

80 Harvard
Napa, CA
August 30, 2019

To: California Board of Education

I am offering my opinion about the proposed ethnic studies curriculum in California. I write as someone who pioneered ethnic and women's studies at the community college where I worked in the 70's and 80's. Our committee, a group of women's studies and ethnic scholars, organized against a recalcitrant administration. Many times we were offered the chance to have either ethnic studies or women's studies as a requirement, but we refused to pit one against the other.

The reason that we wanted women's studies was as urgent as it is today. Girls and women suffer from an epidemic of issues related to low self-esteem. Girls and women are targets of sexual assault and partner violence. Girls and women lose their confidence in adolescence and enter into self-harming behaviors or relationships. Girls and women have no idea of their own history as a gender, which they are not taught in elementary or high school.

I received hundreds of essays testifying to the therapeutic effects of women's studies on the lives of girls, women, and men. I have seen students change their lives as a result of what they've learned in classes. We will never solve the problem of gender equality until we teach its history.

Our group was ultimately successful in getting a requirement that included both ethnicity and gender. Based on my 35 years of teaching women's studies to first generation students, I implore you to include this as part of your new requirement.

Sincerely,

Lauren Coodley

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Napa Valley College

Division Chair of Social Sciences, 2004-2009

State Superintendent
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