

Janna Greene Comments re ESMC2

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education, I am Janna Greene. I am a parent of two sons and a grandparent of a little girl and a little boy. I was born in Moscow in the Soviet Union. I emigrated to America in 1974 as a “refusenik” to practice my religion, Judaism, freely without official government condemnation of my faith. I arrived in America and located with my parents, brother and grandmother to the San Francisco Bay Area of California. I graduated from California universities with a Bachelor in Science degree and a Masters degree in Public Health Administration. I am a proud citizen of these United States of America. I cherish my freedom to practice my religion with my family. I raised both of my sons here in California. My children attended California public schools through high school. My younger son graduated from the University of California.

I appreciate some improvement in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC), but I am concerned by the proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

Here are my major concerns:

The ESMC guiding values and principles need revision because they are the basis of each unit and lesson plan.

They do not reflect California's shared values, nor the values laid out in AB 2016.

They advocate a narrow political philosophy.

They establish an us vs. them agenda.

They are partly based on the book Education at War, which encourages “solidarity” and “linkages” with BDS, and anti-Israel narratives, harmful to many Jewish students.

The second draft does not prevent teaching offensive politically indoctrinating and anti-Israel elements from ESMC draft 1.

The second draft should add elements of balanced curriculum from the LA Unified School District's Ethnic Studies Curriculum to provide solid ground rules for course development.

Numerous sections of the ESMC need revision to expose students to multiple and often competing sources of information and ensure that diverse viewpoints are respected.

The few references to Jews are misleading and offensive.

The ESMC should include Mizrahi and other Jews of color.

The ESMC should remove links to, and group advocacy of, virulently anti-Israel pro-BDS sites with malicious slander about imaginary genocide.

The ESMC should include the lesson plan, “Antisemitism and Middle Eastern-American Jews,” covering contemporary issues of antisemitism, bigotry, and the Middle Eastern-American Jewish experience produced by the JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa.

The ESMC should add a definition of antisemitism that addresses sinister stereotyping and double standards against Jews and Jewish institutions from all parts of the political spectrum.

References to Middle Eastern communities should not favor one community over others.

Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Eastern communities should be represented on an equal basis with Arab Americans.

Mizrahi Jews and other MENA ethnic groups represent ~60% of CA's MENA population (estimated 500,000 Californians).

I know from painful experience having grown up in the antisemitic Soviet Union what it means and feels like to be discriminated against as a member of the Jewish faith. I fled my birthplace to raise a family and to see my grandchildren live proudly to practice their faith in the blessings bestowed upon all of us in these United States of America. It is with this heartfelt wish that I beseech the Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education to improve the ESMC to reflect my concerns and to add to the ESMC the recommendations I have included in this letter.

I respectfully request that you to make significant revisions to the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum to address my concerns.

Thank you,



Janna Greene