

**From:** Tatyana Sundeyeva  
**Sent:** Monday, August 10, 2020 11:10 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Deep flaws in the new Ethnic Studies draft

To whom it may concern:

I am a Jewish woman and a former refugee who grew up and attended school in San Francisco and I find the new proposed California Ethnic Studies curriculum, while an improvement on the past version, deeply flawed.

Here are some of the major issues:

In chapter 3 under "Asian," this draft refers to "the unique experiences of Arabs and other Middle Easterners." The Middle East cannot be divided into "Arabs and others," erasing the identities of dozens of other groups. In fact, this language is misleading, as California's Middle Eastern population is mostly made up of ethnic groups *other than* Arabs. The ESMC needs to "accurately and equitably represent the cultural and racial diversity of California so it is balanced," as the State Board of Education's Standards and ESMC Guidelines require. In fact, this section needs to list the following groups under "Asian" so they will be considered "core" to Ethnic Studies by name: Iranians, who comprise 26% of California's MENA population; Israelis and Jews of MENA descent who comprise 28%; Assyrian Christians, Coptic Christians, other Middle Eastern Christian; Zoroastrians, Baha'is, Yezidis, and Kurds. To do otherwise -- not consider them Asian and sweep them under the heading of "Arabs" or "other" (when in fact many of their family members have been subject to persecution and in some cases genocidal violence by their Arab neighbors) -- ranks them as less important, and is appalling cultural erasure.

As the CDE's ESMC draft says in the "Model Curriculum" section (on page 4), Ethnic Studies is about "bigotry including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia." The ESMC needs to include a section titled "Bigotry" with full lessons (not just links or summaries) on antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of hate, which CDE calls out as key Ethnic Studies course components. In addition to its importance in Ethnic Studies, this content is needed due to the dramatic increase in antisemitic hate crimes in California (up 72% from 2016). In fact, education on antisemitism and Holocaust is so lacking in California, that when I was in high school, a student came into school wearing a swastika on her t-shirt *in San Francisco* and no one batted an eye. I had a swastika etched on my locker and swastikas frequently cropped up on campus in UC Berkeley. Which brings me to my next point: The ESMC needs to revise its list of UC courses or provide guidance for teachers on how to teach inflammatory content with sensitivity and without bigotry. Currently, this list includes a course that covers the "philosophy" of the Nation of Islam, a group described by the Southern Poverty Law Center as deeply racist, antisemitic and anti-LGBT, indeed occupying "a prominent position in the ranks of organized hate." The leader of the Nation of Islam calls Jews Satanic and calls gay and interracial couples filth. Surely, this is not the "philosophy" that the State of California wants our children to learn. Conversely, the only UC course listed which even mentions American Jews is the one which equates the Jewish and Irish experiences and presents Jews as possessors of equal "racial

privilege.” This is a bizarre and false narrative: happily, nobody has ever bombed an Irish-American worship or culture center; but antisemitic violence, harassment and rhetoric is a constant and increasing phenomenon in the United States. Jews who are easily identifiable as such face daily harassment, attacks, and discrimination. All Jews who go to synagogue or a Kosher deli or any other Jewish place have to wonder about security, about what to do if a gunman shows up and tries to kill them as they pray or pick up groceries. I'm sure you can find a more accurate and just course on the Jewish people to endorse.

I consider myself a San Francisco native and I love the state of California, but the Ethnic Studies curriculum as it stands now makes me worried for my Jewish children, who, if this curriculum passes, will be marginalized, erased, and harassed even worse than I was, due to the sheer ignorance of our once-proud educational system.

Thank you,  
Tatyana Sundeyeva-Orozco