

From: Susan

Sent: Sunday, August 11, 2019 3:46 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Subject: a response to the planned ethnic studies curriculum for California high school students

To the Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I was a teacher in Palo Alto for 15 years and am now retired. Because I have always believed in the value of exposing children to information about the varied ethnic and religious groups that make up our state and nation, my curriculum always included information about these cultures, their arts, and languages. Therefore, I was delighted to learn that the California School Board, headed by a man I voted for, has been working to implement an ethnic studies syllabus to widen the understanding of all students to the diversity among us.

However, in learning more about the program, it appears to me that you are subverting your own intention to give students an understanding of the perspectives of various ethnic groups by intentionally eliminating the history and present day situation of one particular religious and cultural group. This group has brought many benefits to our nation and the world, even though it has suffered the worst possible actions against it in an attempt to eliminate it from the world. If you do not present the history of this heinous attack on the Jews in WW II, and tell the coming generations how these people recovered and added much richness to the entire world, you are creating an enormous gap in the reality of life today. Jews have risen from the ashes of the Holocaust to provide the world with 20% of Nobel prize winners even though they are only .2% of the world's population. Jewish physicians have created life saving medical advancements such as a cure to prevent polio from which we all benefit. No culture is without its problems, and not everyone agrees with political decisions that any government makes, but to stigmatize this one group over all the other communities and cultures in the world is to set the stage for another Hitler.

If you want to point out the fact that all cultures have aspects that others will disagree with, that's one thing. However, to single out Jews for vilification in order to forward the political desires of another group is astounding in this day and age. You don't have to love Israel, but to vilify it in hopes of eliminating this one singular Jewish country by highlighting the BDS movement and not give credence to Israel's right to exist is unconscionable. People of varied minorities in Israel have more rights than in many Arab nations. Have we learned nothing from the Holocaust, from slavery, from hatred aimed at "the other"?

How is it possible, in such an educated state as California, that your committee could even contemplate teaching about all religions and ethnic cultures and leave out accurate information about the Jewish population? How is it possible to speak about cultural prejudices against blacks and Muslims, and not talk about the rampant and growing anti-semitism in our country today? Have we not just had shootings and deaths in synagogues in our nation? Jews now need police protection to attend a religious service, and you are creating a program that will add fire to the antisemitism that is becoming more and more apparent by not speaking fairly about Jews. I never believed, in my wildest imagination, that Jews would ever need to defend their existence again in America, the land of the free, and in California, the most forward thinking state in the nation.

I urge you not to deny this fact in our society. Jews are a definite minority and need to be supported by the larger community as much as Muslims, Mexicans, Native Americans and any other minority group do. If you do not include the Jewish story, you are making an egregious omission. Please rethink your plans for this new curriculum and give a fair share to all minority groups.

Susan Hahn