

Testimony of the Texas State Conference of NAACP Branches on the Civil Rights

Good Morning Madame Chairwoman and members of the State Board of Education. My name is Yannis Banks and I am the Legislative Liaison of the Texas NAACP. The NAACP is our Nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots civil rights organization in the United States.

The NAACP celebrates a long history, actually over 100 years, of advocating for social justice, human and civil rights for all people. We were at the forefront during the Civil Rights Era. Our founding members epitomize what the Civil Rights movement was about; a diverse group of people working together to better the lives of minorities and women. As the nation's oldest largest Civil Rights group we have earned a place in the must be taught section for Civil Rights.

To make the claim that the gains in civil rights were granted by the majority, not earned by the courageous efforts of women and minorities is painful and disrespectful to those who fought and suffered for those rights. If those rights were just granted than the events on March 7, 1965, known as Bloody Sunday would not had happened. Those peaceful protestors would not have been beaten just for the right to vote. If those rights were just granted Thurgood Marshall would not have had to argue before the Supreme Court that "Separate but Equal" was a violation of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. If those rights were just granted NAACP Field Secretary Medgar Evers would not have been assassinated because he was trying to desegregate schools. If those rights were just granted, Montgomery, Ala NAACP Secretary Rosa Parks would never have been arrested and the Montgomery Bus Boycott would have never been necessary just for African Americans to ride the bus. If those rights were just granted there wouldn't have been such strong opposition in Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It would not have needed assistance from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and St. Augustine NAACP leader Dr. Robert Hayling. They organized sit-ins, marches and peaceful protests. Hundreds of Black and White civil rights activist were arrested due to these protests, including Dr. King. These peaceful protests lead to violent attacks from the KKK. These attacks made national and international news. Many people were battered, bruised, harassed and died just so I can have the rights I enjoy today.

Did the Civil Rights Movement create unrealistic expectations for equal outcomes? No it didn't. The people involved in the movement knew that it was going to be a fight to gain the rights that are granted to Americans. Nobody expected the change to happen the next day and for many it was not necessarily about change happening for them, but for their children.

It would be both a travesty and an abdication of duty for the State Board of Education to recommend textbooks that do not allow students to receive a balanced and fair portrait of the historical contributions of the people and events that have helped to shape this country. While this may not always be pretty, it is OUR history. We should learn from it, grow from it.

We support and would like to work with you to create a holistic curriculum that includes the contributions of citizens from various ethnic backgrounds who have significantly influenced the country's development. We further advocate that all textbooks align with our suggested curriculum recommendations.