

December 21, 2020

California Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom, Superintendent Thurmond, Dr. Darling-Hammond, and Instructional Quality Commission Members,

We are writing on behalf of our organizations with deep concern about California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). Based on the problematic "Guiding Values and Principles," the ESMC promotes and romanticizes specific political ideologies with no counterbalancing perspective. Guidelines should be added, and the sample lessons revised, to ensure that ethnic studies courses focus on a thorough understanding about ethnic groups, social issues, and civic engagement, without political proselytizing.

As organizations who represent many of the ethnic groups mentioned in the ESMC and who work to educate Americans about the truthful depiction of history, we call on you to ensure there is an accurate portrayal of the perils many American immigrants have overcome as a result of communism.

Tens of millions of Americans trace their heritage to current or former communist countries. This past decade has demonstrated that communism still poses a threat to the human rights of the one-fifth of the world's population who live under communist regimes.

It is vital our educational systems teach the truth about communism to all students. Many victims of former communist countries – Cambodia, Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and beyond – sought asylum in the United States as a result of the persecution they faced under oppressive communist dictators in their home countries and many victims of current communist countries – from Cuba, China, North Korea, and Venezuela to name a few – take great lengths to come to the United States to find refuge today.

We urge you to make significant revisions to the ESMC to address these concerns. Please revise the Guiding Values and Principles of the ESMC to use more precise and inclusive terminology, to align with the State Board of Education's ESMC Guidelines, to build bridges of intergroup understanding, and to ensure critical thinking.

Please see attached for the problematic line numbers.

Sincerely,



Fr. Charles Nalls
President
American Cold War Veterans, Inc.



Channy Chhi Laux
CEO & Founder
Ankor Cambodian Foods



Rushan Abbas
Founder and Executive Director
Campaign for Uyghurs



John Suarez
Executive Director
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**CUBA
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Rosa María Payá
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Nguyen-mau Trinh
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Friends of The Imperial City of Hue



James R. Fisher
Executive Director
Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation

His Excellency Martin Palouš

Former Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Czech Republic to the United States
Former Ambassador of the Czech Republic to the United Nations
Director, Václav Havel Program for Human Rights and Diplomacy (FIU)



VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM
MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

Marion Smith
President and CEO
Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation



Reggie Littlejohn
Founder and President
Women's Rights Without Frontiers

California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Draft 3 Problematic Line Items

Appendix A: Sample Lessons and Topics

The following individuals are from *Appendix A: Sample Lessons and Topics*. The below descriptions are **not** part of the lessons.

Sample Lesson 6: Important Historical Figures Among People of Color

Neo-Marxist Figures:

Angela Davis (Sample Lesson 6: line 1012, p. 45)

- Black Panther, **Marxist and communist activist/author and professor**, Communist Party Vice President

Assata Shakur (Sample Lesson 6: line 1027, p. 46)

- Member of Black Liberation Army, an organization engaged in **armed struggled against the U.S. government** through tactics such as robbing banks and killing police officers
- Assata was convicted of first-degree murder of a police officer

bell hooks (Sample Lesson 6: line 1016, p. 45)

- Author whose writing focus has been the **intersectionality of race, capitalism, and gender** and what she describes as their ability to **produce and perpetuate systems of oppression and class domination**
- **Marxist advocate of class struggle**

Bobby Seale (Sample Lesson 6: line 1026, p. 45)

- Black Panther co-founder (“revolutionary front against racist, capitalistic system”); co-founder of Soul Students Advisory Committee (**revolutionary goals with slogan of “Freedom by any means necessary”**).
- Associated with/implicated in several murders (of fellow Black Panthers Alex Rackley and Fred Bennett), but charges were dropped or not pressed.

Comandanta Ramona (Sample Lesson 6: line 1125, p. 50)

- Comandanta Ramona (1959-2006) was **the nom de guerre of an officer of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, a revolutionary indigenous autonomist organization** based in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas.
- Ideology: **far left socialist Marxist ideology; anti-imperialist/anti-capitalist, libertarian socialist, radical democracy, anti-Zionist**; seeks indigenous control over local resources

Farabundo Martí (Sample Lesson 6: line 1130, p. 50)

- Agustín Farabundo Martí Rodríguez (1893-1932), popularly known as Farabundo Martí, was a **Marxist-Leninist activist and a revolutionary leader in El Salvador** during the 1932 Salvadoran peasant massacre.

- Became known as a Salvadoran revolutionary and, for many, a martyr for the Salvadorian people; involved in the founding of the Communist Party of Central American and led a communist alternative to the Red Cross called International Red Aid. Its **goal was to help poor and underprivileged Salvadorians by the use of Marxist-Leninist ideology.**
- **Helped start a guerrilla revolt of indigenous farmers.**

Frantz Fanon (Sample Lesson 6: line 1123, p. 50)

- French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher influential in fields of Marxism, post-colonial study, and critical theory.
- Fanon argued that **violence is a necessary tool of people's political engagement.** He scribed violence as the defining characteristic of colonialism and a cathartic reaction to the oppression of colonialism. He wrote about the liberation of colonial peoples. He advocated the theory that some neuroses are socially generated.
- Fanon inspired national-liberation movements and other radical political organizations in Palestine, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and the United States.
- *Black Skin, White Masks* is one of Fanon's important works. In it, Fanon psychoanalyzes the oppressed Black person; his work is especially influential on the American liberation struggle more commonly known as the Black Power Movement, the Black Panther Party, and anti-colonial and national liberation movements.
- Influential in Black Studies and more specifically, in the theories of Afropessimism and Black Critical Theory.

Fred Hampton (Sample Lesson 6: line 1015, p. 45)

- Black Panther **Revolutionary Socialist**, Chairman of Chicago chapter of the Black Panther Party (BPP), deputy chairman of National BPP
- Organized an alliance amongst major Chicago street gangs to help them end fighting and work for social change; instrumental in the BPP's free breakfast program and launched a community supervision of police project.
- Was shot and killed in his bed in a raid— likely an FBI assassination; of the three Black Panther figures included in ESMC (Seale, Davis, Hampton), he seems a tragic figure, trying to do good and not personally associated with violence.

Fred Ho (Sample Lesson 6: line 1039, p. 46; Sample Lesson 28: line 6555, p. 314)

- **Saxophonist and Marxist social advocate, anti-imperialist, revolutionary internationalist**
- **Dismissed Yo-Yo Ma as an 'assimilationist'**
- Ho polemicized against the "white assimilationist notion of the petty bourgeois Asian American artist, that anything by an Asian American artist makes it Asian American," stating that, for instance, "Yo-Yo Ma is a cellist who happens to be Chinese/Asian American, not a Chinese/Asian American musician."
- Quote by Fred Ho: "In opposing cultural imperialism, a genuine multicultural synthesis embodies revolutionary internationalism in music: rather than co-opting different cultures, musicians and composers achieve revolutionary transformation predicated upon anti-imperialism in terms of both musical respect and integrity as well as a practical political economic commitment to equality between peoples."

Grace Lee Boggs (Sample Lesson 6: line 1046, p. 46; Sample Lesson 28: line 6564, p. 315)

- Far-left social and political activist.
- Translated into English many of the essays in Karl Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 for the first time.
- Co-authored *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*, reviewing Russian, Chinese, Guinea-Bissau, and Vietnamese revolutions and summarizing the Marxism, Leninism, Maoism, and other currents of Marxism active in the revolutions of the time. A second section is devoted to the United States, surveying class forces from the thirteen colonies to the present, emphasizing Black slavery.
- Founder of Detroit Summer, a multicultural intergenerational youth program.

Lolita Lebrón (Sample Lesson 6: line 1084, p. 48)

- Led an armed group of Puerto Rican nationalists in an attack on the U.S. House of Representatives in 1954. They fired 30 bullets from a spectator's gallery, wounding five congressmen.

Mumia Abu-Jamal (Sample Lesson 6: line 1006, p. 44)

- **Convicted of first-degree murder of a police officer.**
- In his youth was a member of the Black Panther Party; **known for quoting Mao "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."**
- Notable contributions occurred during life imprisonment, where he published essays and books on the death penalty / criminal punishment and broadcast radio commentaries.
- Previously he was a regular columnist for *Junge Welt*, a Marxist newspaper in Germany.

Oscar López Rivera (Sample Lesson 6: line 1093, p. 49)

- Activist and militant who was a member and suspected leader of the **Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña (FALN), a clandestine Marxist-Leninist paramilitary organization** devoted to Puerto Rican independence and is **responsible for over 130 bomb attacks in U.S. cities between 1974 and 1983.**
- López Rivera was convicted for seditious conspiracy, use of force to commit robbery, interstate transportation of firearms, and conspiracy to transport explosives with intent to destroy government property.

Roque Dalton (Sample Lesson 6: line 1165, p. 50)

- 1935-1975: One of Latin America's most compelling poets and an important **political architect of the revolutionary movement in El Salvador.** He wrote emotionally strong, sometimes sarcastic, and image-loaded works dealing with life, death, love, and politics.
- Dalton's work inspired the imagination of those dedicated to the overthrow of the capitalist system, **committed to armed struggle; Marxist-Leninist, joined the Communist Party.**

Vickie Castro (Sample Lesson 6: line 1075, p. 48)

- **Leading female figure in the East Los Angeles high school walkouts; first act of mass militancy by Mexican Americans in modern California history, and set the tone for activism across the Southwest.**

- In college, she was approached by Sal Castro to attend a youth conference to bring young, educated Chicanos together and bring awareness to their fight and struggles.
- David Sanchez and Vickie Castro were the **founding members of the Brown Berets, the Chicano Communist/Marxist movement modeled after the Black Panther Party.**
- Attended one of Sal Castro's Camp Hess Kramer conferences; says "This is where I got my voice. This is where my passion for justice was born in me."

Yuri Kochiyama (Sample Lesson 6: line 1043, p. 46; Sample Lesson 28: line 6559, p. 314)

- Civil rights activist, associate of Malcom X, and **Maoist advocate**; self-stated admirer of Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda, and Peruvian Maoist group Shining Path; known controversial statements.
- Chosen as a role model for ESMC subject of Japanese internment reparations, rather than Members of Congress Norman Mineta, Robert Matsui, and Doris Matsui.
- **Not included in the ESMC list of figures of significance were the following reparation leaders who were NOT Maoists:**
 - Congressman Norman Mineta, who introduced and advocated for the reparations legislation.
 - Senator Daniel Inouye (first Japanese American in U.S. House of Representatives and first in Senate), Congressman Robert Matsui, Congresswoman Doris Matsui, and Senator Spark Matsunaga who worked with Mineta to make the legislation a reality.
 - John Tateishi, who founded the Japanese American Citizens' League (JACL) and directed the civil rights organization National Redress. Tateishi helped lead the eventually successful fight for reparations and wrote the book *Redress: The Inside Story of the Successful Campaign for Japanese American Reparations*, but was not included in the ESMC.

The following sample lessons are from *Appendix A: Sample Lessons and Topics*. The below suggestions are **not** part of the lessons.

Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x Studies:

Sample Lesson 12: Salvadoran American Migration and Collective Resistance (Lines 2182-2734, p. 98-129)

- Sample lesson should depict why El Salvadorians fled their country for the United States as a result of the violence caused by the Salvadoran Civil War between the military-led junta government of El Salvador and the communist-associated Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in order to accurately portray their lived experiences and why they chose to seek freedom in the United States. In doing so, the curriculum will give a more inclusive overview of their experience and El Salvadoran students will be more likely to recognize the diversity of their own ethnic experience in the curriculum.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies:

Sample Lesson 15: Hmong Americans—Community, Struggle, Voice (Line 2776-2979, p. 132-143)

- Sample lesson should depict why Hmong Americans fled communist China and Southeast Asia for the United States in order to accurately portray their lived experiences under communism and why they chose to seek freedom in the United States. In doing so, the curriculum will give a more inclusive overview of their experience and Hmong American students will be more likely to recognize the diversity of their own ethnic experience in the curriculum.

Sample Lesson 19: Vietnamese American Experiences – The Journey of Refugees (Lines 3703-4108, p. 177-193)

- Sample lesson should depict why Vietnamese Americans fled communist Vietnam for the United States in order to accurately portray their lived experiences under communism and why they chose to seek freedom in the United States. In doing so, the curriculum will give a more inclusive overview of their experience and Vietnamese American students will be more likely to recognize the diversity of their own ethnic experience in the curriculum.

Sample Lesson 20: The Immigrant Experience of Lao Americans (Lines 4109-4225, p. 194-199)

- Sample lesson should depict why Lao Americans fled communist Laos for the United States in order to accurately portray their lived experiences under communism and why they chose to seek freedom in the United States. In doing so, the curriculum will give a more inclusive overview of their experience and Lao American students will be more likely to recognize the diversity of their own ethnic experience in the curriculum.

Sample Lesson 21: Korean American Experiences and Interethnic Relations (Lines 4256-4523, p. 200-213)

Sample Lesson 22: Col. Young Oak Kim—War Hero, Public Servant, Identity (Lines 4524-4775, p. 214-225)

- Sample lessons 21 and 22 should depict why Korean Americans immigrated to the United States and how the division of the Korean peninsula as a result of the Korean War affected Korean emigration in order to accurately portray their lived experiences and why they chose to seek freedom in the United States. In doing so, the curriculum will give a more inclusive overview of their experience and Korean American students will be more likely to recognize the diversity of their own ethnic experience in the curriculum.

Sample Lesson 26: Dr. Sammy Lee (1920-2016) (Lines 6108-6111, p. 290)

- The description in Lines 6108-6111 is written in a pro-communist way by stating “The communist critique was simply true...” The communist critique referenced here was not essentially communist but rather made by communists. In other words, the injustice identified was not an injustice because it violated any communist principle, but rather because it violated America’s classically liberal principles. This is one of the reasons the communists made the criticism—it is a tactic to make one’s opponent live by their own rules.

- It is important that the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum correctly acknowledge America's imperfections, but it should not imply that the communist alternative is equally valid. Therefore, lines 6108-6111 should be re-written to portray this information in an unbiased way.

Sample Lesson 32: Cambodian Americans—Deportation Breaking Families Apart (Lines 7748-8815, p. 366-383)

- Sample lesson should depict why Cambodian Americans fled communist Cambodia for the United States in order to accurately portray their lived experiences under communism and why they chose to seek freedom in the United States. In doing so, the curriculum will give a more inclusive overview of their experience and Cambodian American students will be more likely to recognize the diversity of their own ethnic experience in the curriculum.

Sample Lesson 43: Armenian Migration Stories and Oral History (Lines 11579-11860, p. 551-563)

- Sample lesson should depict why Armenian Americans fled Soviet-occupied Armenia for the United States in order to accurately portray their lived experiences under the Soviet Union and why they chose to seek freedom in the United States. In doing so, the curriculum will give a more inclusive overview of their experience and Armenian American students will be more likely to recognize the diversity of their own ethnic experience in the curriculum.