

From: Nancy Cavillones
Sent: Thursday, August 6, 2020 8:44 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Representative Anna G. Eshoo; assemblymember.low@assembly.ca.gov;
senator.beall@senate.ca.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear IQC Members,

I am a California resident, and the parent of three school-aged children. I am also a former high school teacher.

I applaud the CDE for making important changes to the ESMC, and appreciate their hard work. While this new draft is a step in the right direction, I urge you to make further changes to address shortcomings that remain in the curriculum.

Guidelines should be added or reinforced to ensure that ethnic studies courses focus on giving students a depth of understanding about ethnic groups, social issues, and civic engagement, rather than promoting specific political viewpoints, ideologies, or movements.

I would encourage you to remove any language or references to texts that seem to push one ideology over another, and instead, should offer objective and neutral insights that will allow students to practice deep analysis of a text— whether it be print, video or other media.

The curriculum, as it pertains to the representation of Jewish people, should reflect the enormous diversity that exists in the Jewish community— there are Jews of every color, from all over the world. The president of my synagogue is Chinese-American, in fact and my own children are Jewish and Puerto Rican. In multiple places the language used to describe Jews and various immigrant populations from the Middle East is not inclusive enough. Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Eastern communities should be represented on an equal basis with Arab Americans in the ESMC. There are an estimated 500,000 Californians from non-Arab or non-Muslim Middle Eastern groups, who should not be simply lumped together as “other Middle Easterners”. Similarly, references to American Jews should be edited to explicitly mention the experiences of Mizrahi Jews, Jews of color, Jews from the Former Soviet Union, and other Jewish communities in California whose stories are less widely acknowledged.

While white-presenting Jews in America may have “racial privilege,” we are still subject to acts of violence and egregious use of tropes in the media and online . (Chabad of Poway shooting, for example, right here in our own state.)

There is no room for hate in our schools and in our curriculum. Thank you for taking the time to listen and think critically about the messages represented in this important curriculum in a state with an incredibly diverse student population— no easy task, but I’m confident we can rise to the challenge.

If you would like to review the document outlining the specific issues that still need to be addressed in the curriculum, I am happy to send it to you.

Nancy Cavillones
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