

From: Roma Levy

Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 5:20 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on 3rd draft of the CA ethnic studies proposed curriculum

Dear Superintendent. Thurmond and esteemed committee,

I wish to voice my concern over the newest proposed ethnic studies curriculum. In general, I think this is a very well thought-out and well-intentioned curriculum and I think its goals are admirable. Despite this I, like many other Jews, take exception to the use of the word "privilege" as applied in the model lesson on Jewish Americans.

Please be assured that I am not responding to an email plea or a single newspaper article. I have taken the time to read through the lesson, and I believe I understand the intention behind the use of the word. As a medical writer with many publications to my name, I am well aware of the importance of both connotation and denotation. While it is clear to me that the intention is to denote the dichotomy still faced by many American Jews of being perceived as an ethnic and religious minority while simultaneously sharing the advantages enjoyed by dominant ethnic and religious groups, the connotation of the word runs the risk of being used in a highly pejorative way that reinforces negative stereotypes rather than sensitizes the individual to them, or dispels them. The word "privilege" can be incredibly nuanced, and such nuance would almost certainly be lost on elementary- and middle school-aged children, and questionably understood by high schoolers without careful guidance by the teacher, who might or might not have reasonable expertise in the subject matter. For this reason, I would like to suggest you consider alternative terminology, such as "conveyed societal advantages," "benefits," or "freedoms." Any of these terms can be used to convey the same conflict experienced by many Jews of pursuing full acceptance in all strata and aspects of American society while not becoming fully subsumed through assimilation.

Respectfully,

H.Roma Levy, MS