

Members of the Committee,

My name is Alicia di Leo. I am a 1989 graduate of the University of Connecticut and have lived full-time in the state since 1994.

I write to you today in strong support of HB7082, An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African American Studies in the Public School Curriculum. Why is such an Act necessary? For the simple answer that has been known for centuries: history is written by the victors, by the powerful, by the ones who control the narrative. For far too long, American History as it is currently taught has equaled White History. Contributions by people of color have been ignored except for a select few which are held up as proof of the equity of our history curriculum. But I would implore you to recognize that a few school days each year devoted to Frederick Douglas or Maya Angelou simply mocks the idea of equity of representation.

It should go without saying that ongoing, frank, age-appropriate teaching of the inhumanity of America's slave past is crucial in understanding how America was created and how those insidious roots play an active role in our national life today. It is still possible – in 2019 – to find textbooks in circulation that perpetuate the myth of the benevolent master and the well-cared for slave.

American history as it is currently being taught treats the narrative of people of color as separate and distinct from the standard curriculum. It is treated as an “added on” element, rather than woven into the cloth of the American narrative. The concept of “separate but equal” was exposed as a lie by the Supreme Court in 1954. To shunt African American Studies into an elective option or as a special event every February continues to give life to that discredited notion. African American history is not a subset of American history. It *is* American history.

I thank you for your time.

Alicia di Leo  
Ellington, CT