

**From:** Joana Breckner

**Sent:** Thursday, January 21, 2021 2:17 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comment on the proposed California Ethnic Studies Model

Dear Ethnic Studies Committee,

I am writing because of my concern that Jews are the only group in California's proposed curriculum for whom the term "*privilege*" is used. I write this note not as an educator, a historian or a scholar, but as a proud parent, American, and Jew.

When I look up the definition of *privilege* it states: "a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group."

This timeline outlines the persecution of Jews from all over the world whether they are light-skinned, darkened skinned or anywhere in between:

7th c: Visigoths massacre Jews and force them to convert to Christianity

711: Jews help Muslims invade Spain

1096: Pogroms in France and Germany during the first Crusade

1215: Anti-Jewish code of the Lateran Council

1278: Mass arrests of Jews in England

1290: England expels all Jews

1421: Mass expulsion of Jews from Austria

1442: Mass expulsion of Jews from Bavaria

1481: Dominicans set up the Spanish Inquisition that burns hundreds of Jews in the next twelve years

1489: Expulsion of Jews from Milano

1492: Mass expulsion of Jews from Spain after the Christian "Reconquista"

1494: Expulsion of Jews from Firenze

1495: Mass expulsion of Jews from Poland and Lithuania

1497: Mass expulsion of Jews from Portugal

1516: Venezia decides to confine the Jews in a "ghetto" (2,400 Jews out of a population of 98,000) and charge them special taxes

1518: Ottomans massacre Jews in Hebron

1541: Jews expelled from Napoli

1557: The Pope creates a ghetto for Jews in Roma

1597: Expulsion of Jews from Milano

16th c: Russian czar Ivan the Terrible orders to drown Jews who refuse to convert to Christianity

1648: Thousands of Jews are massacred by peasants in Poland-Ukraine

1756 Voltaire writes that Jews are "a totally ignorant nation"

1770 Holbach writes that Jews are "the enemies of the human race"

1791: Russia confines Jews to Pale of Settlement

1819: "Hep Hep" riots in Germany

1881-1906: More than one million Jews leave Russia

1871: Pogrom in Odessa, Ukraine

1881: Pogroms and mass expulsion in Russia

1887: Theodor Fritsch's "Anti-semitic Catechism"

1898: anti-Semitic riots in Paris and Algiers

1904: Pogroms in Russia  
1905: Pogrom again in Odessa, Ukraine  
1915: William Simmons founds the Ku Klux Klan in the USA  
1917: 70,000 Jews murdered by the Mensheviks in Ukraine  
1919: Judaism is banned in the Soviet Union  
1919: Mensheviks hold Jews responsible for communism and kill 100,000  
1921: 43 Jews killed in riots in Palestine  
1924: Hitler's "Mein Kampf"  
1929: Arab mobs kill 133 Jews in Palestine  
1930s: Jews are among the main victims of Stalin's purges  
1933: "Krystallnacht" in Germany  
1933: First concentration camp at Dachau  
1936: Arabs massacre almost all the Jews in Hebron  
1937: Celine's "Bagatelle pour un massacre"  
1938: German Jews are expelled from schools and lose driver licenses  
1939: The first gas chamber opens in Brandenburg  
1941: The German "Einsatzgruppen" (mobile killing troops) kill more than one million Jews in one year throughout Russia and Ukraine  
1941: Romanians massacre 200,000 Jews in Bessarabia and burn 30,000 alive in occupied Odessa (Ukraine)  
1944: Romanians massacre 217,000 Jews in Transnistria (mostly from Russia)  
1945: Of the nine million Jews in German-controlled territory, about six million have been exterminated (two million at Auschwitz, 1.4 million at Majdanek, 800 thousand at Treblinka, 600 thousand at Belzec)

I don't think anyone of these Jews felt "*Privileged*" being ostracized, demonized or killed. No one cared about the color of their skin; a Jew got what a Jew deserved.

According to recent studies by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), antisemitism is at an all time high and only increasing, I do not consider this a "*Privilege*."

As I witnessed the attack on our sacred capitol only weeks ago and saw a man wearing a t-shirt saying "6MWE" meaning 6 million wasn't enough, I do not consider this a "*Privilege*."

But I am hopeful...

Yesterday as I listened to the inaugural speech of President Biden he boldly said,  
"My fellow Americans, I close today where I began, with a sacred oath.  
Before God and all of you I give you my word.  
I will always level with you.  
I will defend the Constitution.  
I will defend our democracy.  
I will defend America.  
I will give my all in your service thinking not of power, but of possibilities.  
Not of personal interest, but of the public good.  
And together, we shall write an American story of hope, not fear.  
Of unity, not division.  
Of light, not darkness.  
An American story of decency and dignity.

Of love and of healing.  
Of greatness and of goodness.”

Your consideration of the labeling of Jewish *Privilege* rings the complete opposite of what this country needs at this time. By singling the Jewish people out as *Privilege*, not only is it false information, it is divisive, dangerous, and racist, which is the exact opposite of what this state, our country and the world desperately needs now.

Amanda Gorman said is so eloquently at the inauguration as well:  
“We are striving to forge a union with purpose  
To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and  
conditions of man  
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us  
but what stands before us  
We close the divide because we know, to put our future first,  
we must first put our differences aside  
We lay down our arms  
so we can reach out our arms  
to one another  
We seek harm to none and harmony for all”

America is the greatest nation and, I pray my children can grow up with the same rights, freedom, and safety from I have been afforded. My grandparents came to this country with nothing, but worked and sweated day and night to achieve the American dream which is a legacy I have been fortunate enough to inherit. I was raised with unconditional love from my parents and G-d...this is my *Privilege*. The rest is up to me.

Enough with the labels and the stereotyping which will only lead to more unrest. With the inclusion of *Privilege* and singling out the Jewish people, this verbiage is racist, antisemitic and will only continue to build walls of hatred and anger. Do not cement your place in history with actions which will prove to be even be more disruptive and dangerous in the long run than the bunch of fools who recently stormed the capitol. Haven't we all had enough.

It is your *Privilege* to do the right thing, and I beg this committee on my hands and knees, that you do. Let's continue to celebrate this great country which honors and protects the ways in which we are alike and different, but with honesty, mutual respect, kindness, and love.

Thank you for your time,

Warmest regards,

Joana Breckner

**DYP** Founder – “***Discovering Your Power, Your Way***”

Accidental Motivational Speaker & Three-time Oral Cancer Survivor