

**From:** Rabbi Sarah Weissman  
**Sent:** Sunday, September 6, 2020 7:41 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] message from a congregant

Please see below a message from Tony D'Esopo:  
Dear EthnicStudies Developers

I explored some of the draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and found the following paragraph in the outline section

"As a field, ethnic studies seeks to empower all students to engage socially and politically and to think critically about the world around them. It is important for ethnic studies courses to document the experiences of people of color in order for students to construct counter-narratives and develop a more complex understanding of the human experience. Through these studies, students should develop respect for cultural diversity and see the advantages of inclusion."

Am I being a grumpy old man (92) by finding that this paragraph by itself turns the name of the curriculum "Ethnic Studies" into a lie? Yes, a lie. It is not a study of different social groups distinguished by national or cultural tradition, of "ethnicities", if you will. If it were, how could it be restricted to "peoples of color." Are not, or were not the Irish and Italians and Swedes and Germans ... and of course the Jews distinguished by national or cultural tradition? Don't they or didn't they experience exclusion? (We still do. After the Pittsburgh shooting you will find guards at our Temple.) Clearly some of these "ethnicities" are excluded from the curriculum because they have already been included in the American social fabric. There remain, obviously, problems of inclusion of varying severity for some sub-populations : Jewish-, African-, Latin-, Asian- and Native-Americans. You will note that in the previous sentence I did not call them "ethnicities" because it's a term that emphasizes separateness, and helping young people deal with this and ending this is what the course is or should be about.

So please rename the curriculum "Can We Be an Inclusive America?" or "Achieving Rev Martin Luther King Jr's Dream", or "How to Live in a Divided America" or at least some name that covers its intent clearly. Ethnic Studies sounds like an academic study devoid of concern with change, like, say. Biology. It is not. It aims at a change in social relationships. Why try to hide the intent? Why lie about it? Don't we have enough of lying already?

Tony D'Esopo  
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