

From: Gary Davis
Sent: Monday, August 12, 2019 9:23 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Tony Thurmond
Subject: Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I am very troubled by the misguided, proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. I support the idea of teaching an ethnic studies class, but respectfully demand that you make major revisions or a significant rewrite of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, consistent with the recommendations from the California Legislative Jewish Caucus letter, Stand With Us, Jimena, Amcha and others.

I am Jewish, and was born and raised in San Francisco (second generation, son of WWII veteran) in a predominantly Irish neighborhood, and attended public school throughout my formative years. [I now live on the Peninsula.] I had pennies thrown at me (based on the ridiculous notion that Jews are cheap) and had kids yell "Christ killer" at me. I am not a very religious person, but moved to Israel in my late twenties and spent a total of 11 years living there. It is a complicated place, passions run deep within all segments of life and I do not agree with everything that happens over there from a political or religious standpoint. Even with all of that, the country is far more open and advanced than any of its neighbors in the vicinity, and produces amazing things that benefit all of humanity. I am shocked to hear that the curriculum of schools in CA may end up teaching a curriculum that either ignores the realities Jews face in this country and around the world, or outwardly takes a negative stance against Jews and the State of Israel.

Despite the significant contributions of Jews to California's history, politics, culture, and government – and our community's longstanding struggle against hatred and discrimination – the ESMC erases the Jewish experience in America. The exclusion is offensive and inconsistent with the purpose of ethnic studies to promote inclusion and tolerance.

- This is indefensible in light of rising antisemitism in America and especially on college campuses.
- The ESMC omits any mention of antisemitism though there are three times as many hate crimes in America against Jews as against Muslims. The most recent FBI statistics record 938 antisemitic incidents and 273 Islamophobic incidents. Hate crimes against Jews rose by 37% according to 2018 FBI statistics, accounting for over half of religious-based hate crimes in the United States.

Though a great deal of curriculum is devoted to Islamophobia, there is absolutely none devoted to anti-Semitism.

- The curriculum denigrates both Israel and Jews.
- The curriculum supports the antisemitic BDS movement. As Asad AbuKalil, Professor of Political Science and BDS leader at the University of California has said, "The real aim of BDS is to bring down the State of Israel."

Is the message of ESMC that Jews have no place even in the enlightened state of California? Are you telling me that when I made the choice to move back to CA from Israel to raise my family that we are outsiders with no place here? Do my contributions to this state and society, as well as my larger family's, mean nothing?

I insist that you make major revisions or a significant rewrite of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum to address these concerns. Just to be clear: i. I am very much against all forms of discrimination, and share in the desire to combat Islamophobia and other forms of racial intolerance in this country; and ii. I am not asking for charity, special treatment or for anyone to feel sorry for the history of persecution that Jews have faced historically. However, elementary balance must be woven into our childrens' school curriculum. How will we ever get past the seemingly increasing racial/ethnic divide if the next generation is set up to learn only a terribly skewed account of history on this subject matter?

Thank you,
Gary Davis