

TRANS & QUEER RACIAL EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE COALITION

To: California Instructional Quality Commission (IQC)
State Board of Education
IQC Executive Director Shanine Coates
State Superintendent Tony Thurmond

September 30th, 2020

Re: BIPOC LGBTQ+ Intersectional Framing and Representation in Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Needs to Be Restored and Strengthened

Dear CA Instructional Quality Commission (IQC), State Board of Education, IQC Executive Director Shanine Coates, and State Superintendent Tony Thurmond

It is a monumental time for the California Department of Education (CDE), our state as a whole, and our students, finalizing the first Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum in the country. For Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities and students — the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) draft was much stronger than the current iteration in significant ways, and its trimming by the CDE for reasons that deny an amplification of LGBTQ+ BIPOC voices in the curriculum, has been unfortunate and harmful. We ask you to again uplift the strong intersectional elements of the original draft as a baseline from here forward, and further strengthen them for LGBTQ+ students and communities throughout the state.

This is written as a complementary public comment to our “LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Intersectionality in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum” letter. Here, it is led by BIPOC LGBTQ+ educators and advocates directly connected to the Ethnic Studies legacies and traditions, and includes specific concerns and recommendations for a basis of what is needed for this Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum moving forward -- from BIPOC LGBTQ+ communities perspectives. Coupled with the recommendations in our complementary letter, this will result in a final ESMC that is courageous in its addressing of intersectional racial justice today, rather than conforming to pressures from people who wish to maintain the explicitly and implicitly heterosexist, homophobic, transphobic, racist status quo -- the time

for change is now. We humbly ask for you to accept each of our recommendations at your November 17th Instructional Quality Commission meeting, and join in solidarity with BIPOC LGBTQ+ voices and perspectives in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. Our recommendations include:

- 1) **BIPOC LGBTQ+ Inclusion.** Overall, the much stronger intersectionality levels present in the original draft, should not have been reduced/cut, and need to be brought back to that minimal baseline of intersectional Ethnic Studies and LGBTQ+ solidarity -- and then strengthened even further, this is imperative. More specifically, the reinstatement includes:
- 2) **BIPOC LGBTQ+ Hxstorical Figures.** The examples of hxstorical LGBTQ+ BIPOC figures in the original draft were much stronger, including: Marsha P. Johnson, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, June Jordan, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, Sharice Davids, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, Jose Antonio Vargas, to name a few LGBTQ+ BIPOC figures that were since cut from the curriculum, our recommendation is that they be reinstated, and more should be added.
- 3) **BIPOC LGBTQ+ Language and Concepts.** Language represents thinking, feeling, communication, and understanding. It is important to include more of the LGBTQ+ affirming language and concepts that were present in the original draft.
 - This includes the explicit critiquing of heteronormativity, cisheteropatriarchy, and heterosexist, homophobic, transphobic structures of oppression and specific forms they take, such as misogynoir and machismo.
 - Purposeful disciplinary language and spelling ideologies of Ethnic Studies that both highlight marginalized narratives, such as hxstory, herstory, hxrstory, need to also be brought back as a reality of the discipline and everyday praxis of Ethnic Studies (see Appendix A for many examples).
 - BIPOC LGBTQ+ youth are already engaging with these terms, language, and spellings, through technology and social media, in connection with intersectional racial justice, and purposefully showing the way from the perspective of young people today -- Ethnic Studies values and respects this, and does not negate it.
 - We cannot allow for LGBTQ+ students who use these alternate spellings with great intentionality in specific academic contexts, and with nuanced explanations/rationale, to be told they “are

wrong” and that they “will lose points”, because these language conventions are not noted in the ESMC. We have been told we are wrong for being who we are for long enough -- this exclusion and dilution of language and concepts need to be reinstated in the next draft, language and terminology to name our world and lived experiences is empowering, and necessary for students to have access to.

- The research literature in sociolinguistics backs this up as the “language ideology” and “spelling ideology” of Ethnic Studies, which has a direct relationship with Gender and Sexuality Studies, and which is an intentional contrast with the “eye dialect” as part of the white gaze that has pathologized communities of color for far too long. The language conventions of Ethnic Studies must not be denied in the curriculum, and the BIPOC LGBTQ+ language must not be negated.
- BIPOC LGBTQ+ concepts/terms including Two-spirit, Nepantlas, The Black LGBTQIA Experience, Fa’afafine, Fakaleti, and Māhū, should be present in the ESMC, as speaking to specific experiences of BIPOC LGBTQ+ communities and students -- any which were removed from the original draft should be reintegrated into the next iteration.
- In the current draft, there is an offensive line in this regard of language, that insults students as young intellectuals with low expectations, and which needs immediate revision:
 - Ch.1, lines 435-436, should read: “It (Ethnic Studies) can help students learn to present their ideas in strong, compelling, and precise academic language of the field, as well as in everyday language, depending on the context and audience.”

4) BIPOC LGBTQ+ Inclusive Guiding Values and Principles Centered.

Ethnic Studies can fundamentally transform the very conditions that have allowed injustice and inequality to exist by uplifting our stories courageously through teaching and learning. This year alone, more than twenty seven Trans and Gender Expansive people have been murdered in our country—the vast majority Trans BIPOC. Integrating an explicit critique of cisheteropatriarchy helps us name this reality, and not just as a footnote (as it has been reduced to in the current draft). Our coalition members who are LGBTQ+ educators are already integrating these powerful and necessary Guiding Values and Principles into our classrooms. We recommended [this formatted version of the](#)

Guiding Values and Principles be integrated directly into the ESMC, the layout, design, increases accessibility for students (rather than broken apart into footnotes as the current draft does). More scaffolding such as this formatting for teachers and students, is what we need throughout the model curriculum, not exclusion and dilution, which further minimizes already marginalized BIPOC LGBTQ+ voices in K-12 curriculum. These guiding values and principles that Ethnic Studies educator leaders came to consensus on (including LGBTQ+ representatives), must be centered, no matter how many explicitly and implicitly racist, homophobic, and transphobic public comments come into the CDE against them.

5) Lastly, BIPOC LGBTQ+ Inclusion Per State Board of Education BIPOC Guidelines, not sacrificing them

- “Include accurate information based on current and confirmed (Ethnic Studies) research;”
 - all four of the above recommendations are supported by Ethnic Studies literature and praxis.
- “Promote self and collective empowerment;”
 - for all students, including BIPOC LGBTQIAP2S+ students.
- “Engage a range of disciplines beyond traditional history and social sciences, including but not limited to: visual and performing arts... *gender & sexuality studies*, etc.”
 - a number of the Ethnic Studies concepts and language noted, have intersectional relationships with Gender and Sexuality Studies, these should have never been removed from the curriculum by the CDE because of pressure from outside BIPOC LGBTQ+ communities. Further scaffolding, not exclusion, is a key part of the solution here.
- “Promote critical thinking and rigorous analysis of history, systems of oppression, and the status quo in an effort to generate discussions on futurity, and imagine new possibilities.”
 - This is exactly what our four main recommendations do, both rigorously analyzing and acting upon history, even at the linguistic level - hxstory, herstory, hxrstory, ourstory -- it is not about etymology in this case, it is about orthography (the visual realm) and phonemes (the audio realm) of the words we use, in naming our world, creating the future and imagining new possibilities as the SBE guidelines ask for. Why were these terms removed? They need to be reintegrated with explanation

why they are important, and again, it is evident these terms are applied in consistent praxis by BIPOC LGBTQ+ youth and communities -- why were their voices marginalized in this revised draft, and the voices of Eurocentric mass media and political status quo protectors prioritized instead? This must be made right in the next iteration.

- “Engage pedagogies that allow for student and community responsiveness, validate students’ lived experience, and address socioemotional development;”
- “Be inclusive, creating space for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or citizenship, to learn different perspectives.”
- “Provide support for a collaborative teaching model that encourages teachers to work with colleagues across disciplines, further highlighting the interdisciplinarity of ethnic studies;”

For BIPOC LGBTQ+ communities and students, the current draft is significantly weakened by the edits that have been made since the original, rather than being strengthened; fortunately, this can still be resolved. The unjust attacks against the guiding values, principles and language of the original ESMC, stem from the same oppressive status quo worldview, as the hateful claims of President Trump, charging that transformative pedagogies are nothing more than “bias, jargon, and indoctrination” -- his recent federal ban on critical race theory, the 1619 Project, and other BIPOC led educational movements make this as clear as ever. Is this who California will listen to? Or will we for once, let BIPOC educators in strong solidarity with LGBTQIAP2S+ communities, guide the way? It is time California. We hope to see our recommendations here, along with the recommendation in our complementary letter, brought to fruition in the subsequent draft of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, it is what our students need — today.

Sincerely,

Trans Queer Racial Educational Justice Coalition

American Civil Liberties Union of California

Somos Familia Valle

United Teachers Los Angeles Equity Team

Appendix A

Hxstory-Herstory-Hxrstory-Ourstory

Hxstory - Southeast Asian Retention Through Creating Hxstory

<https://searchuci.wordpress.com/about/what-does-the-x-is-hxstory-stand-for/>

Herstory - Black Lives Matter

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/>

Herstory - Association of Ethnic Studies

<https://bit.ly/36gh5Q4>

Hxstory- Uplift Los Angeles

<https://www.upliftlosangeles.org/hxstory-mission-statement>

Hxstory - UCI Cross Cultural Center

<https://ccc.uci.edu/about/hxstory.php>

Hxstorical Amnesia - University of Vermont

<https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1341&context=tv>

Hxstory - Learning Our Hxstory Allows Healing to Begin – GSA Network

<https://gsanetwork.org/updates/learning-our-hxstory-allows-healing-to-begin/>

Hxstory - UC Davis Cross Cultural Center

<https://ccc.ucdavis.edu/about/hxstory>

Black Hxstory Month 2019 | Cal State Monterey Bay

<https://csumb.edu/oc3/black-hxstory-month-2019>

History/Herstory/Hxstory & Logo | Campus Climate, Community Engagement & Transformation

<https://campusclimate.berkeley.edu/students/ejce/geneq/about-geneq/historyherstoryhxstory-logo>

Exhibit: "I Am Black History, Herstory, Hxstory" - Library Events - Western Libraries

<https://www.libcal.com/event/6487414>

Reclaiming Black Hxstory Month – The Cargo

<https://slhscargo.org/722/opinion/reclaiming-black-hxstory-month/>

People For Mobility Justice - Our Hxstory

<https://www.peopleformobilityjustice.org/hxstory>

Collective Healing: Coming Together to Recover, Recollect, and Redefine our Community From A Painful Hxstory – Deafhood Foundation

<http://deafhood.org/collectivehealing/>

Nepantla Pattern: Decolonizing Hxstory — Gilda Posada

<https://www.gildaposada.com/nepantla-pattern-decolonizing-hxstory>

Collective Healing: Coming Together to Recover, Recollect, and Redefine our Community From A Painful Hxstory – Deafhood Foundation

<http://deafhood.org/collectivehealing/>

Womxn of Color Make Hxstory in 2018 Election | Associated Students Inc.

<https://asicalstatela.org/womxn>

Buried Hxstories for BIPOC Youth — People's Food Co-op

<https://www.peoples.coop/events-calendar/2019/6/21/buried-hxstories-for-bipoc-youth>

Our Hxstory - Midwest Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Students Union

<https://www.maasu.org/hxstory>

Native Hope - Part One: Acknowledging My Herstory and Identity for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

<https://blog.nativehope.org/acknowledging-my-herstory-and-identity-for-mmiwg>

Herstory - Alma de Mujer

<http://www.almademujer.org/herstory.html>

IN VERBAL MURALS: A STUDY OF CHICANA HERSTORY AND POETRY on JSTOR

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27921699>

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27921699?seq=1>

Chicana Herstory | MUJERES TALK

<https://mujerestalk.org/tag/chicana-herstory/>

NAACP | Black History, Herstory, Theirstory Month and the Environmental and Climate Justice Movement

<https://www.naACP.org/latest/black-history-herstory-theirstory-month-environmental-climate-justice-movement/>

Black HERstory — HER

<https://www.richmondher.com/black-herstory>

Celebrating Black Herstory Month in 2020 – Fabulously Feminist

<https://fabulouslyfeminist.com/blogs/studio-updates/celebrating-black-herstory-month-in-2020>

Black Herstory

<https://www.international.ucla.edu/africa/event/4538>

+ *thousands more examples across California, the country, and beyond.*

Guiding Values, Principles, and Outcomes of Ethnic Studies Teaching

HOLISTIC
HUMANIZATION

CRITICAL
CONSCIOUSNESS

Given the range and complexity of the field, it is important to identify key values and principles of Ethnic Studies to aid in guiding and developing Ethnic Studies courses, teaching, and learning.

The foundational values of Ethnic Studies are housed in the conceptual model of the “double helix” which signifies the interdependence between holistic humanization and critical consciousness.

Humanization includes the values of love, respect, hope, solidarity, and is based on the celebration of community cultural wealth.

The values rooted in humanization and critical consciousness shape the following guiding principles for Ethnic Studies teaching and learning. Together, these are the two interwoven guiding values and seven principles Ethnic Studies lessons should include. Ethnic Studies courses, teaching, and learning will:



1. CULTIVATE

empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and People of Color;



2. CELEBRATE

and honor Native People/s of the land and Communities of Color by providing a space to share their stories of struggle and resistance, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth;



3. CENTER

and place high value on pre-colonial, ancestral, indigenous, diasporic, familial, and marginalized knowledge;



4. CRITIQUE

empire, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression at the intersections of our society;



5. CHALLENGE

imperialist/colonial hegemonic beliefs and practices on ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels;



6. CONNECT

ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on global and local levels to ensure a truer democracy;



7. CONCEPTUALIZE,

imagine, and build new possibilities for post-imperial life that promote collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

SOURCES

Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales and Edward Curammeng, “Pedagogies of Resistance: Filipina/o Gestures of Rebellion Against the Inheritance of American Schooling,” in Tracy Buenavista and Arshad Ali, eds., *Education At War: The Fight for aStudents of Color in America* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2018), 233–238.

R. Tolteka Cuauhtin, “The Ethnic Studies Framework, A Holistic Overview” in R. Tolteka Cuauhtin, Miguel Zavala, Christine Sleeter, and Wayne Au, eds. *Rethinking Ethnic Studies* (Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2019), 65–75.

Tara Yosso, 2005. “Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth,” in *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.