

August 14, 2019

California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee  
California Department of Education

Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

Email:

Dear Members of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee:

My name is Stephen Silver, and I am a parent with two children (ages 6 and 9) enrolled in California public schools. I have reviewed the proposed California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and am deeply concerned about how it treats Jews and the state of Israel.

Broadly, I have four specific concerns: (1) the model curriculum ignores the experience, perspective and remarkable contributions of American Jews to this nation generally and to California in particular; (2) the curriculum completely ignores anti-Semitism -- history's oldest, deadliest and most enduring hatred against an ethnic or cultural group; (3) the curriculum takes a biased and factually false approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict that omits key facts and ignores the Israeli perspective altogether; (4) the curriculum demonizes and vilifies the Jewish state, including in one instance smearing it with a demonstrably false charge that it is an "apartheid" regime, while encouraging students to support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement -- an anti-Israel movement that promotes anti-Semitism and whose leaders advocate for Israel to cease to exist. I fear that, as a result of the failures, omissions, factual distortions and biases contained in a curriculum intended to serve as a model for what is to be taught in California public schools, it will contribute to and even exacerbate the ignorance about Jews and Israel that manifests in anti-Semitism and anti-Zionist hate and bigotry.

### **1. The Experience and Contributions of American Jews**

My first concern is the absence of Jews from the ethnic groups included in the model curriculum. Jews are an ethnic group with a shared history, culture and geographic origin, who arrived in this country predominantly as poor immigrants and have contributed immensely to our nation and to California in particular.

The story of the Jewish people goes back more than 3,000 years, and is a remarkable story that all Californians can benefit from studying and learning about.

Jews in ancient times challenged the conventional understandings of time as cyclical and unchanging and of the relationship of human beings to their deities as a servant-master relationship. Instead, they conceived of the former as a narrative arc with a beginning, defining moments, and an intended end point distinct from its beginning, and the latter as one analogous to students learning from an enlightened teacher or children learning from a parent who cares deeply about and desires the best for its pupils (or children) and emphasizes ethical treatment of one another as a core value. It was a radical new way of thought whose influence can be seen in every subsequent culture that drew upon the Jewish experience, from Christian and Muslim scholars who integrated parts of the Jewish biblical narrative into their own religious scripture, to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s idea that "the arc of the moral

universe is long, but it bends toward justice." The story of Jewish history is also a story about perseverance with universal appeal.

Jewish history began in the Middle East (more about this later), but it did not remain there. Jews were repeatedly forced from their ancestral homeland in modern-day Israel -- first by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., then by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., and finally by the Romans in the years 70 and 135 following a pair of wars in which an estimated 350,000 Jews were killed defending their homeland from conquest. Following the first Roman-Jewish War, Roman soldiers brought 100,000 Jewish slaves from Judea (as Israel was then known) to Europe; it was they who built Rome's celebrated Colosseum. For 2,000 years, European Jews were confined to ghettos, endured extreme and unrelenting hatred and bigotry, and were periodically expelled and massacred. Yet they never surrendered their identity nor gave up on returning to their homeland. To the contrary, in the diaspora, Jews created institutions that preserved their sense of community and cultural and religious continuity.

It wasn't easy. In 800, Charlemagne invited Jews to settle in his kingdom, which dominated Central Europe, and Jews helped invigorate the economy. Yet less than three centuries later, life for Jews changed dramatically. In 1096, on their way to the First Crusade, European soldiers overcome with religious fervor prepared for their planned attacks on Arab Muslims in the Levant by slaughtering Jews across central Germany. Similar massacres followed throughout Western Europe. In 1190, the people of York, in England, trapped the entire Jewish community in a tower and burned them to death. Between 1290 and 1496, Jews were expelled en masse from England, France, most of the German-speaking states, Spain and Portugal. Sometimes they were forced to convert or even were killed and their belongings seized. Columbus' voyages to the Americas beginning in 1492 were funded in large part by money seized by Spain from the Jews who were forced to flee or were killed during the Spanish Inquisition. Thus, Native Americans were slaughtered as a direct result of anti-Semitic hate targeting Jews across the globe in Europe.

Most of the Jews who fled or were expelled from Western Europe eventually settled in Poland, which had not participated in the Crusades and had thereby avoided becoming infected with Western European anti-Semitism. Indeed, Poland initially welcomed Jews and protected them, and for centuries the country enjoyed relative peace and prosperity. However, in 1648, an uprising against Polish rule by the Ukrainian strongman Bogdan Chmielnicki morphed into a genocidal campaign specifically targeting Jews, with more than 100,000 murdered. The Polish reaction was shameful: rather than protect their Jewish neighbors, many Poles scapegoated Jews for their own sudden misfortune. Poland fell into decline, and between the years 1772-1815, Poland was partitioned between Russia, Prussia and Austria-Hungary and for a century it was erased from the map, with Russia ultimately seizing control of most of it. Under Russian rule, Jews were confined to an area of Eastern Europe known as the "Pale of Settlement" and were limited in the kinds of occupations they could pursue. Russian authorities were ruthless, drafting Jewish children as young as 12 years of age into the army for 25-year terms that didn't officially begin until the child turned 18. Russian authorities and their Cossack allies also began targeting Jewish communities with periodic government-organized massacres called pogroms. These massacres killed another 200,000 people and, especially from 1880 on, spurred three million Jews to flee Eastern Europe.

For the nine million Jews who remained in Europe, the worst was still to come. In 1933, an anti-Semitic regime called the Nazis took power in Germany. In 1939, it launched World War II with an invasion of Poland and then quickly overran most of Europe. The Nazis were so ideologically committed to their racist campaign of anti-Semitic hate that they systematically targeted every Jewish man, woman and

child in the lands they conquered for death. In some instances, particularly in Romania, France and Poland, local authorities helped the Nazis carry out their slaughter of Jews. In all, 6 million Jews were murdered between 1939-1945 in the Holocaust -- history's worst genocide -- solely because of their Jewish ancestry or identity as Jews. Of those Jews who survived, most eventually found a new home in their ancestral homeland of Israel.

Before the Holocaust, during the years 1880-1924, about two-and-a-half million of the three million Jews who left Europe moved to America. In the United States, Jews faced prejudice and persecution, yet also found a degree of freedom they had not known since their expulsion from ancient Israel. These immigrants contributed immensely to this country, demonstrating why America benefits when it embraces immigrants, even poor ones. Despite comprising just 2 percent of the nation's population for most of that time, American Jews have won 122 Nobel Prizes -- almost one-third of America's total of 375 (out of slightly more than 900 total Nobel Prizes awarded to date). American Jews became leaders in the fields of science, medicine and law. Scientists like Albert Einstein (special and general theories of relativity), Albert Michelson (speed of light), Ralph Alpher (Big Bang nucleosynthesis), Murray Gell-Mann (quarks), Alan Guth (cosmic inflation), Steven Weinberg (electroweak nuclear force; origin of the universe) and Avi Loeb (evolution of supermassive black holes) explored the mysteries of the universe, and Judith Resnik became the second American woman in space. (One might also note Rosalind Franklin, a British-Jewish woman who made numerous professional trips to the United States, who was a co-discoverer of the structure of DNA.) In medicine, Jonas Salk developed the polio vaccine. In law, Louis Brandeis originated the notion of the "people's lawyer," identified the right to privacy as a fundamental right in his scholarly writings, and, as the first Jewish justice on the U.S. Supreme Court, became a leading champion of expanding American civil liberties.

The notion of the United States as a beacon for immigrants was encapsulated in a poem by a Jewish woman, Emma Lazarus, whose words appear on a plaque inside the Statue of Liberty: "Give me your tired, your poor/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,/The wretched refuse of your teeming shore./Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,/I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" Samuel Gompers founded the modern American labor movement and fought for workers' rights including higher wages and fewer hours. Economist Paul Volcker implemented policies that brought inflation under control, protecting the savings of senior citizens. Writers from Isaac Bashevis Singer to Steven Pinker and auteurs in the film and entertainment industry from Steven Spielberg to Billy Crystal have educated and entertained us. Human rights champion Elie Wiesel was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize. Singer-songwriter Bob Dylan transcended music to become a cultural phenomenon and Nobel Prize for Literature honoree. Almost every significant movement in 20th-Century America, from environmentalism (Paul R. Ehrlich) to feminism (Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg), was rooted in the pioneering work of American Jews. Defying stereotype, Jewish Americans have even succeeded as athletes, most memorably NFL quarterback Sid Luckman, Olympic champion swimmer (and Sacramento native) Mark Spitz and baseball pitcher Sandy Koufax. Indeed, the list of accomplished Jewish-Americans is seemingly endless.

Notably, Jews were never accepted as part of the white majority. When Jews, including my grandparents, came to America, their immigration documents identified their race as "Hebrew," not white. Once here, they were excluded and discriminated against by the same people and institutions that rejected other minorities. Signs at public beaches said: "No dogs or Jews allowed." (My grandfather, Philip Korn, used to make a point of going to a beach in Virginia that had such a sign just to defy it.) Colleges -- particularly elite ones like Harvard -- strictly limited the number of Jews admitted. Clubs excluded Jews, and many law firms refused to hire Jews. Jews, in turn, naturally identified with other

minorities, and throughout the 20th century, Jews were at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement, from NAACP co-founder Henry Moskowitz and chairman and president Joel Spingarn, to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s close friend, adviser and speechwriter Stanley Levison, to Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, two young civil rights organizers who were murdered in Mississippi in 1964.

Jews played a huge role in the development of California in particular. A Sephardic Jew named Washington Bartlett gave San Francisco its name in 1846, and Levi Strauss founded his namesake jeans company "Levi's" in San Francisco in 1853 in response to the needs of people who arrived during the Gold Rush. In Los Angeles, Jews who were excluded from other professions created the film industry, for which the city has become world renowned. Two of the leading companies in the Information Age, Google and Facebook, were co-created by Sergei Brin and Mark Zuckerberg, respectively.

Notably, the European (Ashkenazi) Jewish population is not the only Jewish story in California. California also has a large population of Mizrahi Jews -- Jews from the Middle East who were forcibly expelled or compelled to leave their homes either due to extreme anti-Semitism or as collective retribution by Arab and non-Arab Muslim states for the birth and success of the state of Israel. More than 850,000 Jews were forced from their homes in Arab countries from 1947 on as revenge for the establishment of Israel. Later, about 60,000 Jews were forced to leave Turkey and more than 100,000 Jews fled Iran after the Islamic Revolution began there in 1979. More than 60,000 Iranian Jews now live in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Their story deserves to be told, too.

## **2. Anti-Semitism**

Despite these successes, anti-Semitism has been -- and remains -- a huge problem in America. Like African Americans, Jews have been terrorized and even murdered by white supremacists. The Ku Klux Klan -- perhaps America's most virulent hate group -- has had anti-Semitism as a core tenant from its origins down to the present day. The 1913 lynching of an American Jew, Leo Frank, by a racist mob in Georgia led to the establishment of the Anti-Defamation League, one of America's oldest and most respected civil rights organizations.

Anti-Semitism once again has become common on college campuses today, not only due to classic anti-Semitism, but increasingly also due to anti-Israel hate. Sadly, it has become increasingly common for anti-Jewish hate to be couched as anti-Zionism (opposition to the right of the State of Israel to exist). At Stanford University just last year, for instance, a student of Palestinian ancestry threatened on Facebook to "physically fight" Zionist students. (<https://www.stanforddaily.com/2018/07/22/norcliffe-ra-threatens-to-physically-fight-zionists-in-facebook-post/>) At San Francisco State University, pro-Palestinian mobs have screamed "Hitler didn't finish the job!" and "Get out or we'll kill you!" at Jewish students attending a peace rally (<https://www.jta.org/2017/06/20/news-opinion/united-states/san-francisco-state-students-past-and-present-sue-university-over-alleged-atmosphere-of-anti-semitism>). In 2013, San Francisco State University's General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) provided students with stencils for making signs saying: "My heroes have always killed colonizers," meaning Jewish Israelis, (<http://jewishjournal.com/news/nation/125121/>) and GUPS' president posted a picture of himself holding a knife, called for decapitating a female Jewish Israeli soldier, demanded the "decimation of this Israeli plague." He later wrote about Jewish Israelis: "Violence is always the answer. ... Kill them all." (<http://jewishjournal.com/news/nation/125121/>) More recently, the Jewish student organization Hillel was improperly excluded from an SFSU "Know Your Rights" fair. (<https://www.jweekly.com/2017/08/04/investigation-finds-hillel-improperly-excluded-sfsu-student-fair/>)

At the University of California, Berkeley, the leader of Students for Justice in Palestine rammed a full shopping cart into Jessica Felber, a Jewish student who was holding a sign saying "Israel wants peace." At UCLA, judicial board candidate Rachel Beyda was interrogated over whether being Jewish prevented her from being unbiased, and Students for Justice in Palestine engineered the defeat of Sunny Singh, a (non-Jewish) candidate for student body president, because he refused to sign a pledge not to take trips sponsored by three Jewish groups, including the Anti-Defamation League. And at UC Davis — my alma mater — a vote by the student senate approving an Israel-divestment measure (later overturned by UC Davis' student court) was accompanied by anti-Semitic graffiti attacks on the campus' Hillel House and a Jewish fraternity house.

In 2012, a study by the University of California President's Advisory Council on Campus Climate, Culture and Inclusion found that Jews at UC campuses were often "harassed and intimidated by students, faculty and outsiders," especially during events organized by pro-Palestinian activists. (<https://cascholars4academicfreedom.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/jewish-climate-fact-finding-report-july-2012-final.pdf>) And last year, a study by AMCHA Initiative analyzing anti-Semitic incidents from 2015-2018 found that anti-Israel demonstrations and incidents on American college and university campuses were more likely to manifest in a hostile environment for Jewish students than even classic anti-Semitism. (<https://www.jns.org/study-finds-anti-israel-incidents-far-more-likely-to-contribute-to-hostile-campus-environment/>)

Anti-Semitism isn't limited to college and university campuses, however. At least five times during the past two years, American imams have called for the deaths of Jews during religious sermons. For instance, at an Islamic center adjacent to the University of California, Davis, campus, an imam decried "the filth of the Jews" and told worshipers to "annihilate them down to the very last one" and "make this happen by our hands." (<https://www.algemeiner.com/2018/02/01/at-least-five-imams-in-america-have-called-for-the-death-of-jews-wheres-the-outrage/>)

The New York Times reported in 2018 that "anti-Semitic incidents have constituted half of all hate crimes in New York this year, according to the Police Department. To put that figure in context, there have been four times as many crimes motivated by bias against Jews — 142 in all — as there have against blacks. Hate crimes against Jews have outnumbered hate crimes targeted at transgender people by a factor of 20." (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/31/nyregion/jewish-bias-safety-nyc.amp.html>)

These facts should be important not only to Jews, but to all Californians. As former British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has observed, "The hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews." In 1968, Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated by a Palestinian man, Sirhan Sirhan, in retribution for the senator's pro-Israel views. And in 2014, Frazier Glenn Miller, Jr., a neo-Nazi and member of the Ku Klux Klan, shot and killed three people at the Overland Park, Kansas, Jewish Community Center. Miller's motivation for the murders was anti-Semitism, but all three of his victims -- a 14-year-old boy, his 69-year-old grandfather (a medical doctor), and a 53-year-old woman (an occupational therapist) -- were Christians. Anti-Semitism is a hatred that ultimately touches and destroys everyone, not just Jews.

The curriculum's failure to note the contributions of Jews to America generally and California specifically, the causes for which Jews have stood for, and the story of Jewish success here despite being a minority targeted with hatred and bigotry, is inexcusable, and contributes to the ignorance that feeds

and encourages anti-Semitism. The same is true of the curriculum's failure to acknowledge and take seriously the scourges of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

### **3. The Israeli Perspective on the Middle East Conflict**

#### **a. Zionism is an "indigenous people" movement**

Zionism is an "indigenous people" movement -- a movement for the right of Jews to have self-determination in their ancestral homeland.

The fact that Jews are the indigenous people of the land known today as Israel is not merely a matter of belief, but of historical and scientific fact. Archaeology confirms the more than 3,000-year-old Jewish historical presence in Israel, from the first reference to a people called Israel in the Merneptah Stele (a granite slab dating from the early 1200s B.C., carved by a scribe in service to the Egyptian pharaoh Merneptah), to the Tel Dan Stele (erected by the Assyrians between 870 and 750 B.C.) celebrating a victory over ancient Judah's ruling "House of David." Assyrian sculptures originally from Iraq, and now on display at the British Museum in London, depict the Israelite king Jehu in 841 B.C. and Assyria's siege of the Judahite town Lachish in 701 B.C. An 8th century B.C. Hebrew inscription from Jerusalem's Siloam tunnel records its construction during the period of Jewish rule. Since 2004, the Temple Mount Sifting Project has recovered thousands of Israelite antiquities -- including ancient Jewish coins and seals from biblical families dating back to the time of the biblical kings David and Solomon -- from the hundreds of truckloads of earth removed from the Jerusalem holy site by its Jordanian Islamic religious custodians.

Moreover, genetic studies confirm the ancestral ties of present-day Jews -- including Ashkenazi (European) Jews -- to the Levant. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/science/10jews.html>) Thus, if people indigenous to the Middle East are to be deemed "people of color," this necessarily includes European Jews, too, as well as Mizrahi (Middle Eastern), Indian and Ethiopian Jews.

#### **b. Israel is a multicultural liberal democracy**

The model curriculum implies in one instance that Israel is an "apartheid" state. This vicious slur against the Jewish state is demonstrably false.

In fact, Israel is a model liberal democracy and a multicultural melting pot. Its population includes Holocaust survivors; Jewish refugees indigenous to the Middle East (recall that 850,000 Jews were forced to flee their homes in the Arab world as collective punishment for the birth of Israel, two-thirds of whom eventually settled in Israel while most of the rest found refuge in the United States, France and Canada); immigrants from the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, France and the United States; Arab and Bedouin Muslims who chose to remain in Israel after it declared independence and now comprise about 20 percent of Israel's citizens; as well as Christians, Druze, Ba'hai, agnostics and atheists. All of them are citizens with full civil rights.

It bears emphasis that a majority of Israel's Jews came not from Europe, but from the Middle East (including Iran), India and Ethiopia. The story of Israel's Ethiopian Jewish community deserves special recognition. When thousands of black Jews in Ethiopia were endangered in 1985 and 1991, Israel rescued them and brought them back to their ancestral home of Israel, where they were welcomed with cheers. Israel is the only Western nation with a large African population that it welcomed home as free men and women celebrated upon their arrival by huge, cheering crowds. A member of this community,

Yityish Titi Aynaw, won the title of Miss Israel in 2013. Notably, a large community of these Ethiopian Jews settled in Sderot -- the city that has been targeted more than any other in Israel by Palestinian terrorists under Hamas rule in the Gaza Strip. The first two Israelis killed in Israel by Palestinian rockets launched from Gaza were a pair of Ethiopian Jewish immigrant children: 2-year-old Dorit Aniso and 4-year-old Yuval Abebeh, who were playing under an olive tree just outside their home when they were killed.

Israel's large Arab minority enjoys the same rights as Jewish Israelis. It is represented in Israel's Knesset and Supreme Court, and comprises the same percentage (20 percent) of students at Israel's elite Technion-Israel Institute of Technology ("Israel's M.I.T.") as in the percentage of people in Israel's general population.

Israel is also a humanitarian beacon that sets an admirable example for the world. Israel has always extended a hand to those in need, including typhoon victims in the Philippines; earthquake victims in Armenia, El Salvador, Colombia and Haiti; tsunami victims in Indonesia; genocide survivors in Rwanda, Kosovo and Darfur; and survivors of terrorism in Kenya and Somalia. In response to the 1994 Rwandan genocide and 1999 ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, Israel set up emergency field hospitals, treating thousands. In the latter conflict, Israel provided the region's only delivery ward for Kosovar refugees, saving the lives of many Muslim women and infants. Israel's "Save a Child's Heart" program has saved more than 3,000 children, including many Palestinians and Iraqis, by bringing them to Israel for cardiac surgery. During the ongoing Syrian Civil War in which Syria's president has used barrel bombs and chemical weapons to kill hundreds of thousands of his own people, Israeli doctors have discretely rescued and treated more than four thousand Syrians, as well as provided food and medicine to 200,000 Syrian civilians in communities across the border in Syria. Israel also protected the safety of the Druze village of Hader in Syria from armed jihadists. Israeli doctors have even discretely provided humanitarian medical treatment for the sister, daughter and granddaughter of Hamas leader and former Gaza prime minister Ismail Haniyeh, who publicly calls for Israel's annihilation.

The difference between the respect and rights that Israeli society accords women, religious minorities and the LGBT community, on the one hand, and the way that Palestinian society viciously persecutes these groups -- women and LGBT in particular are subject to "honor killings" that are tacitly sanctioned by the Palestinian government -- is also striking.

Israel's treatment of women distinguishes it from its neighbors. A majority of Israel's undergraduate, master's and doctoral students are women, ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education\\_in\\_Israel#Gender\\_statistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Israel#Gender_statistics)) and Israeli women have become national leaders (Golda Meir), Nobel Prize-winning scientists (Ada Yonath) and even "superheroes" (Gal Gadot). By contrast, Palestinian law condones not only honor killings of women, but also female genital mutilation, marital rape and plural marriages. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prevalence\\_of\\_female\\_genital\\_mutilation\\_by\\_country#Palestinian\\_territories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prevalence_of_female_genital_mutilation_by_country#Palestinian_territories); <https://www.hrw.org/report/2006/11/06/question-security/violence-against-palestinian-women-and-girls>) Palestinian rape victims are often intimidated into silence lest they be criminally charged with adultery, face the prospect of becoming victims of honor killings, or even pressured to marry the rapist so he can avoid prosecution. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/04/30/in-jordan-you-can-no-longer-escape-punishment-for-rape-by-marrying-your-victim/?utm\\_term=.a7f16abb30a1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/04/30/in-jordan-you-can-no-longer-escape-punishment-for-rape-by-marrying-your-victim/?utm_term=.a7f16abb30a1))

As for the LGBT community, Israel is the only country in the Middle East where LGBT rights are protected by law, respected in practice and enjoy widespread support. (<http://www.cameraoncampus.org/middle-east-issues/gayrights.html#.WrK10vkrLDC>) (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/poll-79-of-israelis-back-gay-marriage-or-civil-unions/>) (<http://time.com/4421400/transgender-u-s-military-israeli-army-idf/>) The Palestinians, by contrast, viciously persecute LGBT people and even condone "honor killings," where a family member murders a (usually female or LGBT) relative who has "disgraced" the family by having premarital sex or a same-sex relationship. ([http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc\\_id=10767](http://palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=10767)) According to UNICEF, a 1999 study found that about two-thirds of all murders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were believed to be honor killings. (<https://www.unicef.org/newsline/00pr17.htm>) Indeed, Tel Aviv has a large population of gay Palestinians who have fled persecution in the West Bank and Gaza for the safety and tolerance of Israel.

Israel is also one of the world's leaders in scientific research to improve the lives of people with disabilities, including stem-cell treatments. (<http://www.hadassah.org/news-stories/hadassah-stem-cell-treatment.html>)

Israel's multicultural approach contrasts strikingly with that of the Palestinians, whose approach toward Jews and Israel truly could be compared with apartheid. The Palestinians demand sovereignty over Judaism's holiest sites while vowing that there shall be no Jews allowed in a future Palestinian state. Israel's purported peace partner, "moderate" Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas, insists that no Jew shall remain in a Palestinian state, and while Jerusalem contains the holiest sites of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Abbas demands that Jews be denied the right to visit them, lest they "defile them with their filthy feet." (<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/19/world/middleeast/amid-jerusalem-clashes-israeli-and-palestinian-leaders-try-to-make-their-case.html>)

Abbas also has a vile history of Holocaust denial. In 1984, he published a book titled "The Other Side: The Secret Relationship Between Nazism and Zionism," in which he belittled the Holocaust as "the Zionist fantasy, the fantastic lie that six million Jews were killed." He insisted, falsely, that "many scholars" have determined that "only a few hundred thousand" Jews actually died, claimed that a "scientific study" proved there were no Jews killed in gas chambers, and portrayed the entire Holocaust as a Nazi-Zionist conspiracy. The Anti-Defamation League and David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies have both condemned the book as Holocaust denial.

Abbas also is a longtime ally and supporter of the recently ousted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, a war criminal whose Janjaweed militia has perpetrated a racist genocide in Darfur that has killed about 300,000 black Africans since 2003. ([https://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc\\_id=3900](https://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=3900))

### **c. History of the Arab-Israeli conflict**

Israel's right to exist is based on the Jewish people's ancestral ties to the land, but was given further impetus after the Holocaust. In 1947, the United Nations formally recognized Israel's right to nationhood. When Israel declared independence in accordance with U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181 on May 14, 1948, it was immediately invaded by the armies of five neighboring Arab countries who vowed to annihilate it. Incredibly, this tiny people, comprised largely of refugees and Holocaust survivors, survived the onslaught against overwhelming odds and prevailed.

Despite the armistice, from 1951-1956, Arab terrorist raids into Israel killed 967 Israelis. (See, Martin Gilbert, *The Routledge Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 9th ed., 2008, p. 58.)



In 1956, Egypt threatened Israel again. In a brief war, Israel captured the Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula - land three times Israel's previous size -- and then immediately offered to return it to Egypt for peace. When Egypt rejected the offer, Israel returned all of the land it had captured unilaterally, even without a peace agreement, in return for international security guarantees from France, Britain and the United States and the installation of U.N. peacekeepers along the Israeli-Egyptian border.

In 1967, Egypt once again threatened Israel with annihilation. In May 1967, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, emboldened by Yasser Arafat's deadly terror attacks against Israel from 1965 to 1967 (at a time when the West Bank and Gaza Strip were under Jordanian and Egyptian rule, respectively, and easily could have been turned into a Palestinian state), demanded that U.N. peacekeepers withdraw from Egypt's Israeli border. The United Nations meekly complied, abandoning Israel to its presumed fate. Nasser then massed 900 tanks and 130,000 troops along its Israeli border, while another 100,000 troops from a dozen more Arab countries massed along Israel's borders with Jordan and Syria, completing the siege of the Jewish state. Egypt also blockaded Israel's port of Eilat — an act of war under international law. On May 26, 1967, Nasser boasted: "The battle will be a general one and our basic objective will be to destroy Israel." Israel turned to France, Britain and the U.S., but all three nations balked at fulfilling their decade-old commitments to defend Israel and instead, like the United Nations, abandoned it. When Egypt refused to lift the siege, war ensued. As the war began, Israel begged Jordan to stay out of the conflict. Instead, Jordan attacked — firing 6,000 shells into Israel, killing 20 Israelis, wounding 1,000 and striking Israel's Knesset building and Hadassah Hospital. Only then did Israel respond in self-defense, capturing the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount and Western Wall, from which Jordan had barred all Jews since 1948. Immediately after the war, on June 19, 1967, Israel sought peace, offering to return most of the captured land, but its offers were spurned and rejected. This time, Israel refused to return territory without a formal peace agreement.

Instead, the Arab side responded with yet more war and terrorism:

In 1972, Palestinian terrorists infiltrated the Summer Olympics in Munich, West Germany, and murdered 11 Israeli athletes and coaches.

In 1973, Egypt and Syria attacked Israel yet again, this time in a sneak attack on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. Early on, Egypt and Syria appeared to be on the verge of overrunning the Jewish state, but eventually, Israel rallied and prevailed.

In 1974, Palestinian terrorists carried out a rampage in Israel that culminated in their taking over an Israeli elementary school. The terrorists killed 31 Israelis including 22 children.

In 1978, Palestinian terrorists led by Dalal Mughrabi carried out the Coastal Road massacre near Tel Aviv in the heart of Israel, killing an American female photojournalist who was photographing seabirds at the time, plus 37 Israelis including 13 children. For her act of barbarity, Mughrabi is revered to this day as a national hero by many Palestinians including President Abbas.

Despite these repeated attempts at annihilating the Jewish state and murdering its civilians, including Israeli children, when Arab states finally showed serious interest in peace, Israel readily traded land three times its size for peace with Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994).

Israel also offered the Palestinians a state born in peace on virtually all of the remaining captured territory, including a capital in Jerusalem. However, the Palestinians rejected Israel's peace proposals in 2000, 2001 and 2008, and responded with a horrific terror campaign that killed more than 1,200 Israelis, including scores of Israeli children murdered in schools, buses, discos and pizzerias.

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolphinarium\\_discotheque\\_massacre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolphinarium_discotheque_massacre))

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sbarro\\_restaurant\\_suicide\\_bombing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sbarro_restaurant_suicide_bombing))

#### **4. The Draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Blames the Victim (Israel)**

As noted above, Zionism is an "indigenous people" movement -- the movement for the right of Jews to self-determination in our ancestral homeland. Note that America's iconic civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was a staunch Zionist. Dr. King praised Israel as "a marvelous example" of "how desert land can be transformed into an oasis of brotherhood and democracy." He declared that "Israel's right to exist as a state in security is uncontested," and observed that "peace for Israel means security and that security must be a reality." He also rejected the notion that anti-Zionism could be distinguished from anti-Semitism, saying: "When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews, you are talking anti-Semitism." (<https://www.sfgate.com/opinion/openforum/article/I-have-a-dream-for-peace-in-the-Middle-East-2880295.php>)

Who opposes Israel's right to exist? Former Ku Klux Klan leader and arch white supremacist David Duke, among others. (<https://www.apnews.com/a97b8b2d48c163c5965c2574ccbbe3d3>)

(<http://www.thetower.org/7309-former-kkk-leader-david-duke-calls-rep-omar-most-important-member-of-congress/>) Make no mistake: if you are anti-Zionist, you are aligned with the KKK and Duke. Anti-Zionism is white supremacy; Zionism is its antithesis.

Israel is also a peace-seeking nation. As noted above, Israel made dramatic concessions for peace with Egypt and Jordan, and offered the Palestinians a state born in peace on virtually all of the land in dispute, including a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem, during talks in 2000, 2001 and 2008. Unfortunately, the Palestinians rejected peace and responded with more terror, including deliberately massacring Israeli children in schools, buses, discos and pizzerias. Israel even tried unilaterally withdrawing from Gaza and part of the West Bank in 2005; again, the Palestinians responded with terrorism.

Rather than build a foundation for peace, the Palestinians' corrupt and tyrannical leadership has promoted hate. Since 2008, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has named public squares, schools, summer camps and sports competitions in honor of terrorists like Dalal Mughrabi who murdered Israeli children

(<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/12/world/middleeast/12westbank.html?mcubz=0>)

(<https://www.algemeiner.com/2018/08/10/ten-months-on-palestinian-school-built-with-belgian-aid-still-named-after-terrorist-who-massacred-38-people/>) and paid huge stipends to convicted terrorists, encouraging even more bloodshed. (<https://m.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Sbarro-bombers-and-families-got-almost-300k-from-PA-watchdog-group-says-564665>)

In September 2015, during the Jewish high holy days, Abbas denounced Jews even visiting Jerusalem's holiest sites, including the Temple Mount -- Judaism's holiest site -- because "they have no right to defile them with their filthy feet." He added, in a clear endorsement of terrorism: "We bless every drop of blood that has been spilled for Jerusalem .... Every Martyr (Shahid) will reach Paradise, and everyone wounded will be rewarded by Allah" ([http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc\\_id=15714](http://www.palwatch.org/main.aspx?fi=157&doc_id=15714)). Abbas has even denied 3,000 years of archaeologically confirmed Jewish history in Jerusalem, saying:

"Jews are really excellent at faking and counterfeiting history."  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9RMqmRSu-E>)

Under Abbas, Palestinian Authority school textbooks promote hatred for Jews and glorify terrorism. A third grade textbook, for instance, says: "I vow I shall sacrifice my blood ... and will annihilate the remnant of the foreigners." A fifth grade textbook says of terrorists: " we put their names on our streets and squares ... each of us wishes to be like them. They have decorated the pages of history. ... They are the heroes." A tenth grade textbook says: "And [our] pure blood, we will not spare, will not spare, will not spare." An eleventh grade textbook says: "The corruption of the children of Israel in the land was and will be the cause of their annihilation." A fifth grade textbook teaches: "The Wall of Buraq is part of the Western Wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and is a pure right for Muslims alone." Maps included in these textbooks do not depict Israel's existence within any borders.  
(<https://legalinsurrection.com/2017/11/new-palestinian-authority-textbooks-teach-martyrdom-as-a-life-goal/>)

Yet the draft model curriculum encourages solidarity with the anti-Semitic Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement that opposes peace between Israelis and Palestinians and falsely refers to Israel's democracy as "apartheid" while encouraging support for the Palestinians. This is appalling!

To be clear, the leadership of the BDS movement is blunt that its goal isn't peace at all, but rather, the annihilation of the one and only Jewish state. BDS promotes boycotts of Israeli universities, academics and cultural events. On American university campuses, BDS promotes the shouting down and silencing of all Israeli and pro-Israel speakers, in violation of constitutional free speech rights and most universities' policies.

BDS' ultimate goal isn't peace, but rather, Israel's annihilation. As BDS co-founder and chief spokesman Omar Barghouti has acknowledged: "We oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine," including pre-1967 Israel. Barghouti has also said that Palestinians have a right to "resistance by any means, including armed resistance" -- i.e., the right to kill innocent Israeli civilians, including children -- because Jews "are not a people" -- a statement that is not just unabashedly anti-Semitic but also dehumanizing. Moreover, he has denounced the two-state solution, preferring instead that Israel itself be turned into part of "Palestine." (<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/bds-in-their-own-words>)

Is a dehumanizing and genocidal movement like BDS the kind of movement that California schools should be teaching our children to admire and uphold as an example that they should support and follow? Absolutely not.

Moreover, contrast Israel's actions taken in self-defense in response to wars and terrorism forced upon it with Syria's despotic Assad dynasty. Under Hafez al-Assad, the father of the current leader, Syria invaded Jordan in 1970, Israel in 1973 and Lebanon in 1976, which it still effectively occupies in cooperation with the Iranian proxy militia Hezbollah. In 1982, Syria massacred 25,000 people in Hama to suppress political opposition. Since 2011, Assad's son and successor, Bashar al-Assad, has slaughtered 600,000 people (including thousands of Palestinians (<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20151019-more-than-3000-palestinians-killed-in-syria/>)), sometimes using banned chemical weapons, with support from Iran, Russia and Hezbollah. Assad and his allies have created 6 million displaced internal refugees in Syria and 5 million refugees who have fled the country -- many of them never to return. Syria's seizure of Aleppo in particular was replete with atrocities. Yet there are no "BDS"-style campaigns targeting Syria, Russia, Iran or Hezbollah. There are no similar campaigns condemning China's ongoing hoarding of more

than one million Muslims into concentration camps. Only Israel is subjected to such treatment, and this despite its efforts to achieve peace that have been repeatedly and often barbarically rejected. Why is that?

As Nobel Prize-winning physicist Steven Weinberg has observed: "Given the history of the attacks on Israel and the oppressiveness and aggressiveness of other countries in the Middle East and elsewhere, boycotting Israel indicated a moral blindness for which it is hard to find any explanation other than anti-Semitism."

## **5. Conclusion**

I urge you to wholly revise your model curriculum. The role of Jews as an ethnic group in California should be acknowledged and celebrated, Israel should be acknowledged for the remarkable liberal democracy that it is, and all references vilifying and demonizing Jews and Israel and supporting groups like BDS that vilify and demonize Jews and Israel should be removed.

Very truly yours,

Stephen A. Silver  
San Francisco, Calif.