

From: Noah S

Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 9:05 PM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>

Subject: Re: Automatic reply: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC)

Hello,

Apologies for the multiple emails, but I wanted to submit an updated, and final, letter revising some key points made previously to the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum's (ESMC) Third Field Review. After having more conversations with peers and taking a deeper dive into the curriculum, I do admire the efforts that the ESMC takes to include conversations about Jewish prejudice and diversity. There are many important topics in the curriculum that I greatly appreciate, but want to clarify some comments on topics which my peers and I find concerning.

I want to express thanks for the two lesson plans on Jewish Americans – Sample Lessons 40 and 41, *Antisemitism and Jewish Middle Eastern-Americans and Jewish Americans: Identity, Intersectionality, and Complicating Ideas of Race*. Additionally, I am grateful for the listing of antisemitism as a form of bigotry and oppression, especially at a time of increasing hate crimes and incidents targeting Jews.

I would like to ask for the following:

- revise the above lessons to address the below misrepresentations of Jews
- transparency and an opportunity for public comment in all phases of the development of a final ESMC
- an Ethnic Studies course incorporating “core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations” (Education Code section 51226.7) to enrich California students’ understanding of American history and current events

While the ESMC does address that Jews consist of many racial identities, it conflates race and religion in terms of privilege. White and/or white-passing Jews do experience more privilege than Jews of Color and other racial/ethnic groups in America, but that privilege has nothing to do with their Judaism—but rather those individuals’ race. Additionally, some of the below excerpts ignore the identities of Jews of Color by painting Jews as white.

Page 511 of the current draft states that “descendants of Jewish immigrants often assimilated and changed their position on the racial hierarchy from their immigrant parents, gaining racial privilege.” Researchers estimate that Jews of Color represent at least 12-15% of American Jews, or about 1,000,000 of the United States’ 7,200,000 Jews.¹ The foregoing excerpt disregards the experiences of Jews of Color, as they were, and still are, unable to gain “racial privilege” simply by changing their names. Jews of Color do not possess any additional racial privilege in America than non-Jewish people of color; any belief otherwise would be a claim rooted in anti-Semitic theory about Jewish power. The “racial privilege” a white/white-passing Jew can gain has nothing to do with their Judaism, but rather with their race, and therefore should not be conflated with the Jewish narrative.

Additionally, the above excerpt implies that white-passing Jews simply *chose* to change their names, when in reality many were forced to in order to survive yet still faced constant discrimination afterwards, as a name change alone was not enough to make white-passing Jews accepted as “white” by many social circles (which still persists to this day).

Page 510 and 511 of the current draft also state that “anti-Jewish prejudice decreased” post 1945 as Jews were able to gain “conditional whiteness”. The above paragraphs already illustrate why the “conditional whiteness” phrase is detrimental, and stating that prejudice is decreasing is also inaccurate. According to the FBI’s 2018 Hate Crime Statistics, “a breakdown of the bias motivation of religious-biased offenses showed: 57.8 percent were anti-Jewish.”² In 2014, 609 anti-Jewish hate crime incidents were reported to the FBI. By 2018, the most recent year for which statistics are publicly available, that number had increased nearly 40 percent, to 835 incidents.³

Including the above excerpts “as-is” in the ESMC would teach Californian youth a flawed narrative minimizing prejudice against Jews, overshadowing the identities and hardships faced by millions of Jews of Color, and include dangerous tropes about Jewish power.

Sincerely,
Noah

Sources:

- 1) <https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/population-of-jews-of-color-is-increasing-in-u-s-despite-undercounting-in-population-studies/>
<https://jewsofcolorfieldbuilding.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Counting-Inconsistencies-052119.pdf>
- 2) <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2018/topic-pages/incidents-and-offenses>
- 3) <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/anti-semitic-attacks-more-violent-hate-crimes-new-york-n1110036>

On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 4:48 PM Noah S wrote:
Hello,

I would like to submit a modified version of the letter I wrote yesterday. Some of what I said was more so out of initial frustration, rather than taking a more sound teaching approach and expressing gratitude for the curriculum as a whole. To clarify, I am thankful that the ESMC is being taught, but just wanted to point out some areas which could use improvement. I apologize if my tone came off as angry and/or dismissive of the curriculum as a whole. After having more conversations and learning more about the ESMC as a whole, I would like to express the below comments.

I first want to express thanks for the two lesson plans on Jewish Americans – Sample Lessons 40 and 41, *Antisemitism and Jewish Middle Eastern-Americans and Jewish Americans: Identity, Intersectionality, and Complicating Ideas of Race*. Additionally, I am grateful for the listing antisemitism as a form of bigotry and oppression in the ESMC, especially at a time of increasing hate crimes and incidents targeting Jews.

I would like to ask for the following:

- retain the above lessons, but suggest adding the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) lesson "BINAH – Building Insights to Navigate Antisemitism and Hate"¹
- transparency and an opportunity for public comment in all phases of the development of a final ESMC
- a pedagogically sound Ethnic Studies course incorporating "core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations" (Education Code section 51226.7) to enrich California students' understanding of American history and current events
- revise the ESMC to address the following misrepresentations and inaccuracies of Jews

The current draft states that "descendants of Jewish immigrants often assimilated and changed their position on the racial hierarchy from their immigrant parents, gaining racial privilege." Based on the three most comprehensive data sets available (the 2013-2019 American Jewish Population Project, the 2011 New York Community Study, and the 2017 San Francisco Bay Area Community Study) researchers estimate that Jews of Color represent at least 12-15% of American Jews, or about 1,000,000 of the United States' 7,200,000 Jews.² The foregoing quotation disregards the experiences and identities of Jews of Color, as they were, and still are, unable to gain "racial privilege" simply by changing their names. Jewish people of color do not possess any additional racial privilege in America than non-Jewish people of color; any belief otherwise would be a claim rooted in anti-Semitic theory about Jewish power.

The current draft also ignores the identities of the millions of Middle-Eastern and North African Jews living outside the U.S., and all other Jews of Color, by inaccurately painting Jews as a mono-racial group. Judaism is an ethnoreligion, not a race, and consists of individuals from a wide range of racial identities. The "racial privilege" Jews can gain has nothing to do with their Judaism, but rather with that individual's race, and therefore should not be conflated with the Jewish narrative. Additionally, the above quotation makes it seem as if white-passing Jews had simply "chosen" to change their names, when in reality many were forced to in order to survive yet still faced constant discrimination afterwards, as a name change alone was not enough to make white-passing Jews accepted as "white" by many social circles (which still persists to this day).

The current draft also states that "anti-Jewish prejudice decreased" post 1945 as Jews were able to gain "conditional whiteness". The above explanations already illustrate why the "conditional whiteness" argument is harmful, and stating that prejudice is decreasing is also inaccurate. According to the FBI's 2018 Hate Crime Statistics, "a breakdown of the bias motivation of religious-biased offenses showed: 57.8 percent were anti-Jewish."³ In 2014, 609

anti-Jewish hate crime incidents were reported to the FBI. By 2018, the most recent year for which statistics are publicly available, that number had increased nearly 40 percent, to 835 incidents.⁴

The above sections of the ESMC's current draft paints a false narrative that all Jews are white, and therefore privileged, and that Jews as a whole face consistently less discrimination. Although many white and/or white-passing Jews are more privileged than other racial/ethnic groups in America, that privilege has nothing to do with their Judaism—but rather that individual's race. The wording addressed in the above sections would teach Californian youth a flawed narrative consisting of dangerous tropes about Jewish power, minimizing prejudice against Jews, and erasing the identities and hardships faced by millions of Jews of Color both domestically and worldwide.

Sincerely,
Noah Shore

Sources:

- 1)
https://www.adl.org/education/antisemitism?_ga=2.15088310.1676329339.1611535236-6979710.1611535236
- 2)
<https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/population-of-jews-of-color-is-increasing-in-u-s-despite-undercounting-in-population-studies/>
<https://jewsofcolorfieldbuilding.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Counting-Inconsistencies-052119.pdf>
- 3)
<https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2018/topic-pages/incidents-and-offenses>
- 4)
<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/anti-semitic-attacks-more-violent-hate-crimes-new-york-n1110036>

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<https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/population-of-jews-of-color-is-increasing-in-u-s-despite-undercounting-in-population-studies/>
<https://jewsofcolorfieldbuilding.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Counting-Inconsistencies-052119.pdf>

3)
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