

From: jusbeth
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 8:44 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Problems with the Ethnic Studies Curriculum

As a former Oakland Public Schools History Teacher, a mother, grandmother, and a member of the First Hebrew Congregation of Oakland, I have concerns about the above referenced curriculum. Rabbi Bloom has said it better than I ever could, and I submit his thoughts, with which I concur 100%. Please consider the negative effects this program, (or any other) as presented, will cause for all ethnic minorities when one sided views are offered.

The purpose of the curriculum is worthy--to promote understanding and tolerance in our state school system, given the diversity of ethnic groups and cultures in California. Sadly, this educational effort meant to teach students about marginalized communities marginalizes Jews, omits antisemitism as a form of bigotry, and strongly promotes the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement against Israel while doing nothing to contextualize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Virtually every Jewish organization, from the ADL to the JCRC to the Federation and even the Jewish caucus of California legislators have expressed their concerns.

I respectfully requesting the removal of BDS and other anti-Israel bias from the model curriculum.

Examples of bias in the proposed curriculum:

1. The [Introduction](#) of the proposed curriculum states that, "The implementation of Ethnic Studies presents an opportunity for teachers to... enable students to develop a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion, and aids in the eradication of bigotry, hate, and racism." Despite this stated goal, the curriculum does not feature a single lesson about the Jewish community, mentioning Jews only in passing. With antisemitism rising and ignorance about the Jewish people still a major problem in our society, the exclusion of Jews from this curriculum is deeply disappointing.

2. The [sample lesson plans](#) for the curriculum:

- Encourages teachers to highlight BDS and a pro-BDS group called Direct Action for Palestine, but no voices critical of their perspectives (p. 234).
- Promotes a false equivalence between Israel's efforts to stop terrorists from entering communities to murder innocent people, and U.S. policies on the border with Mexico (p. 234).
- Uses unclear language that implies "Israel-Palestine" as a whole is an Arab country (p. 237).
- Frames the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 War as fact, with no alternative perspectives (p. 242).
- Encourages teachers to use a poem featuring harsh criticism of Israel, but no content offering a positive perspective about Israel or criticism of Palestinian leaders (p. 256, 264-269).

3. A [glossary](#) for the curriculum includes a definition of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement against Israel. It claims the purpose of BDS is to, "establish freedom for Palestinians living under apartheid conditions" without any critical perspective, including that a stated goal of much of them movement is actually to end the existence of the State of Israel.

I urge the state to add lessons about American Jews as an ethnic group, including those who fled the Holocaust, oppression in the Middle East, and discrimination in the former Soviet Union.

Respectfully,
Beth Eiselman