

From: Holly R

Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 3:12 PM

To: Ethnic Studies; [emails redacted]

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

I would like to thank the California Department of Education for working so hard to improve the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

As California sets the tone for so much of what happens in this country and as a former California resident, graduate of UCLA, and a person with many relatives living in California, I am concerned with the curriculum.

I am terribly alarmed at reading that the primary reference of Jews in the revised Ethnic Studies curriculum is in the context of our communities being the beneficiaries of white privilege. This reference ignores the experiences of European Jews who continue to be victims of violent white-supremacy, genocide, and acts of antisemitism. In my own personal experience, many "white" Americans deny the "whiteness" of European Jews.

Further, the Middle Eastern Jewish community, which is comprised of multiple immigrants and people of color, is completely erased. Why are the diverse Middle Eastern and North African communities and experiences still excluded, including those of indigenous Middle Eastern-American Jews, also known as Mizrahi Jews?

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.

I would like to see the next draft of the curriculum include a lesson plan on contemporary issues of antisemitism, bigotry, and the Middle Eastern-American Jewish experience.

Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Easterner communities deserve equal representation and inclusion in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

I believe our students deserve to learn about both Islamophobia and Antisemitism in an ethnic studies framework.

All the best,
Holly Rothkopf
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