

From: Sheila Witzling
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 2:28 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: 2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum May 2019 Draft

I am writing to you as a retired secondary school teacher, a second generation Holocaust survivor, and grandmother. I hope you will research further to clarify some of the inaccuracies and misconceptions put forth in the proposed 2020 Ethnic Studies Curriculum. The stated purpose of this program is to promote greater understanding of diverse cultures but instead uses misinformation to sow the seeds of antisemitism among California's students. Information for sections of this curriculum come from talking points of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Organization whose claim that Palestinians live under apartheid conditions in Israel is shockingly false.

I am shocked for a simple reason: there is not and has never been a system of apartheid in Israel . That is not my opinion, that is fact that can be tested against reality by any person, should he or she choose to visit Israel to see for themselves.

For apartheid to exist, there would have to be a situation that closely resembled how things were in South Africa under the apartheid regime. Unfortunately for those who believe this, a weekend in any part of Israel would be enough to show how ridiculous the claim is.

The most obvious focus for apartheid would be the country's 20% Arab population. Under Israeli law, Arab Israelis have exactly the same rights as Jews or anyone else; Muslims have the same rights as Jews or Christians; Baha'is, severely persecuted in Iran, flourish in Israel, where they have their world center; Ahmadi Muslims, severely persecuted in Pakistan and elsewhere, are kept safe by Israel; the holy places of all religions are protected under a specific Israeli law. Arabs form 20% of the university population (an exact echo of their percentage in the general population).

Israeli hospitals not only treat Jews and Arabs, they also treat Palestinians from Gaza or the West Bank. On the same wards, in the same operating theatres.

In Israel , women have the same rights as men: there is no gender apartheid. Gay men and women face no restrictions, and Palestinian gays often escape into Israel, knowing they may be killed at home. It seems bizarre to me that groups call for a boycott of Israel and say nothing about countries like Iran, where gay men are hanged or stoned to death.

I do not object to well-documented criticism of Israel. I do object when supposedly intelligent people single the Jewish state out above states that are horrific in their treatment of their populations. Arabs and Iranians are rebelling against terrifying regimes that fight back by killing their own citizens.

The imbalance is perceptible, and it sheds no credit on anyone. I ask you to show some common sense. Listen to more than one side. Do not make your minds up until you have given a fair hearing to both parties. You have a duty to your students, and that is to protect them from one-sided arguments.

They are not at school to be propagandized. And they are certainly not there to be tricked into anti-Semitism by punishing one country among all the countries of the world, which happens to be the only Jewish state. If there had been a single Jewish state in the 1930's (which, sadly, there was not), don't you think Adolf Hitler would have decided to boycott it?