

From: Valery Kreidenko
Sent: Sunday, August 11, 2019 12:03 PM
To: Superintendent
Subject: Deep concerns regarding the ethnic studies curriculum

Honorable State Superintendent Tony Thurmond,

I'm writing to you as a father of 2 daughters (like you) who sends them to a Californian public school every day. Recently I got aware of the [Ethnic Studies curriculum](#) and after learning the subject closely I decided to write to you and express my deepest concerns around the current draft.

Let me first start with a story on 2 miracles.

The first is my family personal one: I find myself not seldom looking at my daughters and thinking of their grandfather who was born in 1941 in the Jewish ghetto on the Nazi occupied Ukrainian territory. Before the WWII the village was populated with ~200 Ukrainians and ~500 Jews. After the war he was the only Jewish kid in his grade. How's that? The Jewish families hid their babies in barns and he was the only lucky survivor, all the rest choked in hay. This is our family miracle. The second miracle has some connotation with my family one. On the ashes of the darkest period in the human history the Jewish State of Israel was reborn. People whose forefathers were exiled from their land and in spite of their contribution into the all the fields of the civilization progress were severely persecuted religiously and ethnically almost everywhere along the exile history they returned to their Homeland. They returned to build an exemplary country which inspired in the past and continues to inspire many nations.

The 2 stories I told above are related to 2 significant issues I'm seeing in the suggested curriculum: 1. Unfair ignoring the topic of Jewish ethnics and community and related aspects; 2. Biased, incompetent, misleading and manipulative presentation of Israel.

Let me clarify something first: I'm not against ethnic studies per se. I might even be a big fan of this as long as it is based on the full and unbiased historical facts presentation, inclusive, fair, building empathy and willing to develop and support unity between different origins, and not creating hostility and hate or letting external (sometimes questionably legal) groups turn the public school system into the platform of promoting their political agenda.

If the curriculum is not fixed:

1. The opposite effect of the goal and intent are achieved: "selective inclusiveness" is there while a significant Jewish community and its real concerns wrt rising anti-semitism in California, the US and globally left behind. (see [Swastikas on Jewish Oakland Councilwoman's Forehead](#), [Facing anti-Semitism in California schools](#) – as the Superintendent you may find the fact that California topping the list of the states in this shameful competition as particularly disturbing for you)
2. Instead of fostering fact-based research, empathy and analyzing the situations from different sides and perspectives openly and freely, the public school system lets external, politicized, sometimes barely legal or even illegal, dialogue-destructive and hate groups interfere in the educational program.
3. The hostility and safety concerns wrt Israeli-origin and Jewish heritage students will deepen. Moreover, with the current sick situation around the guns policy and violence... well I prefer to cut my thought right here!

So I thought to humbly share some ideas how the severe flaws in this curriculum must be fixed:

1. Include mandatory (not advisory) module on the history of the Jewish people, their contribution into the different areas of the entire civilization progress and US specifically vs. the persecutions history – from the Temples destruction and exile from the Land of Israel at the ancient times, through the Spain exile, pogroms, Holocaust, attacks and hostility against the internationally recognized State of Israel, a long year terrorism against Israeli citizens and Jewish communities targets and the rising antisemitism around the world these days as well.

Discuss the paradox of antisemitism:

while the Jewish people have been tremendously contributing to the humankind (some examples):

*monotheism and the Judaism and Jewish tradition ethical and moral fundamentals
0.2% population produced 20% of Nobel laureates (100x factor vs. global population)
like with any other ethnic group discuss the prominent Jewish people [globally](#) and American
don't forget to mention and bring the examples of Israeli achievements (the only and exemplary
democracy in the Middle East, [StartUp Nation](#), 12 Nobel laureates, [Israeli inventions and discoveries](#), [IsraAid](#), etc.)*

they've been suffering from the persecutions like no other ethnic group in the world history

2. Remove all the false delusional and manipulative connotations of Israel which have nothing in common with the reality. Those are unfair, incorrect, misleading, hate-igniting and endangering students safety.
3. Fix the curriculum committee staffing: 1. exclude the politically biased members who are publicly known as supporting and endorsing the BDS and other hate and dialogue-destructive groups which are in a wide-consensus manner recognized as antisemitic and are illegal in the majority states in the US and other countries in the world; 2. include a fair representation of the Jewish **and** Israeli-origin communities in addition to all the currently represented communities.

Honorable State Superintendent,

I started this letter with a personal perspective and I'd like to conclude with another one. As a mid level manager in the Silicon Valley company I'm privileged to work with people coming from different places in the world, ethnical origins and backgrounds (India, China, Mexico, Iran, Russia, Ukraine are just a few examples). "Diversity and inclusion" is one of the 5 values of our tech company which has global R&D presence in Mexico, Poland, India, Russia and Israel with the latter serving as the core technology innovation center. We're raising our US-born kids as American patriots with the strong connection to their Jewish heritage and proud of their Israeli origin. And also fostering respect and curiosity to the different origins, cultures and traditions as we believe this helps to bridge the divide.

I spent some time learning your personal story and journey and I know for sure you won't turn away from my concerns which are concerns of over 1.2 million Jewish Californian and over 300,000 Israeli-origin residents included. Stand with us and say clearly:

NO to the selective inclusiveness; NO to the ignorance of the growing antisemitism in the Californian education system; NO to the hate messages within the school system

Sincerely yours, Dad of Libby and Adel (San Jose Orchard Elementary District).