

From: jonathan roussojackel
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 5:07 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Dear IQC:

I am very concerned about the proposed mandatory "ethnic studies curriculum," even as revised.

One example I found troubling in the revised curriculum is in Appendix B. There is a proposed lesson plan related to housing discrimination. And yet there is no mention of the restrictive covenants that existed all across America that denied Jews the right to purchase property in designated neighborhoods. I am very familiar with this practice, as my parents were prohibited from buying a home in certain neighborhoods in New Jersey in the late 1950s. This was not that long ago. I am told that there were similar restrictive covenants used to prohibit Jews and other ethnic minorities from buying property in certain neighborhoods in California.

As the housing discrimination lesson plan is currently drafted, students will (mistakenly) believe that only people of color ever suffered illegal housing discrimination. A lot of Jews were also prevented from attending certain universities and applying for certain jobs because of "quotas." It did not matter whether they practiced the Jewish religion. They were singled out because of their ethnicity. With the shocking rise of anti-Semitism in California, the US and the world, why on earth would you want to ignore this valuable shared legacy? It makes no sense.

I believe that the "proposed lesson plan" to "develop a lesson on the Arab American Experience" was "recommended" by Dr. Thurmond at the last minute to appease those who originally tried to include hateful, biased, rhetoric in the original curriculum, including propaganda about Israel, Jews, and the Palestinian cause but were thwarted.

See: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr20/yr20rel68.asp>. In a somewhat obvious attempt to "bury the lead," this last minute recommendation was included with another recommendation to develop a lesson plan on the "Pacific Islander" experience and to claim that both qualify under the traditional "Asian" ethnic studies discipline, but that is wrong. Not all "Arabs" are "Asian." Just ask any "Arab" from North Africa. Not to mention the fact that some "Arabs" are "Jews." (JIMENA is an organization devoted to the cause of Jews displaced from various African countries, but we don't have any "proposed lesson plans" about them at the moment.) In addition, many other "ethnic" groups are excluded. Why?

I think that somehow the BDS narrative has been implicitly adopted in the revised curriculum even as amended. Therefore there still is an improper assumption that high school students should NOT be taught about Jews and the Jewish American Experience because "Jewish" is "religious" and not "ethnic," whereas teaching the "Arab American" experience is "OK" because "Arab" is "ethnic" and "not religious." This same narrative wrongly promotes the idea that all Jews are "white," which is how they "colonized" Palestine, whereas Arabs are "people of color." What makes me sad is that Jews and Arabs from the Levant have a shared genetic heritage. They also share many customs. Given enough time and prompting they could eventually reach a mutual understanding. Instead, you are considering a curriculum that will only help create more conflict and misunderstanding.

This same false narrative further allows those who repeat it to de-legitimize Israel and Zionism by saying that "anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitic." This is anti-Semitic, anti-Israel propaganda that has no business in a high school classroom and you are in danger of making a curriculum based on this hateful rhetoric a model for the entire country. Please don't do that.

Anti-semitism is on the rise in the US and abroad, even in California. See: <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/smell-the-anti-semitism-america>

High school students are capable of acting and promoting virulent, anti-Jewish hatred. See: <https://www.jweekly.com/2020/09/04/school-officials-identify-marin-student-behind-antisemitic-instagram-accounts/>

Sadly, open Zionism and support for Israel caused a wonderful young lady to resign from her position as student body president at USC. Her "crime?" Support of Israel and her "open" Zionism: <https://www.jweekly.com/2020/08/11/s-f-native-resigns-from-usc-student-government-over-israel-views/>

There is only one way to foster greater understanding and to prevent such hateful behaviors: **Education.** Help teachers promote understanding, not hateful and one-sided political rhetoric.

Therefore I implore you PLEASE to pledge to the following:

1. A sample lesson on Jewish Americans in Appendix B.
2. Addition of a lesson on Middle Eastern American Jews under the Asian American category in Appendix B.
3. Addition of a lesson on Middle Eastern Americans including Jews, Arabs, Iranians, and other large California ethnic communities under the Asian American category in Appendix B.

If you can't do that then please omit the "proposed sample lesson on the Arab American Experience."

Thank you.
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