

**From:** Norbert Weinberg

**Sent:** Sunday, January 31, 2021 9:12 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>

**Cc:** [emails redacted]

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fwd: FW: Concern that ESMC will exacerbate race relations and cause damage to Jews

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Dear Superintendent Thurmond and members of the committee for ethnic studies,

As the child of a Rabbi who spent several years in a Berlin prison before escaping to the Soviet Union, and a mother who barely survived in hiding in Poland during the Holocaust, and as a scholar of 20<sup>th</sup> century genocide, I am very concerned about the structure and tone of critical elements in the proposed ethnic studies curriculum. I also write as a so-called “white privileged” (as used in the curriculum) Jew who is father to children of Middle Eastern ancestry.

Let me start with one simple example of a highly disturbing problem, not related to Jews:

I sat in front of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr as he gave an address to a Rabbinical conference in defense of Israel and Jews of the Soviet Union, just a few weeks before he was assassinated for his efforts to bring justice to African-Americans. Yet, reminiscent of Stalinist practice, he has been expunged from this curriculum.

<https://www.newsweek.com/martin-luther-king-adviser-writes-gov-gavin-newsom-criticizes-ethnic-studies-curriculum-1565410>

Now, I will point out my personal item of complaint, which addresses the “Lesson Purpose and Overview”. I have copied this from your model, p. 485.”” This lesson introduces students to antisemitism and its manifestations through the lens of Jewish Middle Eastern Americans, also known as Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews, whose contemporary history is defined by recent struggles as targets of discrimination, prejudice and hate crimes in the United States and globally. Students will analyze and research narratives, primary, and secondary sources about Mizrahi Jews. The source analysis contextualizes the experience of Jewish Middle Eastern Americans within the larger framework of systems of power (economic, political, social).”

Rather than addressing anti-Semitism, and the fact that the primary targets of acts of violent anti-Semitism have especially been Jews who are visibly such, by their clothing, and who are East European, the curriculum seeks to create a divide in the Jewish population by establishing the Jews of Middle Eastern origin as the targets of hatred and insinuates that they have suffered at the hand of their fellow Jews, who pass with ‘white privilege’. You should be aware that the first racial laws under the Third Reich used such a “divide and conquer” approach by first targeting Jews from eastern Europe inside Germany, and then turned on the German Jews, whose roots went back centuries. This same splitting off of Jews, “white” against “Arab” Jews has been in the propaganda wars against Israel for the past many decades, by spokespeople of the same countries that expelled those Jews.

Rather than teaching the actual history of Jews in North America, the curriculum gives a few quotes and a few magazine articles which make absolutely no sense out of context. I have not studied the other ethnicities that are addressed, but it must be assumed that the same academic and intellectual sloppiness, superficiality and divisiveness pervades the entire curriculum.

For a more extensive discussion of the current model, please see this article from a responsible journal of Jewish thought : <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/california-ethnic-studies-curriculum>

It is best to throw out the entire curriculum and start from scratch, correctly.

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi Dr. Norbert Weinberg

Hollywood Temple Beth El

[address redacted]

Author, Courage of the Spirit, [www.courageofspirit.com](http://www.courageofspirit.com),

Courage of the Spirit portrays the spiritual struggle of one man during the first half of the twentieth century—the author's father, Rabbi Dr. William Weinberg, who survived Nazi and communist tyranny to become the first State Rabbi of the community of Holocaust survivors in the German State of Hesse.