

From: Eli Eshaghian
Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 6:54 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Feedback on ethnics study curriculum

January 20, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a California resident and write to express my deep disagreement with the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, and my disappointment that California is considering adopting it.

The United States just celebrated the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a man who hoped that, one day, his children would “not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Dr. King rightly understood that unchosen attributes like race, nationality, or ethnicity—although often forming a critical part of our identity—should not divide us.

We have some ways to go before the United States fully embraces Dr. King’s Promised Land.

Yet, the Curriculum California seeks to adopt is a massive step backwards on this journey towards a more perfect Union. Instead of teaching that everyone should be treated as individuals, no matter their race, the Curriculum adopts Critical Race Theory, which teaches the future leaders of our nation to view every problem, every aspect of society, every person, through the lens of race. According to the Critical Race Theory, because it is impossible to look beyond race, any attempt to do so is a mask for racism itself. And discrimination based on race is no longer racist—as long as it is used to create racial “equity” (however that term is defined).

Realizing that their views fall squarely within the definition of racism, Critical Race Theorists seek to radically redefine the term. They say that only “oppressors” may be racist, and the “oppressed” may never be racist. If you are a member of an “oppressor” group (namely, white people), it doesn’t matter what your individual thoughts are; you are guilty until proven innocent. And if you are a member of the “oppressed” group, your actions cannot be racist because you lack power.

Rather than teaching our kids the value of individuals, the draft Curriculum (and Critical Race Theory, which it adopts) will do the opposite. It will teach our children that success and failure, goodness or badness, indeed, everything in life, is determined by a person’s immutable attributes. It no longer matters what words a person speaks, or what action he takes; the only thing that matters under this Curriculum is the group to which the person belongs. This teaches those of us in minority groups to be a permanent victim. This is a racist idea itself and the opposite of what this country stands for. It encourages minorities to embrace the soft bigotry of low expectations: because I do not have “power,” I do not have agency; because I do not have agency, I cannot control what happens to me.

(I hope you do not misunderstand me into thinking that identity groups don’t matter. They matter very much indeed. I am proud of my minority background, and in many ways, they inform my values. But I never pretend that the groups to which I belong are an excuse for how I treat other people, or are an excuse for treating myself as being without agency.)

The end result of this backwards thinking is that Critical Race Theorists tolerate racist behavior. For example, policies that discriminate against Asian-Americans when applying to universities are acceptable because that now-disfavored minority group (some of whom were herded into internment camps a mere seventy-five years ago) have “power” by some vague, undefined metric.

Another example can be seen in how the Curriculum treats Jews. (If it matters to you, the reader, I am a Jew, and I am also a “person of color.”) The draft Curriculum celebrates figures who have promoted anti-Semitism (including leaders of the Third World Liberation Front and the anti-Jewish leaders they admire); it uses racial distinctions to divide people into those who are considered white (and therefore privileged) and those who are non-white (and therefore oppressed); and in the case of Jews, it combines

the two, pitting “Jews of color” against Jews who are tarred with “conditional whiteness” and its attendant “racial privilege.”

The draft curriculum teaches that “many Jews with light skin identify with the idea of white-presenting.” “Light-skinned Jews...experience white privilege,” while “Jews of color like all communities of color face systemic racism.” In other words, the same kind of Jews who, in living memory, were forced into ovens for being non-white, are now identified as white—or at a minimum, as having “conditional whiteness.”

This is the same line of thinking used by the Nazis: Jews, in order to take advantage of “whiteness,” hid in plain sight: a Nazi children’s book taught that “[j]ust as it is often hard to tell a toadstool from an edible mushroom, so too it is often very hard to recognise the Jew as a swindler and criminal.” (The name of the book is called The Poisonous Mushroom, and it is available here: <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/rschwartz/hist151/Nazi/poisonousmushroom.pdf>).

It is shocking to read a proposed curriculum that is the intellectual child of this drivel: “Starting with immigrants, and common with actors,” the proposed Curriculum’s section on Jews teaches, American Jews have historically hidden their Jewishness by changing their names. Authors of this curriculum want to make sure California’s schoolchildren know that “this practice of name-changing continues to the present day.” Putting an even finer point on it, passing as white means that Jews “[change] their position on the racial hierarchy . . . gaining racial privilege.”

In fact, Jews are the only group in the Curriculum for which the term “privilege” is used. Amazing, no? We live in a deeply divided country. More and more, people are retreating to their own tribes and shutting out the “other.” The proposed Curriculum only hastens this descent into darkness. California schools should be teaching how to treat people based on their individual characteristics, not the color of their skin. That’s how Dr. King viewed the world; we should continue his legacy.

If California goes through with adopting this curriculum, I will be doing my very best to put my children into private schools. I hope it doesn’t come to that.

Sincerely,

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