

From: gs
Sent: Tuesday, August 13, 2019 7:38 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Democrats for Israel Comments re: Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Democrats for Israel Los Angeles supports Ethnic Studies curriculum, but not aspects that deny narratives and contributions of Jews and other minorities in the Middle East, or that present one-sided discussions of the region's conflicts. We request that the curriculum be updated to acknowledge the presence, role and contributions of Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews, Yazidis, Druze, Coptic Christians and the many other cultures that have long-established historical ties to the region. This includes acknowledging the historical ties to Israel of Christians and Jews.

Democrats for Israel Los Angeles is the only Jewish and Pro-Israel Democratic Club in Los Angeles. Since 1992, we have built bridges in our community working with oppressed communities, our brothers and sisters in organized labor, and members of our own community to make sure the contribution of every voice is heard and is appreciated.

We recently became aware of the efforts to develop an Ethnic Studies curriculum for California schools. The appreciation of contributions of many of our minority communities are not always addressed in schools and we support the effort to promote an Ethnic Studies curriculum.

To be clear, we strongly support the adoption of an Ethnic Studies curriculum, including perspectives on the Arab world. However, as written, there are references that fail to balance, or even acknowledge perspectives, outside of the Arabian-centric view of Islam.

- No reference to or exploration of Turkish culture, influences or identities is proposed.
- No references to interactions between Muslim and non-Muslim cultures in the region and contributions/struggles and diasporas that came from them (e.g. Druze, Coptic Christians, Armenian, Yazidi, Mizrahi/Sephardic Jews) is included.
- No reference to or exploration of Shiite or other non-Arab Muslim culture, influences or identities (Iran/Iraq Afghanistan/Pakistan, Kurdistan) included.
- History of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

Finally, the curriculum inexplicably includes explicit references and support for the BDS movement which blames Israel and Jews in the region for the entire history of the conflict that besets the Middle East. Furthermore, the proposed curriculum promotes Palestinian viewpoints without acknowledging or incorporating other valid narratives, thereby creating a one-sided narrative. While the Palestinian experience and narrative has validity, so does the Israeli narrative, and while they may conflict, they can both be true and valid at the same time. Endorsing or validating BDS, or the Palestinian viewpoint alone without a larger context of both narratives creates a one-sided viewpoint that fails to acknowledge the Jewish community's struggle for self-determination and re-establishment of a homeland.

Failing to acknowledge the broad and diverse set of cultures and religions in the Middle East and their interactions with each other, as well as with powers outside of the region creates a risk of allowing Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and discrimination against each of these cultures into the curriculum.

We believe these issues can be addressed by removing the examples provided referring to Palestinian views or BDS. If more time and consideration can be added to this curriculum, adding to the examples the diversity of viewpoints and contributions from each of these

narratives and cultures to create a more holistic view of the region and its conflicts would present a more accurate set of lesson plans.

Thank you for considering our viewpoints

Andrew Lachman
President

Gregg Solkovits
Secretary

Democrats for Israel Los Angeles Comments Re: Proposed Ethnic Studies Curriculum

DFI-LA calls for removal of BDS references and denial of Mizrahi, Sephardic, Zionist and minority (Druze, Turkish) narratives from Arab Studies

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
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General Arab Studies	Andrew Lachman and Gregg Solkovits President and Secretary, Respectively, for Democrats for Israel -- Los Angeles	"Arab Studies" is underinclusive - As written, there are references that fail to balance, or even acknowledge perspectives, outside of the Arabian-centric view of Islam.
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- No reference to or exploration of Turkish or Shiite culture, influences or identities is proposed.
- No references to interactions between Muslim and non-Muslim cultures in the region and contributions/struggles and diasporas that came from them (e.g. Druze, Coptic Christians, Armenian, Yazidi, Mizrahi/Sephardic Jews) is included.
- No reference to or exploration of Shiite or other non-Arab Muslim culture, influences or identities (Iran/Iraq Afghanistan/Pakistan, Kurdistan) included.

- History of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

Page 35	see above	Remove reference to BDS
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Page 234	see above	Remove: Direct Action Front for Palestine
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Call to Boycott Divest and Sanction Israel

Comparative Border Studies: Palestine and Mexico

Page 234	see above	Add: Study of narratives and history of Mizrahi/Sephardic Jews and Palestinians
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Historic cross-cultural cooperation and conflict in the Middle East including Sunni-Shia, Druze, Yazidi, Turkish, Copt and Jewish communities

Influences of Seljuk and Ottoman Empires on the Middle East

History of Zionism

history of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in the United States

Page 235	see above	Add historical figures of Sephardic and Mizrahi descent: FASHION
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- David Sassoon, ENTERTAINMENT - Max Azria, Hank Azaria Natalie Portman, Haim Saban,

Jerry Seinfeld (parents were Syrian Jews), PHILOSOPHY- Maimonides, Baruch Spinoza,

JOURNALISM - John Berman (CNN), POETRY- Emma Lazarus, GOVERNMENT Haym

Solomon (First President of Continental Congress), Justice Benjamin Cardozo, Former Chicago

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, President UN Administrative Tribunal President Meir Gabay, BUSINESS

Haim Saban, Eli Harari (founder of SanDisk),

GENERAL see above While the Palestinian experience and narrative has validity, so does the Israeli narrative, and while they may conflict, they can both be true and valid at the same time. Endorsing or validating BDS, or the Palestinian viewpoint alone without a larger context of both narratives creates a one-sided viewpoint that fails to acknowledge the Jewish community's struggle for self-determination and re-establishment of a homeland.

Failing to acknowledge the broad and diverse set of cultures and religions in the Middle East and their interactions with each other, as well as with powers outside of the region creates a risk of allowing Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and discrimination against each of these cultures into the curriculum.
