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My name is Amaya Moore, I am 15 years old, I live in Eliot, Maine, and I am going to make a case for why this bill should pass.

The only Black history I've been taught in school was how Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat and how MLK gave a great speech. I learned that slavery happened, but that the extent of it was picking cotton in southern fields while white people cared for the Africans they enslaved by providing food, water, and shelter.

My US History textbook dehumanized people who look like me, they treated my ancestors as commodities, describing the middle passage as a mere exchange of "molasses, spices, and slaves". It was filled with misinformation such as, "the KKK targeted white and Black people", which invalidates the torment this organization has incited against generations of Black Americans. It describes heroic Black people such as Nat Turner as "a rebel slave", a murderer of women and children, not a hero who led a revolution. It would pain me to take notes, re-writing their lies into my notebook, re-reading those words in my handwriting. When it came time to take tests, I was torn between writing the truth, and writing the lies that would get me a good grade.

Whenever I asked questions about Black history, my teachers would either shrug, or share false information. In 8th grade my teacher asked the class to envision "what we would be doing in the 1700s" without giving a second thought to the fact that I would have been separated from my family, sold, enslaved, and possibly raped. What he really meant was "what would you be doing in the 1700s as a white person". The current education system asks children of color to transform ourselves into white people so we can fully understand and appreciate their history. I shouldn't have to check my identity at the door of my school.

Research has proven that nurturing positive racial identities is critically important to student achievement. Sharif El-Mekki writes, "Colorblindness forces a default white paradigm and pedagogical framework on millions of diverse students."

Most Maine teachers are completely out of touch with Black students and our history. They ignore our heritage, violate our hair, use offensive language, and allow students to use the N word. Black students have to endure school while our white counterparts can just show up and learn.

The education system in Maine fails children of color. That is why this bill is so important. Everybody should have the chance to learn the full telling of US history and not the whitewashed, sugar coated version of it. Our ancestors built this country and yet we don't even get to learn about it.

In closing I would like to share with you a piece of American history you probably don't know about. The 1811 Slave Revolt, which is the largest African uprising on American soil. In Louisiana, over 500 Africans revolted against plantation owners and US troops. Although the revolt ended in the death of many Africans, it was pivotal, inspiring enslaved Africans in Haiti to revolt and win their freedom.

Historian Leon Walters writes,

"The sacrifices of these brave women and men were not in vain. The revolt reasserted the humanity and redeemed the honor of the people. The uprising weakened the system of chattel slavery, stimulated more revolts in the following years and set the stage for the final battle, the Civil War that put an end to this horrible system. The children and grandchildren of the rebels of 1811 finished the job in the Civil War. Louisiana contributed more soldiers - over 28,000 - to the Union Army, more than any other state.

These women and men of 1811 represented the best qualities of people of African descent. They were people of exceptional courage, valor and dedication. These were women and men who put the interest and welfare of the masses above their own personal desires. These were people who understood that the emancipation of the masses is a precondition for the emancipation of the individual." (Waters, 2013)

African American history is American history. By ignoring the rich history and inspirational contributions of African Americans, we're not only doing 1.3 percent of Mainers a disservice,

but we're withholding important U.S. history from 100 percent of Mainers.