

From: carol boice

Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 10:55 AM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Opposition to CES "victim/oppressor model"

As a retired longtime U.S. History, Civics, and World History teacher with a BA in World History, MA in U.S. Diplomatic History, life Standard Secondary and Junior College Teaching credentials in history, I am opposed to the negative and divisive proposed new Ethnic Studies Curriculum. Using the "victim/oppressor model," just who are the oppressors and who are the victims? What good does it do to negatively label certain races or religions or ethnicities or groups in our history? Is the goal to incite anger and hatred? Is this new curriculum all about "blame and shame?" How does this new curriculum give students courage and hope, or are they stereotyped as hopeless and helpless victims of cruel oppressors forever, based on their heritage? Teaching history TOPICALLY lends itself to out-of-context misunderstandings with "sound bite" situations, missing "big picture" historical explanations. The history of the world and the United States is an unfolding progression of problem solving towards the betterment of human kind. It must be taught CHRONOLOGICALLY as each situation builds upon another. Yes, there are heroes and villains. No one is without flaws, but it is a process of overcoming obstacles for the greater good. Courageous individuals and peoples have stepped forward from many races, ethnicities, religions, genders, and groups who have made extraordinary contributions throughout history towards peace, scientific advancement, and solving all sorts of social problems. We try to honor and emulate as many of them as we can so that we may continue making progress in the world. If the new curriculum is designed to denigrate and humiliate certain groups and individuals with a negative slant, this erases or hinders the necessary respect, hope, courage, and incentive young people need to persevere and forge ahead with open minds to listen to all sides of issues. One of the Founding Fathers of our democratic-republic, Patrick Henry, is attributed to the following quote: "I may not agree with what you have to say, but I will fight to the death for your right to say it." I think that quote says it all and must be included in your new curriculum. We must also see historical figures as products of their periods of time.

As the first person in my family to go to college, coming from an immigrant background family, I have advised my students to "believe in yourself, work hard to overcome obstacles, keep an open mind, listen to all sides of issues before coming to conclusions, and focus on your goals." A negative, pessimistic curriculum, full of biased stereotypes and divisiveness, aimed at crushing the self-esteem of certain groups, does nothing to encourage understanding, hope, self-confidence, and the incentive to work hard towards positive goals, unity, and peace. An excellent book highlighting a modern historical character for students to learn from is Michelle Obama's "Becoming," which is optimistic and encouraging without "downer" themes of blame and shame, not hate-mongering or vilifying certain groups by portraying them as oppressors. It is an optimistic, "we shall overcome" and "can-do" example for students to emulate and respectful of diversity.

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