

From: **Lauren John**

Date: Sat, Aug 10, 2019 at 1:04 PM

Subject: Please include the Jewish American experience in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

To:

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

My name is Lauren John and I am an adjunct professor of English and ESL at Menlo College in Atherton, California. Our college has been noted as one of the most diverse in the nation and many of our 850 students are the first in their families to attend college. As a result, I read Chapter Two of your draft with great interest and reviewed the model lesson plans. Although I teach at the college rather than at the high school level, there is a lot of valuable material here that I plan to incorporate into my classroom where possible.

Ironically, I became aware of the proposed curriculum through discussions at my synagogue, Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills, California--which provided the link to chapter two--out of concern that the Jewish American experience was missing. While much of the material that you have gathered is highly valuable to educators, I wondered why the American Jewish experience was omitted--especially given the large number of Jewish Americans living in California who potentially face discrimination. Right now, in the wake of shootings at American synagogues, we have enhanced security at Beth Am and I see guards every time I go to worship. Antisemitism continues to exist worldwide and Jewish stereotypes abound. Add in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and discussions of boycotts of Israel (BDS), as well as the neo-Nazis in Charlottesville chanting "Jews will not replace us" and it is evident that there is much to be learned from the discrimination issues faced by my own ethnic minority.

I realize that you don't have time to answer every e-mail that you receive, but I wonder what the criteria was for inclusion of ethnic groups in the curriculum and why American Jews were left out of the curriculum the first place.

Was it a question of population or immigration statistics? Was the focus on people of color, with American Jews not easily identified as people of color?

My concern is that by leaving us out of the discussion altogether, except when mentioning the boycott of Israel, we will be seen only as oppressors rather than as the oppressed.

What's more, many people think that American Jews have one pro-Israel opinion about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, when in reality, there are a variety of opinions and many of us disagree with the policies of the Netanyahu regime.

American Jews are no more alike than LatinX folks--hence the need for the classification --LatinX--within our ethnic group, there is a wide range of diversity.

I understand that not every school district will choose to teach the American Jewish experience and that your model curriculum provides for a lot of flexibility.

But to be truly comprehensive, I hope that you can provide educators with resources for teaching about the American Jewish Experience and antisemitism in America.

Facing History and Ourselves is one organization that can provide you with resources.

<https://www.facinghistory.org/about-us>

Sincerely,  
Lauren John