

Exhibit 7

“real world.” I believe that it is important to discuss current events and real-world topics in the classroom because it exposes students to society, by showing them the good, the bad, and the ugly.

4. For example, in my English and Sociology classes, we were able to debate critical issues, like maternal and reproductive health, in the classroom by conducting our own research, analyzing statistics, and crafting our own persuasive arguments. Exercises like these not only addressed the historical context for the social issues we were discussing, but also addressed the unique and intersectional experiences of marginalized communities, seeking to find solutions to the problems they experience. In these courses, my teachers encouraged us to think about matters from other perspectives, and discover and unpack the root causes to issues in order to find an appropriate solution. It is through this method of learning that I have been challenged to think most critically about the world around me.
5. I find my education to be most enjoyable when my teachers use culturally relevant material. I believe that it is important for all students to have access to readings by authors who are Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) because it helps to introduce additional perspectives into the classroom that vary from the traditional white-washed materials.
6. I find it most difficult to connect with subjects and materials when texts lack depth or nuance, or adequate representation of historically marginalized communities. When students are only taught from the perspective of people in positions of power and privilege, who dictate the narrative and the ideas brought forth, oftentimes the text encompasses a blind-spot that goes unchecked—that particularly paints a tone-deaf depiction of BIPOC and other historically marginalized communities.
7. I believe that in order to know where you are going, you have to first know where you have been, and you cannot do that without also understanding your past. This is why I think it is important that all students be provided with access to historically accurate and complete information that—may at times cause them to feel uncomfortable—in order for them to be prepared to address the real-world issues and challenges they might face in the future.
8. Unfortunately, our curriculum predominantly discusses the perspectives of white males, rather than that of other diverse communities. For example, while I am interested in learning more about topics like Native American and Black history in school, our teachers rarely touch on them, even during Black History Month and Native American Heritage Month. While the Oklahoma Standards say we are supposed to learn about the Trail of Tears

in school, we barely discuss it in the classroom beyond a surface level.

9. Even in a predominantly Black school district such as Millwood, students are graduating with a limited knowledge of people who look like them and that have made influential contributions to society. It is a disservice to Black students to only teach them a limited list of Black figures such as Harriet Tubman, Fredrick Douglas, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr., when the list of Black luminaries, authors, and leaders is substantially longer.
10. I am especially interested in learning about the histories of BIPOC communities in a more historically accurate manner. When my English 4 teacher, Mr. Crawford, asked us to share about “topics you are interested in learning more about,” I responded that I would like to learn more about systemic racism and critical race theory.
11. I wanted to learn more about these topics because these are the issues that students, who look like me, are experiencing both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, statistics show us that racial discrimination is a problem in every aspect of American life from interactions with law enforcement to the school to prison pipeline. This is why I think it is important for all students, but especially BIPOC students, to have access to this kind of information because it helps them make sense of the ways in which racial discrimination in society can impact their lives.
12. I also believe it is important to discuss these topics in order for all students to understand that oppression is something that is experienced on a structural level, rather than just on an individual basis, so that they can begin to think critically about how to combat it when they come across it.
13. Though I believe that it is important for all students to learn about systemic racism, and other similar topics, I believe it is especially important for high school students. In high school, we are at the age where some of us are about to become adults and others already are, making any effort, to shield us from critical issues impacting the “real world,” infantilizing.
14. While some students may be uncomfortable when real world issues and current events are discussed in the classroom, it should not be an excuse to avoid engaging in courageous conversations. For example, although discussions about racial and gender disparities in education, the workforce, and the healthcare system could instill discomfort amongst some students, it is something that all students should learn about before graduating high school because of the far-reaching implications of inequity and

discrimination in the real world.

15. I want access to this kind of intellectually stimulating and challenging information, that addresses issues of a social, political, and societal nature—despite how uncomfortable these topics might make other students feel—because I strongly believe that access to this information will help me to develop the critical thinking and cross-cultural communication skills necessary to understand past and contemporary issues. For example, I’m interested in exploring how our society has decided rightly or wrongly who is deserving, or has “merit”, so that I can better understand, analyze, and critique existing gaps in wealth, housing, and employment by race and gender.
16. HB 1775 directly impacts and interferes with my ability to engage in these courageous classroom conversations by chilling the speech of students and teachers, who—like me—are interested in discussing issues of racial-gender- and sexual orientation-based discrimination and oppression.
17. For generations, BIPOC Oklahoman students have advocated for adequate representation in the course curricula and for a historically accurate depiction of the struggles BIPOC communities have faced, and continue to face, as well as contributions BIPOC communities have made, and continue to make. Yet, the legislature has not chosen to pass meaningful and sufficient legislation in this area.
18. I was in elementary school when I had my first personal experience with racism. If my parents had to have “the talk” with me about race, discrimination, and injustice at age 8, then why are my white counterparts being shielded from these same conversations in the classroom at 16 years old. We should encourage, rather than chill, critical discussions of race topics in the classroom—no matter how ugly they may be—in order to teach students how to handle having difficult conversations in a respectful and empathetic manner.
19. At a time when educators around the country are beginning to think critically about how to make their classrooms a more welcoming environment for all students—following the 2020 National Reckoning for Racial Justice—the legislature has chosen now as their time to act.
20. I do not understand why my life, the histories of people who look like me, and the things I experience inside and outside of the classroom are considered political? I am a human being, like all of my classmates, and I, too, deserve to receive an education that reflects the stories of people like

me in the curricula.

21. In the Oklahoma public schools, every student should be taught the truth about the issues impacting our communities and be provided access to information that allows them to formulate their own ideas about challenges facing our society.

I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct based upon my personal knowledge. Executed in Oklahoma this 29th day of October 2021.

SL

S.L.