

Tristan Ward

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Our society is one that is stricken with polarization and animosity amongst communities, which is all supported by the demonization of marginalized communities by mainstream media. A 2016 study looked into this issue by examining portrayals of unarmed black men who died during encounters with law enforcement in news articles. It was found that the articles tended to claim the victim's activity before their death was "suspicious", or would even mention prior convictions that were no longer relevant (Smiley). Thus, fostering a society built on the values of inclusivity and diversity is crucial, and since current students are the next generation entering our society, our schools have one of the biggest parts to play in creating an inclusive society.

An important concept to remember when covering topics like diversity is the fact that people are actually not too different from one another, and the differences we have *allow* for diversity, which enriches more than it divides. Schools, one of the primary avenues through which attitudes are developed, need to explain why diversity and inclusivity are important and actively ensure all students feel comfortable and their voices adequately heard. This can be done by allowing opportunities like affinity groups for students of color or a Gender-Sexuality Alliance chapter, while simultaneously having conversations and events about diversity and inclusivity.

The history of the United States is a history plagued by the severe mistreatment of marginalized people. However, our history curriculum tends to water this down and fails to highlight minorities that were innovators or catalysts for change in our society. For example,

according to an article written in *the Atlantic*, “textbook publishers tend to “mystify” the reasons for the South’s secession largely “because they don’t want to offend school districts and thereby lose sales.” Some of the most widely used history textbooks today even insinuate that the South’s motivation for secession was simply to protect states’ rights—not to preserve slavery” (Wong). Fortunately, due to the hard work of local grassroots organizations, Connecticut has taken steps to make history more inclusive by enacting legislation that requires high schools to have African American and Latinx studies courses. According to Governor Ned Lamont, "Increasing the diversity of what we teach is critical to providing students with a better understanding of who we are as a society and where we are going" (“Governor”). This is extremely important because not only are we a step closer to having a curriculum that reflects the true American story, but students of color finally have the opportunity to learn about the contributions of their ancestors. Although the struggle to get the bill passed was extremely crucial, drafting a curriculum that reflects the rich history of the entire American experience and *requiring* all students to learn it is even more important. As Douglas Mccrory, a member of the Connecticut State Senate, noted, “This legislation that we have here requires school districts in the State of Connecticut to offer the class...we should require this class, not just offer it” (Gellman). There is no excuse for our school system having part of history be optional to learn.

Schools teaching an accurate narrative of history and, having conversations about these subjects, and allowing affinity groups and safe spaces to exist are good ways to alleviate the divisions between people. However, these are only first steps. It will take a substantial amount of work to create a society that truly values diversity and inclusion.

Works Cited

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