Testifier’s Name: Victoria Fennell


It Is Time for Our Story to Be Told

I am testifying in support of Representative Brandon McGee’s proposed bill, House Bill 7082, An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African-American Studies in the Public School Curriculum.

Since the importation of African slaves to the United States in 1619 (to Jamestown, VA), there has been a misconception that the only contributions African Americans have made to America was through slavery. Slavery was a commercial transaction (funded by many nations) which inflicted brutal and dehumanizing conditions, with after effects (legal Jim Crow) that lingered for many years.

From the front-lines in a segregated (now integrated) military—fighting for freedom in their own country (Battle of Bunker Hill, Spanish American, Civil War, etc.) or in foreign lands (World Wars I, II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, etc.), ours is a history with a commitment to a nation that has not always been loyal to us. However, we have changed the very fabric of this country - through landmark legal decisions that ultimately benefits all Americans, discoveries in medicine, science, technology, and many other fields including all forms of public service - the presidency of the United States. The inclusion of this curriculum should not be a finger-pointing at what was done to a race of people. Rather, it should provide an accurate picture of the contributions made. Sadly, many young people of all races have a very limited exposure to, and knowledge of African American history, except for twenty-eight (28) days in the month of February once a year.
Other states have included African American studies as curriculum in their school systems, the closest being New Jersey. The Amistad Bill, was signed into law in 2002 by Governor James McGreevy with the establishment of a commission (the same name) to “promote wider implementation of educational programs regarding the African slave trade, slavery in America, and the many contributions of African Americans have made over the course of United States history.” [i] It is my hope that Connecticut will follow suit, working with many qualified individuals from academia, community leaders, historical organizations and others to make this a reality.

When we learn about each other’s history, we understand each other better.

Thank you very much.

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