

From: Ariel Beliak
Sent: Tuesday, September 15, 2020 3:34 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies to be Inclusive

Dear California Department of Education,

My first all-night demonstration was outside of UC Berkeley's chancellor's office in support of retaining ethnic studies at UC Berkeley. However, that was not my first demonstration. My father was a peace activist since the 60s and I grew up splitting my time between Israel and the United States. I have marched and supported co-existence work between Israeli's and Palestinians my entire life. I lived through the intafadas, have had friends on both sides killed, and remain steadfast for the need for peaceful co-existence.

As a child growing up in the United States, I barely experienced the level of antisemitism my father did as a child refugee after World War II. He grew up in a rural area and was constantly beaten for being Jewish in the United States. He ultimately had to join a Hispanic gang for protection against the white kids at his school. I only had those singular occurrences when a neighbor would not allow his kids to play with a 'dirty jew' or when I was asked where my horns were.

Today I fear for my children and what is being taught and is now acceptable in society. We don't tell people we are Jewish and definitely don't mention that I speak Hebrew or lived in Israel. To do so means immediate judgement and not the good kind. This despite fighting for co-existence my entire life.

I am writing to support the requests of the Alliance for Constructive Ethnic Studies which you recently received to remove the political agenda from the "Guiding Values and Principles" and resulting lessons by:

- Removing the inflammatory "Guiding Values and Principles" which can bring hate and political dogma into the classroom.
- Aligning all lessons *only* to the impartial Outcomes.
- Adding Elements of a Balanced Curriculum for safeguards against politicizing Ethnic Studies.
- Excluding BDS and other one-sided political conversations about Middle Eastern conflicts.
- Including approaches to social change that work within the system to improve it.

We must strive to live in a world where all people are respected. Where no one lives in fear for who they are. Ethnic Studies has the potential to help us do that but also has the potential to make us hate each other. I know you do not want to latter and need to steadfastly guard against anything the creates hate.

Please help make it so my kids do not need to grow up living in fear.

Sincerely,

Ari Beliak