
From: Ilana Silver [email redacted]

Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 10:24 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] CA's Proposed Ethnic Studies Program is Antisemitic

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you as a young woman from Massachusetts that feels deeply concerned with the antisemitic rhetoric proposed for the ethnic studies curriculum. It has come to my attention that Jewish people are the only people described as privileged in the state's ethnic studies curriculum. Despite being miles away from your state, I cannot stand by and allow this dangerous idea to be practiced in schools. At the root of it, this notion perpetrates Jew-hatred among a large group of kids that are beginning to develop a sense of awareness in their communities and beyond.

While many (but not all) Jews experience white privilege, I would like to make clear that "Jewish Privilege" does not exist. As a Jewish person, I have been told I should die, I have been penalized in school for religious absences, and I have feared for my grandparents life while their synagogue was being gunned down in Pittsburgh. Although the list could go on much longer, I wanted to make a point, these are not privileges. As someone who is white-passing, it is my responsibility educate myself, check my privileges, and support black-owned businesses on my journey towards becoming an anti-racist. I recognize the institutionalized racial injustices that plague our country and participate in local and national government elections and referendums that aim to address these issues. That said, I believe that these are my duties as someone that experiences white privilege, and not the myth that is "Jewish Privilege".

What makes this language even more harmful is that it is notably used by the Klu Klux Klan leader, David Duke, a racist, antisemitic, and xenophobic white nationalist. "Jewish Privilege" is a pillar for many white supremacist and anti-Jew movements throughout history. Conspiracies that Jews control the banks, media, and government, and should be held responsible for all institutional problems are thousands of years old. We've seen this rhetoric transform itself into to expulsion, discrimination, alienation, and genocide of the Jewish people, most notably by Hitler who used this trope to justify the murder of 6 million Jews.

This is a scary time for Jews in America. Antisemitic hate crimes are at an all time high, and they are only growing. On television, we watch our neighbors scream "Jews will not replace us!" while celebrating the flag that calls for our destruction. The capitol insurrection was a fashion show for Jew-haters and racists alike, sporting confederate flags, "Camp Auschwitz" hoodies, and "6 Million Wasn't Enough" t-shirts among other hateful propaganda. These news headlines are certainly disturbing, but knowing that a shooter was in my grandparents synagogue with the intention of murder shook me to my core. These events all occurred because the organizers believed in "Jewish Privilege". Teaching this in your curriculum is harmful, unproductive, and terrifying for your Jewish constituents.

I hope you can consider these points when deciding the language for the state's ethnic studies program.

From a proud Jew,

I. Silver