

**From:** d  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 9, 2020 7:29 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] ethnic studies curriculum

To: California Department of Education  
Ethnic Studies curriculum for California high schools

Re:

I look forward to the implementation of an ethnic studies curriculum, as mandated by legislation led by Jose Medina and others. The revised curriculum guidelines issued recently are a marked improvement over the first draft rejected last year, but still leave me with serious concerns. The opinion piece by Dan Walters (see below) reflects these concerns well. I fear that the Jargonese gobbledegoo (last letter changed by intention) referred to below is an indication that the authors of the worst of the objectionable proposals need to take a course in remedial English.

I support Mr. Medina's concept of emphasizing the four major areas of study he proposed. In the area of Asian studies, I think it is essential that students learn of the contributions of the many groups of Asian heritage that helped make this state what it is. It is also essential that students learn of the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War 2; the history of anti-Chinese legislation at the federal and state levels in the 19th Century; and the heroic efforts of these groups to overcome the prejudice they faced. Let us not forget the story of the Vietnamese who came here as refugees during and after the Vietnam War. I hope that the contributions of immigrants from the Philippines to the health care sector and personal care sector will be recognized. (Every hospital I worked in depended on skilled Filipino professionals.)

I support the need to recognize the Jewish community's history in California.

It is of great importance that the approach to an ethnic studies curriculum embraces the philosophy of inclusiveness and multiculturalism, and rejects the perniciousness of "critical ethnic studies."

As the curriculum progresses, and is improved with time, I hope that another group of people who came to California under difficult circumstances will be recognized, and their story told: the "Dust Bowl refugees" who came here during the Depression and settled in the San Joaquin Valley. I trust that you have all read "The Grapes of Wrath."

I will follow the deliberations over the curriculum in the coming weeks. May it pass that the curriculum you approve will address my concerns and merit my support. Thank you.

Eli Taub, M.D.  
Los Altos, California

Sent: Sun, Aug 9, 2020 9:05 am  
Subject: EB Times + SJ Merc Pg A15: Opinion: California still struggling to get ethnic studies right

**San Jose Mercury News** (Word limit – 150) online form: <http://www.mercurynews.com/letters-to-the-editor/>

**East Bay Times** (Word Limit - 150) Submit your letter within web page:

<https://www.eastbaytimes.com/letters-to-the-editor/>

BCC Camera [letters@camera.org](mailto:letters@camera.org)

**IDEOLOGICAL INDOCTRINATION**

# *California still struggling to get ethnic studies right*

**By Dan Walters**

*CalMatters*

A year ago, the California Department of Education released a draft of guidelines for implementing "ethnic studies" in public high schools.

It unleashed a torrent of controversy - for good reason.

The 303-page document was ersatz Marxist agitprop that, if adopted, would have drummed into young minds the notion that in America, anyone not a white male is virtually enslaved.

"At its core," the draft declared, "the field of ethnic studies is the interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity with an emphasis on experiences of people of color in the United States," adding, "The field critically grapples with the various power structures and forms of oppression, including, but not limited to, white supremacy, race and racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, islamophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia, that continue to impact the social, emotional, cultural, economic, and political experiences of Native People(s) and people of color."

In critiquing "systems of power," it advised, "These are structures that have the capacity to control circumstances within economic, political and/or social-cultural contexts. These systems are often controlled by those in power and go on to determine how society is organized and functions," adding, "some examples of systems of power are: white supremacy, capitalism and patriarchy."

Some of the most pointed criticism came from Jewish legislators who said in a letter, "We cannot support a curriculum that erases the American Jewish experience, fails to discuss antisemitism, reinforces negative stereotypes about Jews, singles out Israel for criticism and would institutionalize the teaching of anti-semitic stereotypes in our public schools."

Hurriedly, state education officials, including Superintendent Tony Thurmond, promised a makeover. The new version is definitely toned down - less a call for social revolution and more a conventional academic outline.

There's some irony in that transformation. The new draft was released as the fundamental change advocated in the first version was gaining currency in response to the suffocation death of a Black man, George Floyd, with the knee of a Minneapolis policeman on his neck.

Nevertheless, the new draft still contains echoes of the previous proposal, to wit:

"Ethnic studies should help students become more engaged locally and develop into effective civic participants and stronger social justice advocates, better able to contribute to constructive social change. It can also help students connect current resistance movements to those of the past, and to imagine new possibilities for a true democracy."

There's another bit of irony in the declaration that ethnic studies "can help students learn to present their ideas in strong, compelling, jargon-free language."

The draft itself is loaded with undecipherable jargon, such as saying ethnic studies help students "conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for post-imperial life that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing." Can anyone translate that?

When the Legislature required an ethnic studies curriculum to be created, its expressed rationale was that since Californians are a complex matrix of ethnicities and cultures, students should become more aware of who we are and how we got here.

No argument there. And there's absolutely nothing wrong with taking a warts-and-all approach, including slavery, genocidal treatment of native peoples and immigration patterns. Facts are facts and we shouldn't shy away from them.

But ideological indoctrination, which the first draft clearly embraced and still colors the second, is not knowledge.

The histories of America and California are not only tales of conflict, including a very bloody civil war, but also narratives of overcoming adversity and achievement, and well-balanced ethnic studies should include them as well.

The Legislature is weighing whether to make ethnic studies mandatory. If so, we'd better get it right.

*Dan Walters is a CalMatters columnist.*