

From: E. K. Thaler

Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 2:16 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Reject the proposed ethnic studies curriculum because it promotes Anti-Semitic concepts

To the Honorable Toby Thurmond:

I endorse in full the position of Agudath Israel of California regarding reasons to reject this deeply flawed curriculum.

I am particularly concerned about the Unit which teaches that Jewish Americans purportedly enjoy special privilege by passing as "white." As a person who has personally experienced Anti-Semitic treatment in educational settings, I know that I am not insulated by being "white."

Moreover, the premise of this unit ignores Jewish diversity, such as darker skinned Jews of Ethiopia and Yemen. At my own synagogue I have prayed with Jews who appear or identify as black, mixed race, Asian American, and Latinx, and with Jews born or raised in Asia, Central America, or South America.

I feel like Irish Americans were added to the Unit as cover for promoting offensive material designed to encourage hatred of Jews. I am also disturbed by the potential to promote hatred and "reverse racism" by treating "white" culture as a monolith, ignoring the diversity of views and experiences among those who share a lighter complexion but came to America from many lands.

Although the curriculum was designed to promote knowledge of four ethnic identities given "favored nation" status, it comments on other ethnicities which seem to fall outside those artificial lines: the Irish, Jews, and Arabs, for example.

If Arabs are purportedly "Asian" by your definition, than the Jewish people, who originated in the Ancient Levant and Mesopotamian regions, are "Asian" as well. Or if you view Jewish ethnicity as originating during the years of our slavery in Egypt and our assembly at the foot of Mount Sinai upon gaining our freedom, we Jews are "African."

How can you write curriculum about us without input and participation of Jewish experts on Anti-Semitism and interfaith relations? Please add representatives from Agudath Israel of California and the Simon Wiesenthal Center to your committees and deliberations.

I urge you to honor the California Department of Education and State Superintendent's commitment to "removing all language or content that can be perceived as anti-Semitic" from the proposed curriculum.

Thank you for inviting considering comment from the public, including mine.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Thaler

