

Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum
Statement: Joseph N Allen
Porterville, CA

Chair Iniguez, Vice Chair Muñoz, Members of the Commission,

Regarding Agenda Item 2, [History–Social Science Subject Matter Committee](#), I (Joseph N. Allen, California Resident and U.S. Citizen) recommend continuing the rewrite of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum document for the following reasons:

1) The document still contains inflammatory language with respect to racial preference. The following passage from the Preface contradicts the commission's intent of designing curriculum that encourages critical thinking and dialogue on race.

(Lines 69 – 71) *Ethnic studies courses address race within the context of how white dominated culture impacts racism and other forms of bigotry including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.*

If the objective is to engage all students in this discussion, focusing on “white” as a source of oppression will make dialogue impossible. White students will have little interest in critical thought if they are defending themselves against the sins of their fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and every generation that preceded them.

2) The very use of the word white seems to contradict the definition of race included in the Footnote for Line 44 *Race: the idea that the human species is divided into distinct groups on the basis of inherited physical and behavioral differences. Genetic studies in the late 20th century refuted the existence of biogenetically distinct races, and scholars now argue that “races” are cultural interventions reflecting specific attitudes and beliefs that were imposed on different populations in the wake of western European conquests beginning in the 15th century.*

If you embrace the view that genetic studies have “refuted the existence of biogenetically distinct races”, isolating the white race (old definition) is reverse discrimination. It implies the program is focused on social agitation for revenge, retaliation, and intimidation, not education. The following quote is taken from [New draft ethnic studies curriculum for California students issued after a year of study](#), by John Fensterwald

Characterizing the revision as “more of a reformat than a rewrite,” R. Tolteka Cuauhtin, a Los Angeles teacher and co-chair of the advisory committee that created the original draft curriculum, said Saturday he was pleased that it incorporates key elements of the original draft.

But he also said there are “some significant omissions” in the new document and concerns that will be fleshed out in coming days. In responding to the critics last year, the revision “now further caters to whiteness and the status quo attacks in significant ways,” he said.

It appears this Los Angeles teacher is not interested in a curriculum focused on critical thinking and dialogue that includes white students.

If the commission members are interested in providing leadership in California (as well as national leadership if this is the first ethnic studies program for grades 7 – 12), this document still needs serious work. I will submit more detailed comments during the Public Review period in September.

I'll close this (as I usually close my correspondence and blog posts) in the words of Edward R. Murrow, “Good night and good luck”.

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