

From: Justin Feldman

Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 11:13 AM

To: Ethnic Studies; [emails redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Antisemitism and the Middle Eastern-American Experience

Hello,

My name is Justin Feldman, I'm a Los Angeles resident (born and raised) and a recent graduate from UCLA. As a concerned Angeleno and Sephardic Jew, I am particularly concerned about my representation within California's Ethnic Studies curriculum.

My mother's family fled anti-Jewish pogroms in Morocco as refugees in 1956, with their family business confiscated and everything but their clothes left behind. They found safety along with hundreds of thousands of other MENA Jewish refugees in Israel before immigrating to the U.S. I carry their legacy of resilience and identity with me every day as a proud Moroccan-Israeli American today. My family and I have and continue to experience antisemitism and xenophobic racism despite our contributions as MENA immigrants in America.

I would like to thank the California Department of Education for working so hard to hear out voices and improve the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. I would also urge the Department to promote equal representation and inclusion in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, keeping with AB 2016's objective of "preparing pupils to be global citizens with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures." My community, and the more than 60% of other Middle Eastern groups in California deserve equitable representation in this crucial curriculum.

I have been invested in ethnic studies since high school and college, where I received a comprehensive ethnic studies education, however, one which did not sufficiently encapsulate the Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewish experience, among other non-Arab Middle Eastern identities.

All references to Middle Eastern people in the curriculum should include, specifically name, and teach on the diverse groups of Mizrahi Jews, Coptic Christians, Kurds, Iranians, Assyrians, and other minority groups from the region who together represent 60% of California's Middle Eastern population and have asked for inclusion. In order for the curriculum to avoid an essentialist understanding of Arabs and the Middle East, and in order to be well balanced, each group should be equally and equitably represented in the Ethnic Studies Curriculum.

I would like to see the next draft of the curriculum include the lesson plan, "[Antisemitism and Middle Eastern-American Jews](#)" produced by the organization, JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa, as it will provide students with high-quality instruction on contemporary issues of antisemitism, bigotry, and the Middle Eastern-American Jewish experience.

Finally, the ESMC should make clear that under the "broadly defined umbrella of Asian Studies" are Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) groups which represent ~60% of CA's MENA population. California Department of Education's Chapter 3 agrees: appropriate topics in the Asian section of Ethnic Studies courses are "the unique experiences of Arabs and other Middle Easterners."

Sincerely,

Justin Feldman

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