

From: Justin Hefter
Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 2:34 AM
To: Hill, Angela
Cc: Fryman, Ann; Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Making Ethnic Studies Inclusive!

Thank you Angela for sharing these concerns!

I also wanted to thank you, and everyone else involved with the Ethnic Studies curriculum for the process of deep listening and revision that you have all taken on. I know it's not easy, but it is so appreciated!

This curriculum is something that I and many of my friends and family members are following very closely, and as the January 21st public comment period comes to a close, **I hope that the IQC's November recommendations are upheld.** The parts that were especially significant were the parts that better reflected California's wonderful diversity (including Sikhs, Hindus, Koreans, Armenians and the diversity of American Jews), as well as the parts on anti-Semitism, and **particularly lesson 40 and the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism.** Watching last week as protesters stormed the US Capitol wearing neo-Nazi shirts saying things like the killing of 6-million Jews during the Holocaust wasn't enough (and a member of Congress who referenced Hitler in a positive way), re-emphasizes the importance of recognizing the intersectional struggle that Jewish-Americans of every color and background face. I'd also add that **anti-Semitism (and other forms of racism as well) should not simply be described as a Right-Wing phenomenon** - that does a major disservice to everyone in the State. When people on the political Left think they are immune to racist/anti-Semitic acts, it leaves room for some really horrible things (e.g., the Amy Cooper incident in NYC) - it's not just the Right that is guilty of racist actions, and students should be equipped to recognize that.

The other things that I think are really important are:

1. Ensuring that references to resistance are emphasized as **non-violent** resistance or civil disobedience. Again, citing what we saw at the Capitol building last week, and what we saw in cities across America this summer, it's so important that the youth recognize the importance of nonviolence as they fight for justice and equity. Cesar Chavez is one of my personal favorite examples of nonviolent civil disobedience.
2. Ensuring that the curriculum promotes **unity and not division.** One potential unintended consequence of an ethnic studies curriculum is that it highlights differences instead of similarities. We're all different, but we're all American. We're all human. It's so important that students leave with empathy for each other, not a better understanding of why they are different. **Bullying in schools is endemic,** and students don't need more reminders of all the ways they are different

Sending you all love during this very difficult time,

Justin

On Tue, Aug 18, 2020 at 9:59 AM Hill, Angela wrote:
[Hi Justin,](#)

Thank you very much for your him your input and feedback. I understand your concerns and will share this information with the Jewish caucus.

Thank you,

Angela

Pronouns: she/her

[contact information redacted]

From: Justin Hefter

Sent: Wednesday, August 12, 2020 9:06 PM

To: ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov

Cc: Assemblymember Ting; Hill, Angela; Fryman, Ann

Subject: Making Ethnic Studies Inclusive!

Dear Ethnic Studies Team, Assemblymember Ting, and Amy and Angela from Senator Scott Wiener's office,

I write because as a San Francisco resident, as an American Citizen and as a human being living according to my Jewish values, I'm deeply concerned that the currently proposed Ethnic Studies curriculum leaves out many ethnic communities that are important to the great state of California.

In particular, it seems that Mizrahi Jews, Iranians, Kurds, Assyrian Christians, Coptic Christians, Yazidis, Bahais, and Zoroastrians are lumped together as "other middle easterners." Lumping diverse groups together into a monolithic collective does a disservice to the objective of having a truly inclusive ethnic studies curriculum.

Similarly, comparing the Jewish experience in America to the Irish experience in America, ignores the experience of Jews of Color, and ignores the fact that anti-Semitic persecution of Jews of all colors persists to this day.

While I'm grateful that revisions have been made that removed language that could very well have been considered anti-Semitic, I don't think that this new version has come far enough. That the original authors of the Curriculum were able to put something together that might have perpetuated anti-Semitism is a clear demonstration of the need for a deeper understanding of the diversity of the Jewish experience in America. I feel, therefore, it's a moral imperative for the body charged with revising the Curriculum, not to simply take out a few harmful references, but to create a curriculum that is truly inclusive.

I'm recently married, and currently plan to raise my future children in the Bay Area. I hope that when I do, they are able to learn from an Ethnic Studies curriculum that accurately reflects their heritage and the community around them.

I am counting on all of you to help make that happen!

Sincerely

Justin Hefter