

From: ESTEE CHANDLER
Sent: Wednesday, November 11, 2020 2:45 PM
To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>
Cc: [emails redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Superintendent Thurmond,

I'm writing because I am greatly concerned over the direction the CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum has taken.

Pro-Israel interest groups should not define antisemitism. Definitions that name criticism of Israel as antisemitic are opposed by many Jewish organizations, both within the United States and internationally. These definitions violate our constitutional right to free speech because their application censors virtually all criticism of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian human rights and equality. These definitions also downplay the main source of antisemitism in the United States, which is white nationalism.

Please substitute: antisemitism is discrimination against, violence towards, or stereotypes of Jews for being Jewish. If you look in a dictionary, that is what antisemitism is. It is harmful and disingenuous to claim critique of Israel's harsh treatment of Palestinians as antisemitism.

We know, from the demands for racial justice sweeping this county, that it is offensive and dangerous to shunt the histories and perspectives of people of color to the sidelines. These revisions are tone-deaf to the political moment we are living in. Our children are once again being left to fend for themselves in an increasingly racialized and polarized political climate. California should be a sanctuary, not a place of danger for our students and their families.

Young people in particular face the consequences of Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism. Arab and Muslim youth are simultaneously invisibilized and targeted. For too long, Arab youth have learned little about their history besides offensive and racist images and stereotypes. Arab-American studies curriculum provides a critical intervention to these stereotypes in K-12 education

I hope you will reconsider letting folks with a political agenda interfere with teaching honestly about history both U.S. and international.

Estee Chandler
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