

# National News 1: What's going on?

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Is the opportunity to learn about a history where people look like you a privilege or a right?

Governor Jan Brewer signed a bill targeting a school district's ethnic studies program on Tuesday, May 15, 2010. The measure prohibits classes that advocate ethnic solidarity, are designed primarily for students of a particular race, or promote resentment toward a certain ethnic group. It also prohibits classes promoting the overthrow of the U.S. government. This bill happened to be signed hours after a report by United Nations human rights experts condemned the nation's toughest crackdown on illegal immigration. Six UN human rights experts released a statement expressing concern about the law and its validity. They issued statements about Arizona's new illegal immigration law, which requires law enforcement to question a person about his or her immigration status, if there is "reasonable suspicion" the person is in the United States illegally. It also makes it a state crime to be in the country illegally.

The members of the UN stated, "Arizona's new law on illegal immigration could violate international standards that are binding in the United States. States are required to respect and ensure the human rights of all persons subject to their jurisdiction, without discrimination." With this new law coming "A disturbing pattern of legislative activity hostile to ethnic minorities and immigrants has been established with the adoption of an immigration law that may allow for police action targeting individuals on the basis of their perceived ethnic origin," political experts said.

State Schools Chief, Tom Horne, has pushed this bill for years, and has stated Tucson school district programs promote "ethnic chauvinism" and racial resentment toward Whites while segregating students by race with its curriculum. Horne has been trying to restrict the program ever since 2006 when he learned Latino civil rights activist Dolores Huerta told students "Republicans hate Latinos." Horne stated, "It's just like the old South, and it's long past time that we prohibited it."

The Tucson Unified School District program offers specialized courses in African-American, Mexican-American and Native-American studies that focus on history and literature including information about the influence of a particular ethnic group. District officials said the program doesn't promote resentment, and they believe it would comply with the new law. About 1,500 students at six high schools in the district are enrolled in the program. Elementary and middle school students also are exposed to the ethnic studies curriculum. The district is 56 percent Hispanic. Sean Arce, director of the district's Mexican-American Studies program, has stated students perform better in school if they see in the curriculum people who look like them. "It's a highly engaging program, and it's unfortunate the state Legislature would go so far as to censor

these classes.”

The immigration bill was a move that ignited international backlash; among the charges many felt the measure would encourage racial profiling of Hispanics. This new bill is furthering and spreading discrimination across all races. The fact this bill would even be constructed much less signed by Arizona’s governor is utterly ridiculous. All Americans should have the opportunity to learn history about people that look like them. Minority’s played a major part in American History and the voice of the Mexican, African, and Native American is lost in our grammar schools. Historical Civil Rights Leaders didn’t fight so their struggle could be stuffed into a paragraph in our history books. Children of color go through all of school seldom seeing figures of color or if seen they only receive small blurbs of history. Rarely is there a program where children can feel empowered by the people who resemble them in history. And when a program such as this comes about you have individuals like Tom Horne who take such a positive thing and turn it into something of conflict, which essentially even furthers this “resentment” he is trying to prevent. These new laws aren’t just an injustice to legal and illegal immigrants. They are becoming a catalyst for the government to restrict our voice and our history. The fact that there was even a necessity to form these classes is what needs to be addressed. Why don’t “regular” American History textbooks include the stories of minorities who shaped this country would be the question Tom Horne and Governor Brewer need to focus on. All Americans should have the right and access to learn history about people from their ethnic background that have substantial influence on the development of this country.