

March 5, 2019

Connecticut House Democrats  
State Representative Bobby Gibson  
Legislative Office Building, Room 4022  
Hartford, CT 06107-1591

**RE:** Bill No. 7082 - An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African American Studies in the Public-School Curriculum

Dear Representative Bobby Gibson:

I am writing in support of Bill No. 7082. I find it imperative to include African American Studies in the Public-School Curriculum. It is crucial that public schools teach the history, culture, and politics of Black people from the United States which will serve to eradicate many stereotypes. The legacy of slavery needs to be taught in public schools so succeeding generations can be exposed to slavery, lynching and segregation and thereby be motivated to say, "never again." The students in public schools need to learn about it and they need to learn that slavery was used to justify and reinforce racism and allowed it to become endemic.

"Two centuries of these stereotypes and pseudo-science have arguably left a deep psychological scar on society - both in white perceptions of Black people and the responses of some Black people to that projection." [Ken Barnes, president of 100 Black Men of London] Black is associated with rap music, with being lazy and uninterested in society and these are traceable back to the racism of slavery. This is one of the most challenging arguments of the legacy debate: how much can the racism of the past be blamed for the racism, culture or inequalities of today? These generations-old stereotypes can be seen most starkly in the disproportionately poor educational results of Black kids when compared with other groups. There is an expectation of failure for Black children in schools. And it comes down to how they are historically perceived by the school system. Society's continuing image of Black men affects the way teachers address their children in class. It is a vicious circle.

African American Studies will impact my district, my county, my state by enlightening students on the legacy of slavery. So, when these students see the Black Lives Matter Movement, people kneeling for justice or the resistance to voter suppression, they will come to grasp the reason behind it. As a member of the NAACP Windham/Willimantic Branch for which Leah Ralls is the President, Ms. Ralls reaches out to the public schools during Black History Month. The Education Committee that Ms. Ralls has established then puts together a program to bring into the schools. While speaking in many of the schools, many students have admitted to using the derogatory "N" word and have indicated that they have no idea where the word originated from. Many of the students are oblivious to African American Studies, they don't even realize that it was the civil rights movement decades of long struggle that led to the implementation of many of the Amendments in the U.S. Constitution [the supreme law of the US].

African American Studies should be part of the public-school system so that students learn about the legacy of slavery and how the echoes of a terrible past can still be heard today. As Bryan Stevenson '85 said "slavery did not end in 1865, it simply evolves, it turns into decades of terrorism and lynching, and our courts and systems of government tolerate it."

Slavery is a history that's there and should most definitely be part of the school system's curriculum! I strongly support this bill!

Thank you so much for you time and attention!

Sincerely,

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