

From: JJ Meis

Sent: Friday, September 18, 2020 9:29 AM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>

Cc: ADL Orange County/Long Beach [email redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Inclusion in the Ethnic Studies Curricula of Anti-Semitism Component

Dear Dept of Education Team -

I fully support the creation and implementation of an Ethnic Studies Curriculum requirement in California schools, both public and private. This should be a component thread of Civics and History that runs throughout a child's education from Elementary through High School graduation and into California Colleges and Universities, as part of a true civic society is teaching all it's stakeholders, all it's contributors, all it's citizens of the contributions and special experiences of all of it's members. This fosters understanding and honest, candid perspective on who we are and how we can be better.

As an Ashkenazi Jewish American and native-born Californian it concerns me that the drafts of this curricula have been reportedly excluding the Jewish American experience. Anti-Semitism in this country and overt, anti-Jewish acts have seen an exponential rise since 2016, and just this week a study was released commissioned by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany found some shocking statistics. This study surveyed American adults under the age of 40, Millennial's and GenZ'ers and the study found a worrying lack of basic Holocaust knowledge:

1 in 10 respondents did not even even having heard the word "Holocaust"

63% of respondents did not know that 6,000,000 Jews were murdered in the Holocaust (much less the other millions murdered) and over HALF of those people thought that it was less than 2MM.

Over half of the respondents couldn't name a single one of the 40,000 concentration camps established by the Nazis during WWII.

Only 90% of respondents believed it happened but what's amazing and terrifying is that 19% BELIEVE THAT JEWS CAUSED THE HOLOCAUST.

56% of respondents reported having seen Nazi symbols on social media or in their communities within the last 5 years.

These figures reveal a monstrous gap in our education. The lessons of the Holocaust are universal. These atrocities can happen to anybody, and have (Armenian Genocide, Vietnam) and both an honest, naked understanding of what our world is capable of, the experiences of many surviving Jewish Americans, as well placing the contributions and successes of Jewish Americans right alongside those of the Black, Latino, AAPI, Arab American, Native American is crucial to fostering understanding in this country.

There are many, many wonderful Jewish Community educators and resources that can be tapped to assist with this endeavor, that can be incorporated into the broader curriculum, but in the least I support the calls by the ADL and the JCRC to strive for the following -

1. A lesson plan on Jewish Americans that recognizes the diversity of the community including Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Mizrahi Jews and Jews of Color. Additionally, a lesson plan on Arab Americans should also refer to Jewish Americans of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) descent.

2. An accurate definition of [antisemitism](#), such as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's, which the U.S. State Department adopted in 2010.
3. Inclusion of lessons about [antisemitism](#).
4. Transparency and an opportunity for public comment in all phases of the development of a final ESMC.

Please do not turn away from this task. You do great work there and as a community volunteer supporting my local school district (OUSD) I value public school education and the drive to give every student a great education and what that can do for our communities. I am one of those that feels that our Civics and History curriculum could use some fine tuning and a greater focus, but as I mentioned I support the initiative to include Ethnic Studies. It cannot however leave the Jewish American experience and the important experiences of the Jewish American story.

Thank you.

JJ Meis

JJ Meis

[address redacted]

[phone number redacted]

[email redacted]