

**From:** Jack Forman

**Sent:** Tuesday, September 29, 2020 11:28 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum for California High Schools (ESMC)

To the California Department of Education:

At the very beginning of this month, I emailed you a letter about some disturbing issues that remained as part of the model curriculum for teaching Ethnic Studies to high school students.

I am writing a short note again regarding the ESMC before the September 30 deadline for comments on the curriculum.

The overarching purpose of Ethnic Studies classes at the high school level should be to teach students about the diverse ethnic groups in America, their rich cultures and the significant contributions each made to our country. The substance taught in these high school courses should be focused on the historical experience of these ethnic groups in the U.S. and how they are faring today, and it certainly should not endorse or even include political ideologies and concepts associated with them.

Earlier drafts of the ESMC ignored Jews as an ethnic group or lumped them negatively and erroneously into a category of "privileged white Americans"; it also included overt examples of antisemitism and anti-Zionism bias that utilized historical anti-Semitic tropes about Jews and endorsed the BDS movement, which denies the right of self-determination of Jews to a homeland in their ancestral lands. Fortunately, the re-written current draft partially has addressed these criticisms.

However, without public transparency, a discarded lesson plan on Arab-Americans from the original 2017 draft of ESMC was reinserted into the current draft under the category of Asian-Americans. This highlights the need for a lesson plan in the ESMC document concerning the ethnic diversity of Jewish-Americans. 15% of American Jews are Jews of Color (family origins are African-American, Asian or Latin-American), and the rest are a rich mixture of Ashkenazic, Sephardic, and Mizrachi Jews who immigrated to the U.S. and became American citizens. In addition, any lesson plan on Arab-Americans should include the American Jews of Middle Eastern and North African descent,

some of whom immigrated to America after they were evicted from their Arab birthplace nations in the Middle East.

The current draft should also include a lesson plan on anti-Semitism as a expression of hate, it and should be defined clearly and comprehensively, using the definition composed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance ([Working Definition of Antisemitism](#))

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Finally, I hope in the future that the Instructional Quality Commission will adhere to its own standards and timelines and be fully transparent in its actions.

Ethnic Studies is more important than ever, and it would be a tragedy if the State of California allowed it to include the very seeds of ethnic hate which it is trying to eliminate.

Jack Forman