

From: Erica Solomon

Sent: Friday, January 22, 2021 12:12 AM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns/feedback on the ethnic studies program

My name is Erica Katsel and I am writing to you as a proud product of the LAUSD school system. I believe strongly in the merits of the ethnic studies program for our schools but I have real concerns about how Jews are portrayed in the current draft and the fact that Jews are the only group in California's proposed curriculum for whom the term "privilege" is used.

Jews are one of the most targeted communities for hate in the United States and excluding them erases the critical role that antisemitism plays in white supremacy and the delegitimization of Israel. If the curriculum is going to be effective and appropriate for all Californians, it must be truly inclusive, and that includes representation of the experience of Jewish Americans and the diversity within the Californian Jewish community (which contains a large number of Mizrahi Jews, Sephardic Jews, Jewish immigrants from Iran, the former Soviet Union and Jews of Color, whose stories are less widely acknowledged or known in comparison to Ashkenazi Jews). Jews are 2% of the population of the United States and 0.2% of the global population. They are thus one of the smallest minority groups in the world and attempts to erase or downplay our long and diverse heritage, as well as our history that contains a millennia of oppression against us (Antisemitism is the world's oldest hatred) is very concerning and frankly, reeks of (likely unintentional) bigotry and ignorance.

I am sure that the intentions of the curriculum drafters are good and there is a sincere desire to give students a balanced and inclusive view of all of their neighbors and the melting pot that is our state; to help and promote values of tolerance, respect, equality and justice. Keeping in line with these objectives, I urge you to revise the ethnic studies curriculum to:

- *Accurately represent Jewish American experiences and teach about antisemitism in all its forms (bigotry and hatred on both the left and the right politically, and the fact that Jews were persecuted and oppressed throughout history, specifically in Europe, Spain/Portugal and the Middle East leading to different waves of immigration).*

- *Add an inclusive unit about Middle Eastern communities featuring a lesson plan submitted by JIMENA.*

- *Remove guiding values and principles which can and will be used to justify bringing hate and bias into our classrooms, in [violation of AB331](#).*

Thank you for your consideration and sincere desire to learn and contribute to a more inclusive and tolerant education for all of your students.

Sincerely,
Erica Katsel