

Good evening. My name is Sarah Bryant, and I am speaking on behalf of the North Lamar English department. We thank you for allotting us time to speak.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, noted suffragette, stated, "The moment we begin to fear the opinions of others and hesitate to tell the truth that is in us, and from motives of policy are silent when we should speak, the divine floods of light and life no longer flow into our souls." Due to the accusations leveled at our department collectively in the Oct. 18th and Nov. 8th board meetings and various social media platforms as concerns critical race theory and pornography, we feel that we can be silent no longer. A response is warranted. We are here to emphasize that our department utilizes instructional material chosen specifically to address the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) as set forth by the Texas Educational Agency (TEA). While different literary lenses are discussed in brief through our college-level courses, at no point do we engage in teaching a graduate level theory such as critical race theory in on-level classrooms. Additionally, we have Board policies that also help drive our instruction, specifically:

- 1) Stimulate growth in factual knowledge, enjoyment of reading, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and societal standards,
- 2) Present various sides of controversial issues so that students have an opportunity to develop, under guidance, skills in critical analysis and in making informed judgements in their daily lives, and
- 3) Represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contribution to the national heritage and world community.

Before we are accused of being "talking heads," spouting policy and hiding behind guidelines, let us reiterate that we carefully review instructional materials, including supplemental materials such as excerpts, before use in the classroom and are ever mindful of content, presenting a curated selection specific to our community and educational purpose, rejecting even approved instructional materials for use in our classrooms. The idea that we are willfully teaching pornographic or otherwise objectionable material with the intent to harm our students is not only

false but, quite frankly, insulting, inflammatory, and injurious. We do not operate in a clandestine manner, but strive to be as transparent as possible.

Moving into transparency, What resolution is being hoped for with these issues? What, precisely, is the goal of challenging the professionalism of our department? Are these individuals only concerned taxpayers in our district, or do they speak for a larger collective? These talking points smack of a deeper, larger, more insidious agenda than has been forthcoming by these accusers. To paraphrase Shakespeare, their argument is “full of sound and fury, yet signifies nothing.” The best they can lobby against us is a far-reaching, degrading charge of teaching pornography to our students. On that subject, which example of text is this charge supported by? How is teaching the human condition, albeit with tough subjects, sexually explicit?

We feel that these accusations are being inspired by a misguided notion that the educational system is driven by liberal narratives designed to tear apart communities and indoctrinate our youth. We feel compelled to point out North Lamar always operates in the best interests of our students. We still pledge allegiance to both the US and Texas flags, followed by a moment of silence to allow our students time for contemplation. We provide our teachers the option to become trained in the use of a firearm, which is stored in a biometric safe in the classroom, to better protect our student body. We do not stifle religion on our campus, as demonstrated by our active Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Each decision made by North Lamar always takes into account our students first, not politics.

Now, we turn directly to the parents, community members, and voters in our district. Please do not sit by in silence and allow these accusations to stand unquestioned. Friends, Panthers, and community members, lend us your voices in denouncing these misguided accusations. Please

support us as we educate our students with their interests in mind, interests that are separate from any political ideology. We in the North Lamar English department have determined that we cannot silence the voices of diversity in our classrooms. We cannot silence those who have a different worldview than ours. We cannot silence those who write of hardship and difficult issues. And we cannot remain silent in the face of such blatant and unwarranted attacks by a radical few.