

From: Jenny Shalev
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 8:05 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Ethnic studies curriculum comment

Hello,

We are a Jewish-Israeli family, living in Sunnyvale, California for six years. I would like to express my deepest concern about the new California Ethnic studies program that excludes the Jewish community, the Jewish-American history, and promotes boycott against Israel.

I believe that you have already received multiple comments on the proposed program, I wouldn't want to repeat them, so I would like to share a personal experience. My son has experienced an anti-semitic incident last year, a student in his Middle school has attached a yellow star of David to my son's t-shirt. Our family is descendants of Holocaust survivors, my son's great-grandmother was the only one in her huge family to survive Auschwitz concentration camp, my grandfather was also the only one who survived from his family due to escape from a Nazi concentration camp in Poland. Their relatives were all labeled with a yellow star and perished in the Holocaust. I can't even start to explain how deeply sadden we were to learn that our child was labeled with this Nazi sign in 2019, in the progressive and inclusive California education system. While the school administration was very sensitive and effective in taking care of this, they do not decide what the students learn about. I believe that the student was completely uninformed about the Holocaust and the Jewish-American community history and sensitivities. Unfortunately, this was not the only incident and I keep hearing similar stories from other parents in our community. There is so much hateful and fake content on the Internet that without proper education we will raise a whole generation of students who are completely misinformed.

Given the recent unfortunate shooting events, I also believe that the content proposed in this program can be of a physical threat to the Jewish and Israeli students, it's easy to portray the Jewish students as villains and expose them to potential threats or create an environment where they will be forced to conceal their identity. I was born and raised in the USSR where Jews were discriminated and forced to hide their identity, precisely the reason why many of them immigrated to the United States. Just imagine how an Israeli/Jewish student will feel when BDS content is being taught in the class, knowing how complex the situation is and that only one side is presented (most of the Israelis and Jews completely oppose the BDS, it's considered anti-semitic in many countries, 27 States in the US have passed various anti-BDS measures) . How will the class environment be if there are both Muslim and Jewish students in the classroom, are we interested in bringing this complex political issue into our classrooms?

I believe that our education system should be unbiased, unpolitical and inclusive. Our students deserve to be educated in a safe environment without labeling, shaming, and singling out any ethnic group. I hope that the curriculum will be revised to include the Jewish minority and our complicated history and to exclude political and biased content, and in general, to contribute to a positive connection between the various communities.

Thank you for reading! I hope this letter will be taken into consideration and a new more balanced curriculum will be proposed.

Jenny Shalev