

From: Andrew Stein

Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 4:27 PM

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Revisions to the Ethnic Studies curriculum on Jewish history

Dear California Department of Education,

I am writing to you as a Jewish high school student in San José, CA, to express my concerns with the Jewish lessons of the Ethnic Studies curriculum. I have reviewed the proposed lessons in the outlined curriculum, and although I was initially delighted that there would be multiple classes on Jewish history, I am left disappointed with the current plans. As I and the rest of the Jewish community can see, the state intends to mandate an inaccurate education on the history of the Jewish people, effectively institutionalizing antisemitism.

The most striking issue lies with the description of Jewish Americans as "privileged." While white-functioning Jews do hold privilege with regards to their skin color, this representation of privileged Jews only erases the racism that Jews of color experience, as well as drives a wedge between us and other marginalized communities by portraying Jews as being less oppressed. Furthermore, this echoes the white supremacist belief in the existence of "Jewish privilege," a myth perpetuated by ADL- and SPLC-designated antisemitic and white nationalist hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and Identity Evropa, also known as the 'American Identity Movement'. As well, Jews are the only group in the entire curriculum who are described as privileged, despite there being white people present in many other ethnic groups discussed in the lesson plans.

In addition to my concerns with the issue of privilege, these lessons fail to expand on the Jewish connection to Judea and the land of Israel, thus perpetuating dangerous misinformation. Only twice in the entire Jewish curriculum is the land of Israel mentioned, and both times are superficial overviews that do not reflect the depth of the undeniable Jewish attachment to our homeland; not once is Judea mentioned. These lessons also entirely omit the significance of Zionism to the Jewish community, both within Israel and the Diaspora; while we appreciate not having our movements incorrectly defined and misconstrued with things that it is not, the lack of inclusion of this topic erases the deep Jewish longing of two thousand years to self-determine and return to our indigenous homeland of Israel, as well as denies students the opportunity to learn about Zionism directly from Jews. Additionally, these lesson plans do not mention the founding of the State of Israel, one of the most significant events in modern Jewish history due to its creation of a safe homeland for Jews worldwide as well as triggering pogroms and genocides throughout Europe, southwest Asia, and northern Africa.

Another major concern I have with this curriculum is the false claim that antisemitism decreased in the United States after the Holocaust due to Jewish assimilation and the aforementioned "conditional whiteness." According to the [FBI 2019 Hate Crime Statistics](#), antisemitic hate crimes comprised 60.2% of religiously motivated offenses, as well as 13.6% of total offenses, despite Jews making up less than 2% of the American population. After the Holocaust, antisemitism in the U.S. did not disappear, but rather changed its manifestation in order to become less overt, though overt antisemitism is still a very real problem faced by the Jewish community. Modern antisemitism often takes the shape of conspiracy theories and tropes ingrained into society, though these lessons fail to mention such forms. In fact, this curriculum perpetuate antisemitic tropes such as the characterization of Jews as supposedly changing their race in order to gain privilege in American society.

This is only a sampling of my grievances regarding this curriculum; ultimately, the proposed lessons serve not to educate about the Jewish community, but rather to covertly indoctrinate students with dangerous antisemitic ideals. On behalf of the Jewish community, I implore Governor Newsom to not sign the Ethnic Studies bill until these issues are transparently resolved by a diverse panel of Jewish historians. Should this bill be passed without solving these glaring issues, the State of California will become an agent of antisemitism, further endangering me and my community.

Thank you for your time; I would be happy to discuss this further and I anticipate your reply.

Sincerely,

Andrew Stein