

From: Devorah Marcus
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 4:13 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Jewish Content of New Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my grave concern regarding the Jewish content of the ethnic studies curriculum. I am in full support of this component of education and consider it one of the aspects that make our California education program so wonderful. I am in full agreement with the concerns expressed in the letter you received from the California Jewish Legislative Caucus. The apparent purposeful exclusion of the Jewish community and Jewish history from the history of California is profound and gravely alarming. I, as an American Jew, am a 4th generation Californian and I am greatly distressed at the way prejudice and anti-Jewish bias is being expressed in the erasure of our community's history and contributions both here in California and in the nation at large. This marginalization only magnifies the growing sense of threat that the Jewish community faces here in a country that has been our home for over 300 years as we are witnessing violence and unprecedented public anti-Semitism.

Equally upsetting is the emphasis on the BDS movement in regard to the Jewish state of Israel. No other global conflict is given this level of in-depth attention, especially in-depth attention that focuses on a biased narrative reflecting only one side of the conflict. The broad Jewish community understands the BDS movement as an on-going attempt to de-legitimize the existence of the modern state of Israel. It floods public spaces with lies, dis-information, selective narrative, and anti-Semitic bias. It is profoundly upsetting to see this content make its way into academic content.

As I understand it the purpose of the ESMC is to help us all learn more about each other in the spirit of goodwill and genuine understanding. This curriculum fails in this goal and actually will serve to isolate the Jewish people while fanning the flames of intolerance and bias. The BDS content itself seems to be a violation of the ESMC guidelines as it is not inclusive, it represents a single narrative/viewpoint. The conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians is a profoundly complicated and painful situation which requires thoughtful and sensitive handling. The way it is handled in its current presentation reflects and represents a true anti-Jewish/anti-Israel bias that is a diminishment of everything this program seeks to build. Please reconsider and allow the Jewish community to help advise on the content so that our people, our history, our difficulties, our triumphs, and our contributions are not erased.

I write this as a proud Californian, a proud American, a proud daughter of a bi-lingual public school teacher, an advocate for peace and justice, and the Senior Rabbi of a synagogue of 475 families.

With Respect and Prayers for Partnership and Understanding,

Rabbi Devorah Marcus
Temple Emanu-El of San Diego