century, the effect that WWI and WWII had on the struggle for equal rights, and Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer to begin with.

History teachers should be given the tools to better instruct their students about these historical facts through anti-racism trainings and additional resources.

However, we cannot talk about the full American history without delving into the history of the formation of race and the perpetuation of racism and anti-blackness in our country. Without these parts included, we will continue to feed all students a lie. This lie is hindering all students, which is why all students should know about Black and Brown peoples' history and racial tensions that have existed, and continue to exist, between the races.

Our modern world is quickly advancing and changing. Let us not continue to have our education be the one to lag behind. We can begin with this bill with SEJ's amendments.

Thank you!