

The Proposed Curriculum is Severely Flawed and Unfit for Use

The proposed Ethnic Studies Curriculum, developed by the California Department of Education, is deeply flawed and unfit for use. As outlined below, these flaws include the pervasive use of material falsehoods, misrepresentations, and the exclusion of necessary facts and foundational information. The proposed curriculum marginalizes the religious identity of Jews and attacks the national heritage of certain Jewish immigrants. It is apparent that the authors are biased and bear a predatory purpose: to systematically facilitate indifference toward Jewish persecution and promote anti-Israel perspectives among impressionable students. The result of the curriculum would be to create hostile environment that facilitates discrimination based on ethnicity and national-origin. Israeli-American and Jewish minority students would face a material threat to their safety and civil rights.

This matter is particularly insulting and outrageous given that California's Jewish and Israeli-American communities have gone to great lengths to make the truth readily accessible to our broader community. Indeed, the pool of instructive resources and relationships at the disposal of educational administrators and state policymakers is vast. Any objective observer of the proposed curriculum can readily gather its systematic employment of demonization, delegitimization and double standards – each of which can indicate anti-Semitism. Sadly, even the mere proposition of this curriculum brings into doubt the intellectual standards and moral character of many who are involved in California's educational system.

In November 2005, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recognized that anti-Israel sentiment can cross the line into anti-Semitism, and in the Commission's words, "should be distinguished from legitimate discourse regarding foreign policy." The Commission clearly stated: "Anti-Semitic bigotry is no less morally deplorable when camouflaged as anti-Israelism or anti-Zionism." The Commission specifically called on educational administrators to publicly speak out and "set a moral example by denouncing anti-Semitic and other hate speech, while safeguarding all rights protected under the First Amendment and under basic principles of academic freedom." The U.S. Department of Education's Office on Civil Rights has made the same recommendation to educational administrators.

In March 2008, the U.S. State Department issued a detailed report on anti-Semitism globally, recognizing that anti-Zionist sentiment and criticism of Israel can cross the line into anti-Jewish bigotry. Whether intended or not, such sentiment and criticism can have the effect of promoting prejudice against Jews. As an example, the State Department noted that demonizing Israel and/or Israelis "as barbaric, unprincipled, selfish, inhumane, etc. is anti-Semitic and has the effect of causing audiences to associate those bad attributes with Jews in general." This type of anti-Semitism is no less hurtful or harmful than more traditional forms of anti-Jewish bigotry.

Basic decency demands that the California Department of Education write a new curriculum that is objective, factually correct, apolitical, and grounded in the values of tolerance and respect for all.

R.D.Jacobs,MD