

Good morning.

My name is Adrian Solis and I am a Social Studies Teacher at Henry Abbott Technical High School in Danbury, CT. I am here to share my experiences and hopes for the African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino Course of Studies. As an integral member of the Puerto Rican/Latino Content Development Committee, I worked closely with other members in organizing topics, writing units, and developing activities for lessons.

I currently teach a Latinos Studies class of my own where I have tested several activities and explored materials we have gathered for Semester 2 of this course. The feedback I have gotten from students has been exciting and inspiring. For example, on a lesson covering Indigenous Americans, students said:

- “It is important to understand where us as Latinos come from and our identity...Overall, learning about these Indigenous people really inspired me more because I can consider myself as Indigenous, even though I don't follow the same lifestyle as them, I still believe that learning about them can make a difference.”

Another student wrote:

- “This information we have been learning has to be taught to more people so that they can be proud of our cultures because most of it is influenced by the Indigenous cultures. The contributions of these indigenous groups to the world are way more than they are credited for. People have to realize that we are valued more than what they have made us think throughout the years.”

During a class discussion on race and Latino identity, students opened up to me as I have never experienced in my twelve years of teaching. The lesson was real, exposed, raw, and therapeutic. I related so much with what the students were saying. Their stories and opinions were heartfelt and honest. It became a moment of pure reflection and growth.

Throughout my tenure of teaching, I have never experienced such high and intense emotions

after concluding a class. This course has the capacity to expose and share our fears, anxieties, and private thoughts in a safe space allowing us to move forward as better people together.

I can only imagine what a complete year of an African American/Black and Puerto Rican/Latino class will do for our high school students, especially our students of color who will finally be able to see themselves in the curriculum on a regular basis. The hope is that this course can become a pathway of learning that can serve as a foundation or supplement for the future education of our youth across the state. It has the potential to have a positive academic impact by creating a more informed citizenry for everyone involved.

This course isn't just for Black or Latino students, it is for every single community member that is connected to this class. All kinds of students, teachers, administrators, parents, and relatives will learn empathy and gain a new perspective and appreciation for how the history of our state and country has been shaped and impacted by Black and Latino people. Thank you so much for your time and fervent approval of this course and professional learning to support its implementation.