

From: emanuel k

Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 7:11 PM

To: Ethnic Studies; [emails redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Antisemitism and the Middle Eastern-American Experience in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission of the California Department of Education,

My name is Kathy Emanuel, and I am a concerned parent of LAUSD students in Los Angeles, California. I am also a Middle Eastern Jewish woman. My parents and I are Mizrahi Jews who fled Iran during the revolution in January of 1979. We took just a couple of suitcases of personal possessions and left everything behind because we were scared of physical antisemitic persecution. There had been antisemitism in Iran in many forms. We were now worried that our lives were in serious danger. While we were waiting in Paris to be able to enter the United States, my father learned that his work partner, also Jewish, had been executed by the new regime. His fears were not unfounded.

I appreciate your efforts to improve the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. One way I can help you improve it to be the high quality, inclusive, and impactful program that you envision is by sharing a little of my experience as a Middle Eastern Jewish immigrant and ask that you see me -- that you see us, as there are many of us here in California -- and include our experience in the Curriculum. I identify as one of the 500,000 Californians of Middle Eastern heritage who has been ignored so far in the revised Ethnic Studies curriculum. As an Iranian American Jew, I am proud to be an American, proud to be Jewish, and proud of my Middle Eastern heritage. For AB 2016 to achieve its objective of "preparing pupils to be global citizens with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures," my Iranian, Jewish community and other Middle Eastern communities in California deserve equal representation and inclusion in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

The fact that the primary reference to Jews in the revised Curriculum is in the context of our communities being the beneficiaries of white privilege is laughable, if it weren't so willfully blind and bigoted. The Middle Eastern Jewish community in California is comprised of people from different countries, backgrounds, cultures and colors. Members of my community experienced antisemitism in Iran, and members of our communities have experienced xenophobia and antisemitism in California. Having an "ethnic studies" curriculum in California and not including adequate instruction about people from the Middle East, Jewish people and antisemitism makes no sense. If you were to walk into LAUSD schools when they are in session, you would see many students from our communities. Please include them in the Curriculum.

I am specifically asking that the Curriculum be further revised to include the following:

1. All references to Middle Eastern people in the Curriculum should include, specifically name, and teach on the diverse groups of Mizrahi Jews, Iranians and other minority groups from the Middle East, who are asking for inclusion.
2. The next draft should include the lesson plan, "Antisemitism and Middle Eastern-American Jews" produced by the organization, JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa, to provide students with quality instruction on antisemitism, bigotry and the Middle Eastern-American experience.
3. The Curriculum should make clear that the umbrella of Asian Studies includes Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) groups which represent approximately 60% of California's MENA population.

Please see us and include us.

Best,

Kathy Emanuel