

**From:** Sarah Levin

**Sent:** Wednesday, September 30, 2020 4:51 PM

**To:** Superintendent

**Cc:** Tony Thurmond; [emails redacted]; Ethnic Studies; [emails redacted]

**Subject:** Inclusion of revised lesson plan, "Antisemitism and Jewish Middle Eastern Americans"

To Governor Gavin Newsom, Superintendent Tony Thurmond, State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond, Deputy Superintendent Stephanie Gregson, Instructional Quality Commission Chair Jose Iniguez, and Instructional Quality Commission Executive Director Shanine Coats:

This month over 5,800 members of the public asked the Instructional Quality Commission to include Middle Eastern Jewish Americans, also known as Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews, in the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC).

Attached is JIMENA's\* comprehensive lesson plan "[Antisemitism and Jewish Middle Eastern Americans](#)"\*\* we ask be included in the ESMC Appendix B, Asian American and Pacific Islander section. It was written by a professional, independent regional scholar and curriculum expert.

The ESMC defines Ethnic Studies as the "study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity, with an emphasis on the experiences of people of color in the United States [who have] common experiences of racism [including] examples of how collective social action can change society in positive ways." (Chapter 1, page 4). Asian Americans\*\*\* includes "the unique experiences of Arabs and other Middle Easterners" (Chapter 3, pages 20) and "forms of bigotry including anti-Semitism." (Preface, page 4).

California has a total population of at least 200,000 Mizrahi Jews who are an indigenous Middle Eastern community that has experienced racialization, antisemitism, and marginalization here in the United States. Many individuals within our communities have intersectional identities as a result of experiencing prejudice and discrimination as Jewish Americans, as Middle Eastern refugees and immigrants, and as people of color in California. (The Iranian Jewish community in Los Angeles is one of the largest Middle Eastern diasporic communities in North America.)

It is imperative that students learn about us and antisemitism which is why antisemitism is the focus of our lesson. One of the oldest and most deadly forms of hate, antisemitism remains the third most prevalent ethnic-based and the most prevalent religious-based hate crime in the US and California (68% of California's total for 2% of its population), up 72% since 2016.

Moreover, "antisemitism has become integral to the architecture of American racism.... which means the other channels of its hatred cannot be intercepted without directly taking on antisemitism" according to Eric Ward, a prominent leader of color whose life work is studying, exposing, and countering organized hate groups. Antisemitism is the "fuel that White nationalist ideology uses to power its anti-Black racism, its contempt for other people of color, and its xenophobia—as well as the misogyny and other forms of hatred it holds dear," Ward has concluded.\*\*\*\*

It is JIMENA's hope that our lesson on Jewish Middle Eastern Americans as well as content on other Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) groups which represent 60% of California's Middle Eastern community will be included in the ESMC, satisfying legislators' aim when enacting AB 2016 -- "preparing pupils to be global citizens with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures." The ESMC must comply with the State Board of Education's (SBE) requirements that content portray peoples

proportionately (SBE Social Content Standards, 2013) and it be balanced (SBE ESMC Guidelines, 2017). California's Education Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, ethnicity, and religion.

Thank you,

Sarah Levin, Executive Director

Gina Bublil-Waldman, President

\* "Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa"

\*\* This is an updated, shorter version of the two lesson plans we submitted July 14, 2020, formatted as the California Department of Education requested.

\*\*\* San Francisco State Asian Studies Professor Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales advised CDE that it "need[s] to consider Asian American Studies as a growing field...addressing unique voices, history, humanities and issues of broad racialized groups." (CDE's October 15, 2019 Ethnic Studies expert panel presentation).

\*\*\*\* "Skin in the Game, How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism," Eric Ward (June 29, 2017)  
<https://www.politicalresearch.org/2017/06/29/skin-in-the-game-how-antisemitism-animates-white-nationalism>

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Sarah Levin

Executive Director

JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa