

From: Eli Kia

Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 9:55 AM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments about Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

To the Ethnic Studies Board:

My name is Eli Safaie-Kia, and I am a recent graduate of Palisades Charter High School, and I am a Persian Jew. Much of my time in high school has been spent advocating for equal educational opportunities for all students, directly through my opportunities to be involved in school governance. In 2018, I traveled to Sacramento with the California Association of Student Councils to participate in the Student Advisory Board on Education (SABE). In the days leading up to our meeting with the state board of education, my group created a proposal for a more fair and inclusive approach to history that validates and shares alternative perspectives, providing underrepresented communities a voice within California classrooms. It was clear that our focus needed to primarily be on four groups: Black, LatinX, Native American, and Asian American histories. A little less than a year later, I was troubled to see the draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that the SBE, CDE, and IQC had proposed. While it's intended goal was exactly what myself and my group members had proposed, it approached this goal in a way that was hurtful and dangerous to my community and so many other ethnic communities. There have been many positive steps taken to ensure an inclusive curriculum and I want to thank you for that, but there is still more work to be done.

Attached in this email, please find an open letter from Jewish teens and allies from across California.

As I said, I am a Persian Jew. My family fled from Iran, have endured hardships in the Middle East and in the US and their story deserves to be told. I find it offensive that my identity, along with many others, has been simplified to "other middle easterners" in the revised draft. The ESMC should be revised to ensure that Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Eastern communities are represented on an equal basis with Arab Americans. I also want to point out that there is an offensive mischaracterization being spread about Jewish students who share perspectives like mine with you. We are not arguing for the exclusion of the Arab community, only for more accurate representation of Middle Eastern communities in California.

My parents remember vivid images from the time of the Iranian Revolution where pages of Jewish and Christian history were ripped out of textbooks because they did not fit the narrative of the new Educational Clerics. Rather than tell my children stories of how our identity was ripped out of textbooks, I'd like to tell them about how my generation was one of change, where all identities were valued and cherished in the classroom and beyond.

Please let me know if you have any questions, and thank you so much for your attention to this matter.

Best,



Eli Kia