

My name is Carly Gordon and I am a junior at Francis Howell North High School. I came here tonight to speak briefly on some of the responses from the community on the decision to create a black history and a black literature class.

Firstly, it is undeniable that there are racial dynamics present in almost every social setting. Though not at the fault of any individual, we participate in a racialized society. Because I have always tried to listen to others' experiences, I thought that I was exempt from participating in these racial dynamics. However, at the end of the day it doesn't matter if I am working to understand power imbalances or ignoring that existing dynamic, I am still part of a society that finds race important.

I've often complained to my parents about school with the very familiar: "When am I ever going to use this?" School is typically viewed as a space that prepares us, as students, for the next step. In fact, it is what the vision statement of FHSD requires. Regardless of what this next step is for each student, there are important skills necessary for any path in life. That's why we have required courses. We then have optional classes for things that could be viewed as important, if a student deems it relevant to their pathway. Even with the diverse array of classes offered at FHN, it is necessary to encourage choice for students looking to build their future.

In the status quo, FHSD lacks classes that seek to understand racial dynamics and their history, through many facets. There is no other class like that offered through FHSD. Classes like black literature and history will fill a gap that was previously present in class options. These classes will foster understanding and perspective on a level I cannot describe as I haven't taken the class, but I see two large benefits. Firstly, white students like me can gain insight into other points of view regarding social structures that they may have not known about, specifically students who are considering working in law, history, or social/governmental services. Secondly, it will allow certain marginalized groups, in this case black students, to access scholarly analysis on relevant social dynamics, and these skills could also be applied to a future career.

I understand some of the hesitance on the part of the community. Some may be worried that we're too young to talk about these things, or that it's simply too difficult to discuss in school. But now is the time when we, as high school students, are finally being allowed to make choices. And perhaps that's the best thing about these classes- that they are a choice. Just like an anatomy class or an engineering class, if a student doesn't want to take it, they don't have to. But for certain people within the FHSD community, these classes would be highly relevant in their future endeavors. Let FHSD do like any other district - teach us.