

From: TW

Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 1:58 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] RE: Revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:

As a California taxpayer, parent of a public high school student, and educator at a public community college, I am writing to comment on the revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) released on July 31. I strongly believe that adding Ethnic Studies to California's high school curriculum will, among other things, foster respect between students and an appreciation for our nation's rich and diverse history.

I wish to note that I welcomed the removal of the overt antisemitism and extreme and gratuitous anti-Israel bias from the previous ESMC draft, and am grateful that the new draft recognizes antisemitism as a form of historical and continuing bigotry. However, I also believe the new ESMC could be further improved.

For example, I recommend the curriculum include a definition of antisemitism. Correctly defining this concept is not merely academic. A newly released study commissioned by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany found that 12% of the 1,350 18-to-39 year olds surveyed (17% in California) said that the number of people who died in the Holocaust had been greatly exaggerated, and 20% said people talk too much about the Holocaust. As an ancestor of one of the only branches of my family to survive the Holocaust, I'm very concerned at this lack of knowledge and worried that the current draft curriculum as written would further contribute to students not taking seriously the mass murder and attempted extermination of the Jewish people.

Moreover, I suggest that the ESMC recognize that the American Jewish community includes people of color — including in my own family — and that many Jewish Americans trace their family roots to the Middle East and North Africa. For example, I draw your attention to a suggested lesson plan entitled "Irish and Jewish Americans: Redefining White and American." The title and description give the impression that American Jews are uniformly of European descent and as such have all attained "white identity" and "racial privilege," to quote the lesson plan. It is an ironic conclusion as white supremacists explicitly reject the "whiteness" of any Jew. Indeed, their hate-filled worldview sees Jews as a critical player in the destruction of the "white race." Failing to acknowledge the ethnic diversity of the Jewish community will mislead students about the complexity of contemporary Jewish identity and the hatred targeting Jews.

I would like to add that my own Jewish child (a California public high school student) has recently been on the receiving end of the very antisemitic hate speech and sentiments I refer to above, and has been told by other young people (including Irene's and classmates) that, as a Jew, the fear and hate she experiences is not real. The same hate and ignorance that fueled

the Holocaust is being openly and unapologetically spewed in the United States today, and I believe this — and the perception by others that it's not real or serious — is due in part to the lack of accurate and serious education on the topic. I believe the ESMC could be strengthened accordingly.

Thank you for considering these concerns.

Tamara Weintraub