

From: Jordan Ariel Zimbelman  
Sent: Thursday, August 8, 2019 8:11 PM  
To: Ethnic Studies  
Subject: Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Well Intentioned Teachers & Scholars,

I absolutely love that this program is being launched! It is so important for there to be awareness and tolerance raised in our schools. As a child, I was discriminated against as well. It means so much that my states school system is working on this area of society that still needs so much healing. I am a part of the South Coast Interfaith Council for that very reason. I go to events with people of all different faiths and see an array of people there who all look different from each other and believe differently from one another as well. The beauty is that we all have the same goal: to promote peace and unity amongst the people. On that note, I would like to share a story from my childhood:

When I was twelve years old, I used to walk to school. There was this boy that I had a few classes with. He was really cute, I thought. Blonde hair, blue eyes, cute little buzz cut, ripped black jeans, Doc Martins. Looked like a cool rocker dude to me. We weren't friends, but we knew who each other were. One day, when we were at a school assembly someone threw a balled up piece of paper at me. Curious, I picked it up and turned to see who threw it. It was that boy. He smiled at me mischievously. I smiled back, thinking that maybe he had a crush on me or something. I hadn't thought of him that way before, but again, he was cute and I was flattered. I unraveled the paper to find that I was very much mistaken. The paper was laden with swastikas and hateful comments. "Dirty Jew," it said, "Hitler will rise again and you and all of you family will die!" I turned around to see him and his friend pointing at me and laughing. I showed a couple of curious friends who sat around me. They told me not to pay any attention to him that he was just being mean. I was deeply hurt though and it was the second anti-Semitic experience that I had had that year (the first was a close friend of mine saying that she hated the Jews for killing Jesus). So, I balled the paper up, turned around, and threw it back at him. I was shaken the whole rest of the day, but I didn't want to tell on him to the teachers. I didn't know how to handle it.

I went home at the end of the day and told my parents - my father who was born Jewish and my mother who converted to Judaism after being agnostic for many years, because she loved the family values that the peaceful religion taught. She also loved that it didn't condemn or damn anyone for believing differently. That we are judged based on our actions.

Anyway, they were both obviously very upset and called the school. The school called the boy to the office the next day and I guess he gave them some cause to search his backpack. There they found the hateful note, a slew of other anti-Semitic paraphernalia, and a biography on the life of Adolf Hitler.

The boy approached me later that day and I was scared. Thankfully, he wanted to apologize and I forgave him. We went our separate ways and everything was fine. After the note though, my mom started driving me to school in fear that he would seek retaliation for my telling on him. I told her I didn't think he would, but she was afraid. She told me that kids usually think like that because of what they are taught at home.

As someone who was raised to look up to people who fought for peace and freedom, love and equality, my heroes were people like Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luether King Jr., Harriet Tubman, and (I was

twelve) Kurt Cobain. I am twenty eight years old now. I teach yoga and art in the LA area. I still look up to these people and strive to be like them.

My mission is to spread light and goodness wherever I go. I am a proud Jew and I have been to Israel. It is not what it is portrayed as in this text. I am hurt by the one sidedness that is presented in this proposal. Please, please, show the beauty and light of my people in your text. Share our story too. We are a good people. My future children deserve to grow up in a California where they can feel safe and accepted, just like everyone does.

Thank you for your time and understanding.

God bless you and yours -

Love and Light,

Jordan Ariel Saul-Zimbelman