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Gorham
LD 2001

Senator Jackson, Representative Ross, and the members of the Maine Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, I am Logan Vail, a senior at Gorham High School who attends Bible Believing Baptist Church. I'm doing an Extended Learning Opportunity with the Christian Civic League of Maine and am in the Maine Army National Guard. Most importantly, I am a concerned citizen who plans to be seriously involved with issues I care about as I enter into adulthood.

I would first like to concede that American history classes as of now do not adequately teach a lot of the topics that would be covered in such a class as African American Studies. Our history classes in general are quite lacking in a lot of areas. I don't think the solution to that, though, is making classes focusing on every people group and/or topic that wasn't represented well enough. Especially when they get so politically charged on issues that are genuinely up for debate in modern America, like the impacts of systemic racism in the year of our Lord 2024. It makes more sense to me to improve upon the many history classes that we already have. I don't see the limiting principle to the alternative. In an ideal world, the ins and outs of every topic and people group would be common knowledge to all students, but we can't make individual classes for all of those lacking areas. We have limited time and resources in the school year; improve what we have and do the best we can.

Similarly to, hopefully, most people, I am very concerned about the increasing racial divides and tensions in our culture. I say they are increasing based on the state of race relations in the 2000s versus in modern times. I've linked two resources that back up that claim, but I think it's common knowledge at this point based on personal experiences in our own lives and those of people we know. Anyhow, it seems to me that the more we talk about race as a factor differentiating people, the more we use words like 'blackness' and phrases like 'white privilege', and phrases rooted in marxism regarding the oppressor classes and the oppressed, the more we are pushing these divides further, whether we intend to or not. As a student I can personally testify to this fact: the more we create this divide along the lines of the victimized and the victimizers, the more tension between us there is. The Civil Rights Team, Black Lives Matter flags, Progress Pride flags, the Black Student Union, the advocacy by teachers for the view that systemic racism and white supremacy are prevalent in 2024, etc are all examples of things that aren't helping, but exasperating the problem.

Stop talking about race in this fashion. We are on an equal playing field, just look around you. The reason certain people in the country and especially in Maine, black or white, do well or do poorly in life, has little if anything to do with racism of any kind. The main problems facing the African American community, namely crime, drug use, and fatherlessness, have all gotten worse since the Civil Rights Movement. We ought to use history as a guide, and when there was blatant and obvious anti-Black racism in the American system, like 100 years ago, these issues were not so prevalent as they are now. As racism has been dealt with more and more, which I hope you agree that it has been (the African American Studies curriculum seems to), these problems have not been. Just like a lot of other issues, divides among peoples, along the lines of race or any other factor, come down to family and individual choice.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/interactives/public-opinion-on-race-relations-1990-2016/>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/04/09/how-americans-see-the-state-of-race-relations/>