

From: Mike Braun
Sent: Saturday, August 10, 2019 8:20 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Tony Thurmond
Subject: ESMC proposal is seriously flawed

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I am shocked by the flaws in the proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. I fully support the idea of teaching an ethnic studies class, but urge you to make major revisions to the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, consistent with the recommendations from the California Legislative Jewish Caucus letter. It seems that your recommendations have been hijacked by those who wish antisemitism to continue its explosive growth in our society probably because they see this as a way to bring pressure on the State of Israel.

I fully support diversity and inclusion; but despite the significant contributions of Jews to California's history, politics, culture, and government – and our community's longstanding struggle against hatred and discrimination – the ESMC practically erases the Jewish experience in America. The exclusion is offensive and inconsistent with the purpose of ethnic studies to promote inclusion and tolerance.

- This is indefensible in light of rising antisemitism in America and especially on college campuses.
- The ESMC omits any mention of antisemitism though there are three times as many hate crimes in America against Jews as against Muslims. The most recent FBI statistics record 938 antisemitic incidents and 273 Islamophobic incidents. Hate crimes against Jews rose by 37% according to 2018 FBI statistics, accounting for over half of religious-based hate crimes in the United States. Though a great deal of curriculum is devoted to Islamophobia, there is absolutely none devoted to anti-Semitism.
- The curriculum denigrates both Israel and Jews.
- The curriculum supports the antisemitic BDS movement. As Asad AbuKalil, Professor of Political Science and BDS leader at the University of California has said, "The real aim of BDS is to bring down the State of Israel."
- The over-emphasis of the Israeli Palestinian conflict and the definition of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) in the ESMC are both framed entirely from the vantage of proponents of BDS and fail to adhere to curriculum guidelines that require content to be taught in a manner that is "balanced", "inclusive", and reflective of "different perspectives". While Jews are an indigenous ethnic group to modern day Israel, and a significant minority in America, our voices are omitted in all curricular references to the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

The one-sided framing of the Israeli Palestinian conflict in the ESMC creates an intolerable scenario for Jewish students. They are already being stereotyped, accused of dual-loyalty, harassed and forced to face social litmus tests. Creating a curriculum that reinforces these sources of hatred will make the situation worse, when the espoused goal of your ESMC is to make things better.

I urge you to make major revisions or a significant rewrite of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum to address these concerns and would appreciate a response.

Thank you.

Michael Braun
Palo Alto, CA

