

The California Department of Education received more than 700 submissions that contained the text below. Other identical comments may have been posted separately.

From: Laura Younai

Sent: Wednesday, September 9, 2020 2:14 PM

To: IQC; Ethnic Studies

Cc: [emails redacted]; SBE; Shanine Coats; Stephanie Gregson

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Middle Eastern Jews in California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

To the Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education:

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In August 2019 and again in July 2020, eleven Middle Eastern Jewish organizations based primarily in San Francisco and Los Angeles, urged the State of California to include Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews in California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and I am writing to you today to amplify this request.

By including only the experience of the dominant ethnic – religious group from the Middle East, an Arab American lesson plan will fail to promote rigorous analysis of history, systems of oppression, and the status quo in an effort to generate discussions on futurity, and imagine new possibilities. The inclusion of diverse Middle Eastern-American experiences, like antisemitism, is essential for a full and rich understanding of Middle Eastern American identity, and is required by CDE's principles, guidelines, standards, and laws.

As a concerned Jewish American, I am writing to share four core principles that I ask you to consider in the development of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. I believe these principles are vitally important in producing an Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that is representative, balanced, free of bias and adhering to the guidelines and standards of California's Department of Education.

1) I believe it is critical that the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) focuses on the lived experiences of Middle Eastern and North African Jews IN North America, many of whom have been racialized and have experienced various forms of bigotry. The ESMC should make clear that under the "broadly defined umbrella of Asian Studies" are Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) groups which represent ~60% of California's MENA population but whose stories have been excluded from the ESMC.

2) At a time when there is great need to provide our students with high-quality educational content related to bigotry, it is essential to incorporate adequate instructional material on antisemitism – not just simplistic references to it. I would like to see the next draft of the curriculum include the lesson plan, "Antisemitism and Middle Eastern-American Jews", as it will provide students with high-quality instruction on contemporary issues of antisemitism, bigotry, and the Middle Eastern-American Jewish experience.

3) The State of California must draw clear redlines against antisemitism and discrimination. The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum must not include the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement, and other highly politicized conversations about Middle Eastern conflicts that create unsafe classrooms for Jewish and Middle Eastern minority students throughout California.

4) The State of California must uphold its promise of transparency and public input in reviewing the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. We are deeply troubled by the CDE's recommendation that the public will not be allowed their rightful opportunity to review and comment on any new Arab American Studies lesson plan or content to be added

to the curriculum, per standard procedure as defined in AB2016.

Thank you,

C.C.

Governor Gavin Newsom

State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond

State Superintendent of Public Education Tony Thurmond

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Mrs Laura Younai