

From: Alex Jackson
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 7:32 PM
To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments for Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Good evening,

My name is Alexandra Berkley and I am a resident of California. I am also a product of the public school system and take great pride in my education.

I am also a proud Jewish woman who grew up in Orange County and Long Beach schools, where the Jewish population is not prevalent. I now live in Los Angeles with a larger Jewish population and consider myself a reform Jew.

It is great to see development in the Ethnic Studies class that will be taught in public high schools. I read through the updated curriculum and have only one note regarding Unit 6: Irish and Jewish Americans: Redefining White and American.

While it is interesting to learn about the history of the Jewish people and what brought them to America, including but not limited to the Holocaust where 6 million Jews were murdered innocently simply because of their religion, to ask high school students to write a paper about why Jews are more privileged than other races/religions in this country and who is "allowing" this to happen is anti-semitic. Even in the prompt, you are taking the horrible stereotype that "Jews control banks, media, Hollywood, etc." and putting it into educational rhetoric and essentially telling every high school student in California that this stereotype is true.

As I read through the rest of the units in Appendix A, I see that you end on social justice, you discuss stereotypes of almost every ethnicity in our country as well as how they arrived in America. I also see you're addressing how to disseminate stereotypical messages and why they're wrong, or how different immigrant communities have contributed to our workforce and made a positive impact on our society.

What I don't see is any other prompts about a religion. Although Judaism has led to debates about whether it is a religion and/or culture and/or ethnicity, it is a religion first and you are not teaching about other religions like Christianity, Buddhism or Catholicism. So why select Judaism to be analyzed and not others?

However, if you would like to have your students focus on the Jewish people and how their culture has been brought to America, I highly recommend you spend time teaching them about the Holocaust, teaching them about anti-semitism in America that is STILL here today, teach them about the anti-semitism rooted in the BDS movement and ask them to come up with ways to disseminate stereotypes of Jews and combat the anti-semitism in this country. Have a debate on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to introduce Middle East conflict to these students, relevant now more than ever as peace deals continue to develop between Arab countries and Israel.

I strongly recommend you take a very close look at Unit 6 and remove the anti-semitic overtones of it.

Thank you,

Alex Berkley