

From: Jo Ann Solov
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To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Ethnic Studies Curriculum

I converted to Judaism in 1973 and was married in at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco by Rabbi Joseph Asher. I was enriched by my conversion course work and the breadth of knowledge that I received. My husband and I then moved to Brooklyn where we were part of a Jewish community, and I read many books by Jewish authors, expanding my awareness.

I give you this background because I was far less informed in my own California upbringing in the '50's-'70's. I remember once saying the word "Jew" in a Protestant church discussion and then apologizing because I thought it was a swear word.

I am now a member of the Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom, a national organization that has expanded its membership 10 fold over the past 2 years because of the xenophobia that has arisen in our country. Our Jewish/Muslim friendships have given us an incredible understanding of each other's religions, and we are constantly amazed at our commonalities and similar value systems.

I stand behind the critiques of the Jewish state legislators and all the various Jewish Federations and community organizations who are joining in the call to redesign the proposed ethnic studies curriculum to improve the representation of Jews and the State of Israel. Education is the only way we are going to combat the prejudices and hatreds that are festering in our communities. A curriculum that allows for discussion, speakers, debate, select films and literature would open minds and reveal our common humanity.

Good luck with your project and know that we will all be better people for this increased understanding and knowledge.

JoAnn Solov
Sacramento, California