

**From:** Miriam K. Freedman

**Sent:** Thursday, August 15, 2019 11:45 AM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Subject:** Public Comments with serious concerns about the proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Sir/Madam of the California Department of Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to add my voice to this effort.

Please say a loud and decisive NO to this Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). Based on the discussions I've heard and the press reports/editorials I've read about it, the ESMC is wrong and bad for our students and bad our glorious state. (I have not had the opportunity to read the entire document.)

While it's a relief to see today's statement by our State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond that the ESMC will be revised, his statement does not go nearly far enough. The challenges this ESMC pose go far, far, far beyond anti-Semitism. They cannot be cured by some tweaking (with more stakeholder groups) of the current document.

My concerns about this proposed ESMC are far more basic. It seems to me that this ESMC misses or bypasses the very point of education. We need to start with the basics: Why do we have any ethnic studies curriculum? Hopefully and presumably it is to **educate** students and open their minds about the various groups of people who make our state magnificent and the various social and economic systems at play. Different students should be allowed to have different opinions--hopefully with a factual basis. It's the factual basis that can justify creating an ESMC.

The purpose is not to **proselytize** students to favor some groups over others, to view history in one prescribed way, and to buy the party line of stakeholders; e.g., about capitalism racism, ableism, white supremacy, etc. Do those terms even belong here as they are being used? NO.

Such a curriculum must at a minimum include honest stories and voices of diverse groups and not create enemies among them; an honest picture of various social and economic systems without

fostering hatreds and further erosion of public trust and community among our citizens. And finally, at a minimum, it must be historically accurate and fair. From what I can read, it appears clear that this ESMC does not meet these minimums.

As a concerned citizen of this state, a former teacher, and parent/grandparent of students in public schools, **I urge you to please, please start over.** The "revision" needs far more than tweaks here and there. It needs to get back to basics: Why are we doing this? What is its purpose? How does it enhance a diverse and vibrant state?

The Los Angeles Times echoes these concerns:

We have no objection to a course that broadens students' thinking about race and gender and sexuality and history and power. But too often the proposed ethnic studies curriculum feels like an exercise in groupthink, designed to proselytize and inculcate more than to inform and open minds. It talks about critical thinking but usually offers one side and one side only.

You are today's guardians of our state's schools and our precious students. You owe it to all of our students to be honest, fair, and purpose-driven. I urge you to create a curriculum (if one must be had--an issue we can debate) that can be the pride of our citizens, not a "gotcha" weapon that some can use against others and foster further division and hatred in our state and nation (since California often leads the nation in these efforts). Such division and hatred is not good for our growing children and not good for our great state of California.

If I can be of assistance, please let me know.

Miriam Kurtzig Freedman, JD, MA

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Author of Special Education 2.0--

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