

**From:** Julie Lavine

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**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Subject:** Comments on the proposed ethnic studies curriculum

While the idea behind requiring an ethnic studies course in California high schools surely started with a noble idea, that is, to promote understanding across all the spectrum of humanity that resides here, this proposed curriculum will accomplish exactly the opposite. While I am sure that we all want to encourage students, when presented with the facts, to look at those facts with open minds, and then come to their own conclusions, this curriculum will accomplish exactly the opposite. It reads like militant propaganda and leads the student along to come to foregone conclusions. It does not present any context for the facts it does present, nor does it present any facts that might contradict the aforesaid foregone conclusions.

The entire history of the U.S. is presented as a function of "oppression and privilege," line 32, which is code for black vs. white. Every word written is there to reinforce in the young mind feelings of otherness and victimhood, rather than promote amity despite our differences. Our nation is great because of our working together toward a common goal, despite our individual differences of culture and history. Yes, our nation has had a horrific history of slavery, bigotry, and racism. But nowhere do I see any mention of the fact that we are much less bigoted than in the past--we even elected a biracial President...twice. Many more doors are open to African-Americans than in the past, as witnessed by the many professional and middle-class blacks around us. Which African-American teenager would not be angered by line 119: "years after slavery ended many African Americans continue to live in poverty because of racist discriminatory laws." Where are these laws; the authors do not quote any examples. An uninformed youngster might be tempted to think that America is the worst country in the world after taking this ethnic studies course, rather than knowing that class, gender, racial and religious bigotry is a human problem that occurs all over the world. Slavery was once a global problem, not limited to the U.S. or even the Western world. Where is the context in this curriculum?

It is astounding to me the anti-Jewish bias apparent in this document. Anti-Jewish violence is the NUMBER ONE hate crime in America! If this curriculum is to promote understanding and acceptance of oppressed people, why is there almost

no mention of anti-Semitism? They are historically the most oppressed people on earth. It goes on to call to Boycott, Divest, and Sanction Israel (line 4958), the national homeland of the Jewish people, without presenting an even-handed approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is very complex and cannot be narrowed down to anti-Israel narratives and hip-hop songs. Why is Israel referred to as Israel/Palestine? Israel is a sovereign nation. Where is the balance in this curriculum?

Also, if I may humbly suggest, keep newly-minted gender words to when the students are studying gender issues. For example, in the footnotes under line 103, words like Latinx and misgynoir are used. These are not even real words! If you want to introduce students to these concepts, then do it when they are studying gender, and don't mislead them with words that don't belong when studying other subjects. This whole idea that there are twenty genders is a figment of somebody's imagination, and never in the entire history of this planet, anywhere on this planet, have we seen such a thing. Where is the calm sanity in this curriculum?

In summary, this is a highly flawed proposed curriculum, and it needs to be drastically modified in order to accomplish the goal of promoting peace and understanding amongst us, as well as the goal of teaching critical thinking skills to the student.

Thank you.

Devorah Lackner