

From: J Freestone
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 2:01 PM
To: Superintendent
Subject: Request to Modify the Ethnic Studies Curriculum

The Honorable Tony Thurmond
State superintendent of public instructions
Sacramento, CA 95814-5301

Dear Mr. Thurmond

As a CA resident, mother, and a citizen of this universe who does not want more conflict in this world, I am concerned about the new ethnic studies curriculum that is to be adopted by the California Department of Education as a mandatory course for all students to graduate high school. The curriculum does not recognize Jews as a minority in the US, calls for boycotting Israel (in 3 different classes), attempts to explain the conflict in the Middle East using a single-sided story, encourages aggression against Israelis, and spreads hate against Israelis and Jews.

In 2019 we have had 248 mass shootings this year alone.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_mass_shootings_in_the_United_States_in_2019] Almost all of them directed towards minorities and many of them - directed towards Israelis and Jews. We have got to find a solution to this problem of hatred.

Groups that are targeted include people. Real people who each are human that bleed the same blood and breathe the same air. We all have feelings, love, fear and joy. We are all citizens of this universe and together we make this world beautiful in diversity. Common ground for people to bond and connect should not be a harbinger for hate. No matter the religion, sexual orientation, ability, cultural background, or any other distinction we are all people in this universe and we do not deserve to be hated for these components of our souls, personalities, or interests that connect us. This most definitely should not be taught to every graduating high school student in an ethnic studies curriculum.

Teaching a one sided curriculum in any light does not serve our children. This does not conform to the growth our society has made with many significant social rights movements in our history. We are blessed to live in a country and at a time where women vote, slavery has been abolished, and workers are not discriminated against on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or sex, to name a few. With California one of the most liberal states, I am appalled teaching any subject without being neutral and purely factual is even a possibility for our state.

There is no doubt the conflict in the Middle East is a very hard topic. In America we fear and lament the mass shootings that occur and in the Middle East killing on the basis of hatred for a group is a regular occurrence and is a part of life. It is a worldwide problem and we need to be a part of the solution HERE and NOW. The conflict, the existence of the State of Israel, and the continued anti-Semitism is deep topic in history, emotion, and religion. We should not shy away from difficult topics as that does not promote resolution. What we need to do is to learn. We need to understand each other. We need to approach difficult topics from a neutral standpoint so we have the space to find a solution thru understanding. Continued killing and hatred is clearly not solving any of these problems.

As a mother I will not stand by and allow our children be taught any kind of hatred. Pro or Anti anything. I will stand up and teach them to open their minds and hearts to understand each side of a conflict. I will teach them critical thinking skills and I will teach them to look from both perspectives. I hope my children will be a part of the solution and not perpetuate existing conflicts.

I hope you will join me in striving to solve our problems and to promote the hope of peace. I urge you to modify the ethnic studies curriculum to teach neutral and fact based topics that allow space for each individual to have their own understanding and their own opinion. It would be wonderful if this curriculum encouraged finding a solution to any ethnic studies problems. Will you encourage our children to be solution to our problems and change this curriculum?

Thank you,
Juliette Freestone
Mother from Half Moon Bay, California