

COMMENTS ON THE ETHNIC STUDIES MODEL CURRICULUM

Hello. I am a California resident and I have a great niece and great nephew who are enrolled in the California public school system. As a practicing Jewish woman and a firm supporter of the State of Israel, I was most distraught to read sections of the proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and see what was included and what was left out.

I think that an ethnic studies curriculum should seek to educate students about the backgrounds, beliefs, and lives of their fellow students; to enhance students' self-confidence; and to include everyone at the table, so to speak, especially students whose cultures are in the minority. California has a rich mixture of many cultures and religions, among them Jews. Nationwide, Jews make up 2% or less of the U.S. population. California ranks 8th among states with the highest populations of Jews. Jews make up about 3% of the population of California.

It is important that all students learn about Jewish people and their contributions to American society because school is where students are supposed to learn about the world around them. It is also important that that education contribute to the safety and security of Jewish students and all Jewish people. Since 1957 there have been 36 violent attacks and failed attack plots targeting Jewish institutions in the U.S. Those attacks include the 1999 arson attacks on Congregation B'nai Israel synagogue in Sacramento; the 1999 shooting at the LA Jewish Community Center; the 2002 shooting attack on El Al airline at LAX; the 2003 Mblotov cocktail attack at Valley Beth Shalom synagogue in Encino; the 2005 (fortunately failed) synagogue bomb plot in LA; another 2018 LA synagogue attack; and just this year, the shooting at Chabad of Poway synagogue. As written, and despite the goal set out in the introduction to the proposed curriculum of fostering appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion and aiding in the eradication of bigotry, hate, and racism, there is no lesson about the Jewish community; Jews are mentioned only in passing. And, with a view to the above list of attacks on Jewish institutions and with antisemitism rising and continuing ignorance about

Jewish people here in the U.S., the exclusion of Jews from the curriculum is very troubling.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is extremely complex and to understand it requires a comprehensive understanding of the history that preceded it, the day-to-day events that exacerbate it, and the attempts to resolve it. In any conflict, there are at least two perspectives. Unfortunately, the proposed curriculum approaches this complex subject from one side only, with no alternative perspectives regarding the 1948 war (p. 242), Israel's efforts to protect its citizens from terrorism (p. 234), and the BDS movement (p. 234 and the Glossary). Particularly with regard to the BDS movement, to label Israel as an apartheid state is simply wrong when Arabs serve in the Knesset (parliament), on the Supreme Court, and in the armed services; when they attend universities alongside other Israelis; and when they are employed as doctors and nurses in Israeli hospitals and treated there as patients. Ironically, it does not help Palestinians; it hurts them when their employers are boycotted and they lose their means of feeding their families; and it hurts Palestinian academics and artists when Israeli institutions in which they participate are boycotted.

While some will argue that criticism of Israel is not the same as antisemitism in practical fact, it is. And untempered criticism of Israel paints a target on Jews worldwide, in the U.S., and here in California. It is bad enough if the curriculum does not teach. It is far worse if it endangers the lives of Californians.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my concerns to you. I am hopeful that you will take them to heart and make significant changes in the curriculum.

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