

From: Gail Rodkin
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 2:19 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Tony Thurmond ; JIAC
Subject: Concerns about Flawed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I am upset by the flawed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. I support the idea of teaching an ethnic studies class, but urge you to make major revisions or a significant rewrite of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum consistent with the recommendations from the California Legislative Jewish Caucus letter, Stand With Us, Jimena, Amcha and others.

While I support diversity and inclusion, I oppose a curriculum that “erases American Jewish experience, fails to discuss anti-semitism, reinforces negative stereotypes about Jews, singles out Israel for criticism, and would institutionalize the teaching of antisemitic stereotypes in our public schools.”

This is indefensible in light of rising antisemitism in America and especially on college campuses. The ESMC omits any mention of antisemitism though there are three times as many hate crimes in America against Jews as against Muslims. The most recent FBI statistics record 938 antisemitic incidents and 273 Islamophobic incidents. Hate crimes against Jews rose by 37% according to 2018 FBI statistics, accounting for over half of religious-based hate crimes in the United States. Though a great deal of curriculum is devoted to Islamophobia, there is absolutely none devoted to anti-Semitism.

The curriculum denigrates both Israel and Jews. The one-sided framing of the Israeli Palestinian conflict in the ESMC and the emphasis on the BDS fail to create a “balanced” and “inclusive” curriculum and creates a scenario where it’s likely that Jewish students may be stereotyped, accused of dual-loyalty, harassed and forced to face social litmus tests.

ESMC focuses heavily on power structures and forms of oppression including white supremacy, sexism, classism, Islamophobia, transphobia, but comes across in places as an attempt by fringe activists to hijack the model ethnic-studies curriculum for California high schools in the service of radical political goals. While I support the initiative in principle, this distorts the Jewish experience and often denigrates many mainstream ideas.

I urge you to make major revisions or a significant rewrite of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum to address these concerns.

Thank you.
Gail Rodkin

