

From: Nahal Kazemi
Sent: Monday, December 28, 2020 10:09 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] public comment on ESMC draft 3

To the State Board of Education:

As a parent and concerned member of the community, I want to thank you for developing and incorporating lesson plans on Jewish Americans in the Ethnic Studies curriculum and urge you to keep Sample Lessons 40 and 41 in the final draft. I would also urge you to add ADL's lesson BINAH -- Building Insights to Navigate Antisemitism and Hate, which is meant to help students develop empathy and become better allies, into the final version.

Growing up in Southern Orange County, I benefited immensely from my schools' efforts to educate its students about the Holocaust, including through the incorporation of works like "Number the Stars" and "Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl," in the curriculum, as well as with a trip to the Museum of Tolerance. In 2019, I was shocked and dismayed to see students in Newport Beach post photos of themselves giving a "heil Hitler" salute in front of a swastika made of plastic cups at a party. It was even more shocking to me that these students claimed that they had no idea how awful the history of antisemitism was, and lacked an understanding of what the Holocaust was. That ugly fact proved to me that a rich curriculum in ethnic studies, aimed at eradicating hatred and fostering empathy, is absolutely critical at this moment.

As I child, I had friends whose grandparents were Holocaust survivors. As an attorney, I have helped Holocaust survivors obtain reparations from the governments that persecuted them. I had the opportunity to learn from those who experienced terrible tragedy and it affected me deeply. I know that sadly, the number of Holocaust survivors still with us is dwindling and students will not be able to learn from them first hand. We need a robust curriculum that can pass those lessons along, especially in this time of rising anti-semitism, bigotry, and racism. Hate crimes are on the rise across the country. We cannot blithely assume that these are the death throes of hatred, harbored by older, unenlightened generations. Hate groups across America are recruiting young members and the best defense we have against a rising tide of intolerance is education.

Thank you for your work in creating a balanced, pedagogically sound Ethnic Studies course, incorporating the "core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations" to enrich California students' understanding of American history and current events. I urge you to remain committed to transparency during this process and allow for public comments in all phases of the development of a final ESMC.

Sincerely,

Nahal Kazemi