

From: John Corona
Sent: Monday, December 21, 2020 6:30 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Instructional Quality Commission

Dear Committee:

I am writing to your committee to express my opinions on the state's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum which is set for a Spring rollout. I am a recently retired educator of 40 years in Riverside, Calif. and for the vast majority of time, I taught U.S. History. I was most fortunate to be named a State Teacher of the Year by three different organizations over my tenure and in my final year was the subject of a short feature shown nationally on the CBS Evening News. Let me say from the beginning that I AM NOT in the least against the idea of an Ethnic Studies class or stream in our state school system. However, I have some grave concerns over the proposed curriculum and the logistics of delivery.

I have read a good portion of the proposed curriculum and from my perspective, it presents California and America as bastions of racism in which ethnic minorities cannot be successful. It is almost entirely focused on what we have failed to do as a state and a nation from dealing with slavery, forcible deportation and genocide. There is no denying our sins and there is no question that kids-especially teenagers- need to know about these things. HOWEVER, THEY ALSO NEED TO KNOW THE OTHER SIDE!!! My goal every year when I stood in front of my classes was that they were going to get both sides of the story. They were going to hear about our warts as well as our beauty. My job as a teacher was to give them both sides of history and let them make up their own minds. My job, once they had formed an opinion, was to let them have that opinion and not invalidate it or discredit it so long as they could effectively defend it. The way the proposed curriculum is laid out, it doesn't appear that "the other side" is given much credence and that individual opinion, the very bulwark of Democracy, isn't the goal. Another one of my goals was to "make them think". It appears that the goal of this curriculum is to make them think one way.

Students need to know the courage of Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez, Rosa Parks and Abraham Lincoln. They need to know the work of thousands of individuals who have made our country the greatest multiethnic country in the history of the world. They need to know that our enemies, historically, have seen our multi ethnicity as a weakness but it has always been a strength. Without this side of the story, how can these students eventually bring our country to new heights and new successes? Speaking as the descendent of immigrants and minorities, I know the challenges many of our kids and our society face and the history behind it. I've heard personally from my relatives the stories of racism, bigotry and obstacles but I also know the history of their fight to get beyond those things and be successful in this state and country. I think the Ethnic Studies curriculum needs to reflect that. They need to hear about Harada Vs. California; or the Mendez case ; or the desegregation of schools in Riverside. Yes-they need to know of our failures but they need to know our successes as well.

My other concern is that I have heard that Ethnic Studies-at least at the high school level-will be a requirement for graduation. I am not against this idea per se except to ask "where do you fit it in" in a school's curriculum? Unless there is a move to reform school schedules where does a student fit this in amongst all their other requirements? I realize that this varies from district to district, but that is simply a cop-out and it still begs the question. Where will this fit in-as a requirement- amongst four years of English-three years of Social Science-two years of PE-three years of Math-2 years of Foreign Language and three years of Science? There are more years than that required depending on a student's choice of college. There are also calls across the state for Civic classes to be added; for Ethics classes to be added; Afro-American studies; Chicano Studies and the list grows with every societal crisis we see. What if a student is on the STEM path? What if they want to take another professional path? What if they are in band or choir or theatre? What do they give up? If in fact, making Ethnic Studies a requirement is true, that needs to be rethought in regard to how to make it fit into the way schedules are built and what's best for kids. I believe we would be better served if it were an elective class at least for now.

I appreciate the opportunity to express my concerns and thoughts. Thank you.

John Corona
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