

From: Laura Milhandler
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 6:41 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: ESMC: Relief and Objections

August 15, 2019

Ms. Soomin Chao

Chair, Instructional Quality Commission

California Department of Education

Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairwoman Chao and Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:

I know that you have received many emails and letters which employ the same basic text. I have used that same model in my email because it speaks for me, I support it, and it is so well articulated. I have included my own personal thoughts as well, and I hope you will take the time to read this in its entirety.

I am writing to express my relief and gratitude that State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond, Vice President Ilene Straus and Board Member Feliza Ortiz-Licon have issued a joint statement on the draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, which is under development, recognizing that the current draft model curriculum falls short of the State of California's goals and needs substantial redesign.

I add my voice to that of the thousands of Californians and numerous organizations and coalitions that have expressed alarm over the current draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). As you now recognize, in its current iteration, the ESMC is extremely biased and hostile towards the American Jewish experience, and its one-sided representation of the highly complex and disputed conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people. I support the detailed comments submitted by the Institute for Curriculum Services and the Jewish Public Affairs Committee, as well as by Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa and the Legislative Jewish and LGBT caucuses. Among the concerns shared by these broad-based and diverse groups are 1) the omission of Jews as an ethnic group and of anti-Semitism as a form of bias and prejudice; 2) the negative stereotypes of Jews and Israel; and 3) the inclusion of, and support for, the Boycott,

Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which presents a single, divisive viewpoint on a complex issue and creates a hostile environment for those who disagree with or question its principles.

While this is not the goal of ESMC, I challenge you to ask yourselves honestly: Where was BDS and support for "Palestine" when Jordan (the original Palestinian homeland, two-thirds Palestinian, and ruled by a non-Palestinian family) controlled the West Bank, when Egypt controlled Gaza, and when Syria controlled the Golan Heights? What Middle East nation would allow most of us the closest lifestyle to that which we and our various multi-ethnic, multi-cultural friends currently enjoy? Only Israel.

I will also add that I am very proud to be living in the "blue" State of California, but I truly feel that in the effort to be all-inclusive to the wonderful variety of peoples who make up our state, and to distinguish ourselves from the current and past Republican Presidential administrations, we do so at the expense of other groups. The ESMC certainly does, at the expense of Jewish Americans.

Many years ago when I was a student studying the minority experience, I saw that Jews were excluded, and I was told Jews were excluded because Jews tend to be, overall, economically independent and stable. The fact that a people who are less than 1.5% of the United States population (and less than .5% of the world population) would be excluded from consideration of being a minority based only on economic status was shocking and appalling. This is what the ESMC has done. Explain to my children, who are among the very few Jewish children in their schools, who endure ignorance, insults, and proselytizers, that they are not a minority and that there is no such thing as anti-Semitism. Explain how the Jewish people's contributions to our state and nation, derived from our own values and ethics, are denied our own ethnicity? How can the authors of the ESMC portray Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, the only nation in that region that values religious rights, women's rights, gay rights, among others, the same as we do here in California, as a(n implied) colonialist evil entity? Israel is the only Jewish nation, the size of New Jersey, among overwhelmingly hostile neighbors, the size of the rest of the continental United States.

With the current increase in anti-Semitism nationwide and worldwide, the ESMC draft as it was *would only and severely contribute to this problem*. This is about truth and courage. I am hopeful now that the new draft will correct these errors and show *courage* in portraying one of the most-targeted minorities in the nation and the world in an *honest* manner.

Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

Laura Milhandler
Placentia, CA