

From: Rosal Mendez

Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 10:27 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: [email redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] "the danger of the single narrative"

California Department of Education,

As a former History Professor and Professor of Mexican American Studies, I found your proposed Ethnic Studies curriculum "model" presented on pages 5-9, "CP Introduction to Ethnic Studies" from Northern United-Humboldt Charter school, to be highly problematic and contrary to our educational mandate.

The course is filed under the Subject Area of History/Social Science, yet history is sorely lacking in the "course outline" that follows.

The entire orientation of the "course" is highly negative. It proposes to "examine systems of oppression", and refers to "the American experience" as one of "slavery, colonization, discrimination and bigotry". . . "along with other core ideas such as: assimilation appropriation, alienation, oppression." Nowhere is there any acknowledgement of the conditions of opportunity that the United States has provided to immigrants, no mention whatsoever is made about the "processes" of democracy, religious freedom, economic and educational opportunity that this country has offered to its people, even if fraught with discrimination. Yet the very foundations of democracy in our country presented the hope and the opportunity of people standing up to seek and work for and if necessary, fight legally or through other means to acquire their democratic rights and the right to political participation and representation.

The course purports to lead students to "envisioning their own ways to challenge oppression." What about encouraging the students to envision their own ways to make contributions to our society? Never once is there a mention of discussing or having students learn about the contributions that different ethnic groups have made to our country.

There are also historical inaccuracies such as the statement about "Christopher Columbus' genocide of the native population."

The "unit" on Mexican Americans is pitiful. It is badly written (grammatically) and focuses only on undocumented immigration. Nowhere do we find it covering the history of the Mexican American people (which is a very rich history), and no mention of the economic, legal, cultural contributions of Mexican Americans (which are substantial and in fact made California into a premier agricultural state), nor any mention of Mexican Americans' fight for their democratic rights, especially the right to vote, nor of their heroic participation in WWII. This "unit" asks the students to investigate rural immigrants. Yet, since the 1940s, the majority of Mexican Americans have been urban dwellers. That is not taken into account in this "curriculum".

Yet the most shameful part of this "course outline" is the section on page 8 on "Irish and Jewish" immigrants. To begin with, no other unit in this course outline "pairs" any two groups together. The Irish and the Jewish people are far apart from each other, not just geographically. So why this sudden "mixing"? If the Irish deserve to be included in the course, then they merit a full unit. And likewise the Jewish people, who have made a great contribution to this country in the realms of science, music, literature, medicine, morality, and who have been present as supporters and contributors (e.g. with pro-bono legal help) in the struggles of many peoples: in the African American Civil Rights Movement and in the Chicano Civil Rights and the Farmworkers Movement, for example.

Why is no legitimacy given to the Jewish and the Irish people's experiences on their own?

In the course outline, there is a total negation of the fullness of the experiences of these ethnic groups and of what America has offered to each, and how America has benefitted from the contributions of each. There is nothing about the positive aspects of what these ethnic groups have brought to American society.

On page 9, the "course outline" makes a statement about "the danger of the single narration." This is probably the one, truly accurate statement in the narration. It is very dangerous, especially to the minds of the young, to present "a single narrative." And yet, this whole course outline, and the CDE "Model Curriculum" that embraces it and presents it as its FIRST "model", is a **dangerous single narrative**.

With great concern,

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