

Greetings,

My name is Jack Lucas. I am a lifelong California resident and a former student of California public schools. I am writing to you because, while the public comment period on the ethnic studies curriculum has closed, I want to express my unequivocal support for the proposed curriculum and strongly urge the California State Board of Education to reject any changes to the curriculum, especially as it regards the portrayal of Israel.

According to CalMatters, the proposed curriculum will teach students about, among other lessons, the compounded oppression that black women face in society, known as misogynoir; how discrimination against trans people, queer people, and non-men intersect in the form of cisheteropatriarchy; and the presence of Islamophobia in society. The most controversial point appears to be the characterization of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which the curriculum defines as a "global social movement that currently aims to establish freedom for Palestinians living under apartheid conditions." Like other parts of the curriculum, this should remain unchanged.

The BDS movement calls for a boycott of, divestment from, and sanctions against Israel and all companies and institutions with ties to Israel. This call arises from the conditions that Palestinians in the region face. For instance, on a single day in May of 2018, Israeli troops killed up to 60 Palestinians protesting at the Gaza border for the right of return to the land from which they were displaced. As an indication of the power imbalance, only one Israeli soldier had even been wounded up to that point. Last month, hundreds of Israeli troops demolished Palestinians homes and displaced families in order to build more settlements on Palestinian land. Just this week, the Israeli government announced it would ban two Muslim congresswomen, one of whom is of Palestinian descent, from entering Israel because of their criticisms of the country's treatment of Palestinians. The undemocratic and violent actions of Israel, like these, are the basis for the BDS movement and general criticism of Israel. The movement's main goal is Palestinian self-determination, meaning an end to the occupation of Palestinian land and the right of return, among other priorities. As the BDS website explicitly states, it opposes all forms of discrimination, including antisemitism.

The lessons in this ethnic studies curriculum would be important in teaching California students about the challenges minority groups face in America and lead to greater understanding and appreciation of history, including Palestinian history. Palestinian students, just like Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, deserve to see their history taught in school. The proposed curriculum's characterization of BDS and Israel is an accurate reflection of that history. While the Board has reportedly agreed to revise the curriculum as a result of the criticism it has received over the portrayal of Israel, I urge the members of the Board to reconsider and keep this curriculum as it is.

Thank you for your taking the time to read this letter and for considering this view.

Sincerely,
Jack Lucas