

From: Jason Chukwu

Sent: Tuesday, November 3, 2020 6:21 PM

To: Ethnic Studies; [email redacted]; Tony Thurmond

Cc: [emails redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Remove Political Agenda from CA Ethnic Studies

Dear Members of the IQC, Superintendent Tony Thurmond, Governor Gavin Newsom, and Members of Legislative Caucuses,

As a Black American, I am disappointed with the current draft being proposed as the foundation for California's ethnic studies curriculum. We, and our foremothers and forefathers, have fought, struggled, and protested for inclusion—only to have many of our historical s/heroes and leaders erased from an ethnic studies curriculum that claims to elevate the study of Black people. Although the draft language released on July 31 is improved from the previous version in its specifics, the current model continues to represent Black people as a monolith, ignoring the diversity of our voices and experiences. It overlooks the accomplishments and methods of prominent Black leaders like John Lewis, Thurgood Marshall, Shirley Chisholm, Dr. King, and President Obama for the sake of elevating voices that derive from the Black Panther Party's Marxist political stance and encouraged violent revolution. This is a disservice to our youth.

While many of the direct references to specific neo-Marxist revolutionaries fortunately have been removed from the current version, we are concerned that the bias is still likely to show up in our classrooms based on the current values and principles. Indeed, this version depicts non-violent Black leaders as "passive" and "docile," (App B, lines 679-80) maintains an emphasis on Black accommodationalism, (App B line 689) and allows the opportunity for one-sided examples in vague general categories like African American Political Figures" or "Evolution of Black Political and Intellectual Thought." (App B, lines 705, 688). The Principles need to be amended to require that all lesson plans include balanced perspectives and avoid any political indoctrination.

The push for an ethnic studies model curriculum is long overdue. However, it should not come at the expense of further erasure and marginalization of centrist Black voices, experiences, and her/histories. Our people are diverse. We are multihued and multilingual. We come from all stripes of the political spectrum. We do not want our kids force fed a Marxist, militant creed - we want them to learn pride in their ethnic history and accomplishments. Black Americans have participated in every aspect of American life—even under the threat of death. Our foremothers and forefathers have bled and died for us to live. We should not, do not, and will not support another "curriculum" that seeks to diminish the variety of our experiences or our stories, forcing them into a neat little box of someone else's radical left wing ideology.

In summary, we ask that the curriculum be amended to remove support for a one-sided, neo Marxist / revolutionary agenda, and add explicit safeguards to ensure a balanced curriculum which accurately portrays history, the roles of various ethnic groups, and the diversity of the Black American experience.

Thank you.

Jason Chukwu