

To the Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education, I write in support of an ethnic studies course, but am opposed to its proposed implementation. The proposed curriculum turns a blind eye to any discussion of anti-Semitism in the U.S. while simultaneously demonizing Jewish causes like the state of Israel. As a Jewish American and San Francisco resident, this subject is extremely important to me. My grandparents faced unimaginable discrimination, being the lone survivors of their families during the holocaust before fleeing persecution to the state of Israel. Eighty years later, I often face less severe, yet equally troubling anti-Semitic tropes walking down even the notoriously accepting streets of San Francisco. I wear my kippah proudly when I walk to religious services at San Francisco's Mission Minyan located in its always welcoming Woman's Building. And even during these select times, I am no stranger to shouted insults from the street about my Jewry, or my alleged association with the state of Israel. During these experiences, I am hyper-conscious of the rise of anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic attacks throughout the country: from the chants in Charlottesville, to the shooting in Pittsburg, to all the day-to-day aggressions in between that otherwise go unnoticed. As current statistics show, more than 50% of current discriminatory attacks in the U.S. are against Jews, and those numbers don't show any signs of slowing.

It is for these reasons that I am in full support of an ethnic studies class, and I hope that it will teach students to grow with a more open mind and greater understanding of the great diversity on which this country stands. However, after reading the curriculum, I feel, not supported by this much-needed education, but quite the opposite. Jewish Americans are not mentioned as victims of oppression in the course agenda; rather the agenda ironically implicates Jews as "white imperialists."

I am critical of Israel's policies, just as I am of the U.S.'s. However, I believe there is a time and a place for these criticisms, and I do not believe a course on diversity can ignore diversity-of-thought itself. The course as proposed is hypercritical of Israel, without any Jewish representation or discussion of the Jewish plight that led to its founding in 1948. The current proposed curriculum goes so far as to promote a movement whose mission is to delegitimize a state that has been the only true safe-haven for Jews in modern day history. I can think of nothing more alienating than that for a Jewish student sitting in those classrooms.

I believe a discussion of Israel in this course would be a distraction from the greater message, and would be more divisive than beneficial. Overall, I question whether a discussion of Israel itself is warranted in an ethnic studies course on domestic diversity. That being said, if Israel is to be criticized, then there MUST be a discussion of historical context, and why the Jewish people so deeply care about its prosperity. As it stands, the course, without further context, will do no more than demonize the state of Israel itself. I am currently 30-years old, and considering making a home in this great state. I look to send my future children to public school, to expose them to diversity of culture, thought, and upbringing. Yet this proposed curriculum has me second-guessing this option. I do not want my own children to feel marginalized in a class that was designed to prevent marginalization.

It is for these reasons that I implore you to reconsider the teachings of this course so that people of all colors and creeds will feel welcome in the classroom. I hope these

classes will be designed to encourage understanding, not divisiveness; inclusion, not alienation; and love, not hatred.

Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns.

Sincerely,

--

Joshua Dingott