

The California Department of Education received 85 submissions that contained the language below. Other identical comments may have been posted separately.

From: Yisrael Gelb

Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 10:03 AM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment On Proposed Ethnic Studies Curriculum

To the Honorable Tony Thurmond,

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed CDE ethnic studies model curriculum. The State Board of Education guidelines state that the curriculum shall "be inclusive" and "encourage cultural understanding."

Many of the model curriculums published in Appendix A are deeply offensive to me, as well as the Jewish community at large. Any insinuation (e.g. see page 8) that Jews have gained racial privilege and have "joined the club" of those enjoying white privilege and superiority, is nothing less than hate speech.

Furthermore, over the protest of many, the decision was made to focus the curriculum on only four groups, including Asian-Americans. Yet, somehow included in this group are the Arab/Muslim Americans (e.g. see pages 15 and 20). As reported in the Jewish Journal (<https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/opinion/320528/its-time-we-talk-about-iranian-jews-and-californias-ethnic-studies-curriculum/>), the proposed curriculum ignores Iranian religious communities — Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and Bahais — integral to the Los Angeles population.

For the state to consider Arab-Muslims as Asian Americans (see Chapter 3, page 20) is a distortion of an Arab history full of hatred and persecution of the Jewish nation. It also blatantly ignores the fact that Israel is a state in the Asian continent. Many of the proposed model curriculum are deeply flawed as it relates to issues of anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jews throughout history. It cannot be said that they are inclusive and encourage cultural understanding.

Finally, California is the most diverse state in this great nation. The curriculum should be reflective of that and include cultural sensitivity to all ethnicities and races. Many nationalities have been and continue to be subject to stereotypes and hatred in this country. We have strength in our diversity, regardless of the color of our skin. The curriculum needs to do a better job reflecting that.

The SBE guidelines require the inclusive input from local nonprofits and advocacy groups, and recommends creating a steering committee of invested parties. I highly encourage you to include local organizations such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center and Agudath Israel of California in further drafts of the proposed curriculum.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Yisrael Gelb
Chief Executive Officer
Agudath Israel of California