

From: Farinaz Tojarieh
Sent: Tuesday, January 19, 2021 10:36 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Ethnic studies curriculum public comment

Please read the article below to further educate yourselves on why the current curriculum is so utterly discriminatory, hateful and offensive to Jews and should undergo a massive rewrite.

I am an immigrant from Iran. I've lived in this country since I was 7. When we moved here, I did not speak the language, and I had no friends. There was NOBODY to help me with my homework. My parents didn't speak English, and my brothers were younger than I. No cousins, no other role models. I worked HARD.

My parents both worked 7 days a week, 9-14 hours every day to allow for us to get by. When we first moved here, we were a family of 6 living in a small 2 bedroom apartment. We were on welfare and food stamps. My brothers and I started working in high school so that we could help my parents with the bills.

In California, my brother was told that "Hitler should have take care of you guys when he had the chance."

We've worked HARD to get to where we are. We've encountered our fair share of antisemitism, and we certainly were NOT privileged.

This proposed curriculum offends me to my core. Now my kids are going to be forced to learn in school that we are "privileged?" That is absolutely and utterly unacceptable. Should this draft go through, you will likely encounter many lawsuits as it incites hate, among other things.

Sincerely,
Farinaz Cohen

https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/327667/jews-have-until-thursday-to-influence-ethnic-studies-curriculum/?fbclid=IwAR1OD65_x4xyTLOqNCIfXkgkUQVeaOZW6U-Ftbs0MWzGWePqBLDncTsMRBA

"The current draft of the 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."

“White supremacists continue to racialize Jews as non-white,” the curriculum’s “Fact Sheet on Jewish American Diversity” acknowledges. But “many Jews with light skin identify with the idea of white-presenting,” it reads. “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 disqualifies most Jews from the solidarity offered other minority groups.

Nazi curricula taught that in order to usurp white privilege, Jews pretended to be white, hiding in plain sight. “Just as it is often hard to tell a toadstool from an edible mushroom,” read a Nazi [children’s book](#), “so too it is often very hard to recognize the Jew...” Depicting Jews as imposters and appropriators of privilege -- people who pose as something to which they have no legitimate claim -- has been a frequent anti-Semitic theme throughout history. A recent large scale [analysis](#) of modern anti-Semitic disinformation from the Network Contagion Research Institute (NCRI) suggests that this same conspiracy theory is endorsed by twenty-first-century anti-Semites of all kinds.

But surely, a modern-day ethnic studies curriculum wouldn’t perpetuate the same idea?

“Starting with immigrants, and common with actors” (*actors?*), the proposed California 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 (what would have been called “posing” as white in an earlier era) means that Jews “[change] their position on the racial hierarchy... *gaining racial privilege*” (Emphasis added).

Jews are the only group in California’s proposed curriculum for whom the term “privilege” is used. Let that sink in. Jews are the *only* group in

California's proposed curriculum for whom the term "privilege" is used. (Do your own word search in the [curriculum](#) for the word "privilege" if you'd like to see for yourself.) The word appears elsewhere, but not attached to any other ethnic group.

There ought to be no discussion about Jews and privilege that doesn't begin by talking about the historically enacted and repeated genocidal ideology that revolves around Jews and privilege. For an ethnic studies curriculum to go traipsing through that discourse without a single mention of its ugly and bloody history is not a lesson about anti-Semitism. It is a repetition of it. By itself, that should effectuate a vote of no confidence in the entire franchise.

In the midst of the largest recorded surge in anti-Semitic propaganda and [attacks against Jewish people](#) across [the globe](#), a new framework for racial theory again counts Jews as members of the evil class. Jews, who represent roughly 0.2% of the world's population and roughly 2% of the U.S. population, are again targeted for their "privilege." Yet, when concerns are raised about the ways in which critical ethnic studies programs promote this type of hatred, the authors of *Rethinking Ethnic Studies* [write](#), "such strong feelings are part of students' sense-making and development."

Indeed.

Critical race theory is not the historical equivalent of Nazism, but it doesn't have to be: the question is whether an American education will help students widen their sense of "us," or once again, teach students to harden their sense of "them."