

Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum May 2019 Draft

(Download and use to provide specific recommendations)

Include the chapter of the model curriculum, the page number, and line number(s) to ensure that the California Department of Education and Instructional Quality Commission can reference the content of the document when reviewing your comments. Please email this document as a Word document to ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov. You may contact Kenneth McDonald, Education Programs Consultant, at kmcdonal@cde.ca.gov with any questions regarding this template or the public input process.

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview	<i>Nancy Matlin</i> <i>A native Californian, living in San Carlos California</i>	Page 1 – line 20 – The USA is comprised of many different ethnicities, not just those “people of color”. Throughout US history, there have been waves of immigrants of all nationalities and backgrounds: Germans, Irish, Italians, Jews and most recently Indians. Focusing on “people of color” – who is that? Latinos, Blacks, Native Americans? What of other peoples whose skin color is olive or white? Why is Ethnic Studies limited to people of color? Don’t other people matter? Isn’t that racist?
1		Page 1 line 22/23 – Is the goal of this curriculum to teach social justice or to explore the many ethnicities that make up our human fabric?

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1		<p>Page 2, line 29 – Why is there no mention of antisemitism? With the huge increase in hate crime leveled against Jews – more than any other minority in this country, not to include Jews in this curriculum is antisemitic.</p> <p>According to the ADL, antisemitic attacks have doubled over the last year. Per capita, Jews are the number one targets of hate crimes in America. These figures are a continuation of the increasing trend of antisemitism in the US, in which California is one of the epicenters. The Californian Jewish communities have been the victims of many large-scale attacks, including the recent Poway Synagogue shooting. Despite this, this victimhood receives no mention in the curriculum. Worse yet, the document gives heavy deference to BDS, an organization that has been widely recognized by American leaders as antisemitic. Its is baffling that BDS, a foreign policy issue, should receive more mentions in a document about American Ethnicity than American Jews and Israelis.</p> <p>The Jewish people are a distinct ethnic group that celebrates a variety of religious denominations and sub-ethnicities. They have unique cultural practices, culinary traditions, and contributions to American society. Despite discrimination, Jews and Israelis in America have exemplified the American dream, and have made impressive cultural, social, and scientific contributions. To exclude these Jewish and Israeli narratives is to deny the tribulations and contributions of this minority. To deny the tribulations and contributions of Jews and Israelis in America is to erase them as a minority and ethnicity worth studying in California.</p>
1		<p>Page 2 line 35 – Is this curriculum about ethnic studies or gender politics? The drafters of this model curriculum clearly are bringing their own biases into this curriculum, choosing to make the curriculum one of gender politics rather than one exploring the socio-ethnic and cultural aspects of different ethnicities.</p>

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Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
General		Pages 3-26 This is all such garbage. The Ethnic Studies Curriculum developed by the California Department of Education is completely unsuitable for teaching children. It is a self-serving document whose purpose is not to teach children and adolescents about different ethnicities, but rather to convince students that people of color are victims of social injustice. It is a political document with a political agenda.
2		Page 3, Lines 62 – 78 These are not sociological or ethnic studies terms, these are political terms. These are terms meant to teach a radical, political agenda. The curriculum authors are taking a vulnerable population and teaching that our civil society, our government and our democracy is racist, oppressive, patriarchal and full of white supremacists. This is a destructive, distorted, and highly factitious viewpoint. This is not an objective, balanced document!
2		Page 5 Lines 119-126 These are biased, inaccurate, divisive statements.
Chapter 2: Sample Course Models African American Studies Course Outline		Suspected Inclusion of the Nation of Islam (Page 48, Lines 669-670) Listed amongst sample topics to discuss, the curriculum mentions African American Spiritual and Religious Traditions, one of those worth discussing being "Nation of Islam". It is of great concern that this may be a spelling error, and the movement that is suggested is actually "Nation of Islam". Nation of Islam is led by Louis Farrakhan, a notorious antisemite who once referred to Jews as "termites", called Judaism a "gutter religion", and claimed that Jews and Zionists took part in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It is unacceptable for an organization led by such an unabashed bigot to be celebrated in the classroom.

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Chapter 2: Sample Course Arab American Studies Course Outline		<p>Conflation of Israel with Palestine (Page 236, Lines 4991-4993; 241 Lines 5138-5139)</p> <p>Israel is repeatedly connected with Palestine throughout the document. This seems to imply that the terms and territory can interchangeably called by either terms. This is not the case. Israel is a sovereign state, and implying that its internationally recognized territory could still in anyway be considered by the name of the British Mandate is offensive to Jews, Israelis, and Zionists the world over. The state of Israel is not called as it is by subjective opinion, it is a fact, and it is unacceptable to teach students otherwise.</p>

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Chapter 2: Sample Course Arab American Studies Course Outline		Inclusion of Nakba Narrative (Page 237, Lines 5030-5031; Page 242 Lines 5158-5159) The curriculum appears to push educators to adopt a simple Nakba narrative, which presents Palestinians only as victims of expulsion rather than willing participants in warfare. The historical record is not a subjective matter; even if one starts in the middle of the record without explaining the context. In 1947, Arab Palestinians were the initiators of hostilities against Israel, and continued as irregulars alongside 5 invading militaries who sought to destroy the new Jewish state. As a result, civilians of all sides fled the combat. Framing Israel's war of independence only in terms of resulting in "dispossession" of Palestinians is highly contentious, as it implies Israel as the intentional dispossessor. In reality, according to historian Benny Morris, the vast majority of flight from the Levant was due to "the flail of war". That is, that people fled of their own accord, to avoid getting caught in the fighting. The choices of rhetoric suggest that this curriculum may prompt a historicity, and California students deserve historically accurate education.

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<p>Chapter 2: Sample Course Arab American Studies Course Outline</p>		<p>Potential Significant Figures to Cover: Linda Sarsour (Page 234, Line 4970)</p> <p>The curriculum presents several controversial figures as role models for children. The most controversial of them is Linda Sarsour. Linda Sarsour has consistently used her hatred for Jews and the State of Israel to divide Americans, and once expressed support for sexual violence against a woman.</p> <p>Sarsour has actively tried to delegitimize the connection between Jews and Israel. In October of 2012, Sarsour tweeted out “Nothing is creepier than Zionism”. Recently, she claimed that Jesus was Palestinian, a gross example of cultural appropriation. Of course, Linda Sarsour also advocates for the BDS movement – which is a movement that targets only one country, Israel – a majority Jewish country.</p> <p>When it comes to antisemitism, Sarsour has repeatedly downplayed hate and violence against Jews. She vilified the ADL, one of the most respected organizations in protecting Jews, dismissing their findings even as she created lists of “good” and “bad” Jews.</p> <p>When it comes to feminism, Sarsour has charged that Zionist-feminist women are not true feminists, dispossessing them of their identities. Even worse, she joked about the removal of the genitals of a prominent feminist who had been the victim of FGM.</p> <p>Finally, when suggesting Sarsour herself be a role model, it should be considered that she herself continues to associate with open anti-Semites and terrorists. Linda Sarsour’s role model is Dr. Louis Farrakhan, who preaches hatred for Israel and Jewish people. Recently, he said “I’m not an Anti-Semite, I’m Anti-Termite”. In recent speeches, he’s referred to Jews as “Satanic” and that “Jews control everything and everybody”. Sarsour even once embraced an infamous terrorist, Rasmea Odeh. The rest of those that Linda Sarsour associates with are of the same stock.</p> <p>California’s children should not be taught to hug terrorists, to stand with anti-Semites, to joke about FGM, downplay antisemitism, and support BDS. If one supports such a sentiment, then one cannot ask children to emulate Linda Sarsour.</p>

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Glossary		<p>Uncritical Definitions of BDS (Page 2, Lines 30-40)</p> <p>In the glossary of the curriculum, Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) is defined uncritically as a positive social movement seeking "freedom". Teachers adopting this perspective would not only be misinforming Californian students regarding the organization's objectives, they would also be ignoring the movement's antisemitism, supporting a legally dubious action, and advocating for a radical political position.</p> <p>The objectives of BDS are unfortunately much more malicious than the glossary would claim. The founders and thought leaders of BDS have repeatedly declared that the main aim of BDS is the dissolution of the state of Israel. Omar Barghouti, co-founder of BDS, has asserted that Israel should become Palestine, unequivocally rejecting Jewish self-determination. Ironically, self-determination is also featured in the glossary as an important subject. The curriculum betrays its advocacy for that right by supporting an organization that actively seeks to deny it to another. Advancing BDS in the classroom is to further that reprehensible goal.</p> <p>The denial of a basic right to Jewish people is not the only problematic characteristic of BDS. The organization has proven time and time again to be comfortable with antisemitism. BDS activists routinely use classic anti-Semitic tropes, materials, and expressions of hatred. While BDS claims to be against antisemitism, it has done nothing to address to virulent racism, bigotry, and Jew-hatred within its ranks. On the contrary, it has embraced all allies, regardless of their violations of the very principles the California Curriculum professes to impart. It is for all these reasons, and more, that Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi condemned BDS as an antisemitic organization. For all the good that the department of education wishes to instill in its students, teaching BDS in schools will also be implanting the seeds of antisemitism.</p> <p>It is not only one Democratic politician that has condemned BDS. There has been widespread non-partisan support against BDS. 27 states have passed legislation and resolutions against BDS. One of these states was California, which passed a bill supporting any private or state initiative that engages in discriminatory actions [including] actions taken against individuals of the Jewish faith under the pretext of a constitutionally protected boycott or protest of the State of Israel." Further, Republicans and Democrats alike united in 2019 to overwhelmingly pass a resolution condemning BDS. BDS is not just morally</p>
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		<p>unaccepted in America, it is legally rejected. Therefore, it should not be featured so greatly in an American curriculum.</p> <p>Lastly, instructing on BDS as detailed in the glossary of the Ethnic Studies Curriculum forces upon students a radical political position. BDS seeks to strong-arm a foreign liberal democratic state into adopting policies. Such a controversial political position should not be taught lightly to children without showing the other side of the policy debate. Regardless of the political leanings of a teacher, their lessons should be objective in dealing with political issues. Presenting BDS in a completely uncritical fashion is akin to political indoctrination.</p> <p>Including BDS as an instrumental feature of the curriculum will not teach appreciation of ethnicity, but the denial of rights, antisemitism, and political radicalism.</p>