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Testimony in support of **House Bill 7082: An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African-American Studies in the Public School Curriculum**

By Harald M. Sandström, PhD, Emeritus Associate Professor, Politics & Government, University of Hartford, and Director of its African-American Studies program for 16 years.

Distinguished Chair and Members of the House Education Committee, with a special bow to my representative the Honorable Bobby Gibson.

I am very pleased to appear before you in *strong* support of Raised Bill 7082. I was privileged ~ especially as a white American born in Sweden! ~ to serve as Director of the University of Hartford's African-American Studies program (now the Africana Studies Program) for more than a decade and a half before I retired in 2010. I'll spare the Honorable Members the story of how that came to be.

My teaching in that program focused on the Anglophone West Indies, where I did my doctoral research on the Black Power movement ~ yes, there's a story there, too! ~ and comparing that movement to its expression in the United States and South Africa. My experience in that African-American Studies program reinforced to me the **profound** importance of teaching our young about the proud history and culture of African-Americans and of all black and brown people in our great country. It is beyond my comprehension why we are even discussing whether that needs to be an important component of the social studies curriculum in Connecticut public schools.

Let me address what I suspect will be one of the strongest arguments against this proposal. In our current system of school funding, we have developed *de facto* segregation. This is hardly debatable by now. Many parents of children in predominantly Caucasian towns will object to their children being forced to learn about the background of students of color. Yet the history books of black and brown students are replete with Caucasian history. Even teaching about the Holocaust often neglects to acknowledge that **the Middle Passage and slavery WERE a holocaust, as the slaughter in Rwanda in Central Africa and Apartheid in South Africa are now also seen to have been.**