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To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>
Subject: The Proposed Curriculum Glorifies Anti-Semitic Figures as Role Models

The Proposed Curriculum Glorifies Anti-Semitic Figures as Role Models

The curriculum glorifies several problematic figures as role models for children. The most concerning is Linda Sarsour (Page 235, Line 4970). Linda Sarsour has consistently expressed hatred for Jews and the State of Israel and works toward the political tolerance of such hateful views. Sarsour once even expressed support for sexual violence against a woman.

Sarsour has actively tried to delegitimize the connection between Jews and Israel. In October of 2012, Sarsour tweeted out “Nothing is creepier than Zionism”. Recently, she claimed that Jesus was Palestinian, a gross example of historical delegitimization. Of course, Linda Sarsour also strongly advocates for the anti-Semitic BDS Movement while downplaying incidents of hate and violence against Jewish persons.

Regarding feminism, Sarsour has charged that Zionist-feminist women are not true feminists, in an effort to dispossessing them of their identities. Even worse, she joked about the removal of the genitals of a prominent feminist who had been the victim of FGM. Furthermore, Sarsour associates with open anti-Semites and known terrorists. Linda Sarsour is an ally of Louis Farrakhan, and publicly embraced deported terrorist, Rasmea Odeh.

A person who embraces terrorists, stands with anti-semites, jokes about FGM, downplays anti-Semitic victimization, and support BDS discrimination is not a fit role model for California’s students.

Jews and Israeli-Americans Were Intentionally Excluded from the Proposed Curricula

Despite being an ethnic studies curriculum meant to objectively focus on American minorities, the American-Jewish community has been entirely excluded. Given the many obvious points of Jewish communal contribution throughout the history of the United States, as well as the high-profile nature of anti-Semitic attacks that have recently taken place in Poway and elsewhere, it is obvious that this omission was not merely due to an insensitive oversight, but rather disturbingly, was intentional.

As stated by the California DOE, “the curriculum is written for educators or community members seeking guidance in developing a local high school ethnic studies program that reflects the pupil demographics in their communities”. Per the most recent U.S.

Census estimates, there are roughly 8,000,000 to 10,000,000 Americans that identify as Jewish which is 1.7% -2.6% of the total U.S. Population. There are also almost 250,000 Israeli-Americans in California. It is unacceptable that this curriculum includes no representation of Jewish and Israeli-American identity whatsoever.

In general, the Jewish people are a distinct group bearing a variety of religious, ethnic and cultural characteristics. Likewise, they collectively possess a unique and relevant history, cultural practices, traditions, and have made key contributions to American society. American Jews and Israeli-Americans possess a unique immigrant experience, tracing back to the American Colonial period and extending through more recent waves of arrival. This includes those who fled the Holocaust and persecution, as well as others who have come to make unique contributions to America. Despite facing discrimination, Jews and Israeli-Americans have nevertheless come to exemplify important aspects of the merits to be found in America's overall values, and have made many impressive contributions to society. To invalidate Jewish and Israeli-Americans by excluding their worthwhile narratives would teach the wrong lessons to students.

If anything, now is a time to enhance students' understanding and overall sensitivity toward the Jewish community. A report issued by the Anti-Defamation League detailed a shocking 67% increase in incidents from 2016 to 2017. A 2015 Brandeis Center-Trinity College study found that most Jewish-American college students had personally experienced or witnessed anti-Semitism. An AMCHA Initiative survey found a 45% increase in anti-Semitic activity on college and university campuses between 2015 and 2016. Given that anti-Semitic incidents are increasing at an alarming rate in the United States, it is outrageous that the proposed curriculum would nevertheless seek to instead promote the anti-Semitic BDS Movement, which has been widely condemned for its anti-Semitic nature.

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