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Arizona Bans Ethnic Studies Programs - Who's Next?

May. 14, 2010 ? Danielle

Earlier this week, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed into law HB 2281 which would "ban schools from teaching classes that are designed for students of a particular ethnic group, promote resentment or advocate ethnic solidarity over treating pupils as individuals" according to the LA Times. The bill was specifically passed targeting ongoing efforts in the Tucson School District to provide students of color with culturally relevant history lessons. The attack comes only 20 days after Arizona passed the most sweeping anti-immigrant law in American history, which has been widely condemned as racist.

GSA Network condemns this most recent bill banning ethnic studies in schools. As an organization that works to promote greater safety in schools, our research has shown that students feel safer when they see images of themselves in the curriculum. You can read more about this in the California Safe Schools Coalition research brief LGBT Issues in the Curriculum Promotes School Safety [1]. Furthermore, history shows us that when one marginalized community is attacked, other marginalized communities are not far behind. If ethnic studies are banned, who's next?

In fact, research has shown us that students face multiple forms of harassment in school, and need curriculum to reflect all of their identities. LGBT students of color frequently face multiple forms of bigotry and harassment, a reality that is sadly and ironically reinforced by laws such as the one just passed in Arizona. To read more about how multiple forms of harassment impact youth check out this California Safe Schools Coalition research brief: Multiple Forms of Bias-Related Harassment at School [2].

We are happy to see many of our partner organizations such as the ACLU working hard to combat these racist laws. And we applaud the Tucson School District for its plans to continue teaching its ethnic studies classes. As GSA Network continues our work to ensure safe schools for LGBTQ and Ally students, we will also work hard to ensure that students have the right to learn about important historical figures and social movements that reflect the full complexity of their identities and experiences.

To read More:

Los Angeles Times [3]

New York Times [4]

Time Magazine [5]

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Links:
[1] http://gsanetwork.org/files/resources/CSSC4-curriculum.pdf
[2] http://gsanetwork.org/files/resources/CSSC8-forms%20of%20harrassment.pdf
[3] http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-ethnic-studies-20100512,0,5313151.story
[4] http:// http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/14/education/14arizona.html
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