

From: richardokato
Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 3:48 PM
To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies comment

Greetings,

Thank you for the opportunity to allow public comment on the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. I want to first say that this Model Curriculum is a wonderful detailed program for discussion among the various ethnic groups showcased.

I am a school psychologist with Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). What I state here is my own opinion and does not necessarily reflect that of this organization. LACOE is in the process of discussing the impact of current events on race relations and how to improve health and wellness for the benefit of students, parents, staff, and the community. We deal with implicit bias, applying positive behavior intervention supports, and mindfulness. I work with many students of color, primarily of black and brown heritage who are at-risk to overcome significant economic and systemic issues facing them in their education.

I grew up during the first civil rights movement of the 1960s. I attended Lincoln High School in Los Angeles as a junior high student when Lincoln was a six-year public school. Teacher Sal Castro and student activists led the walkouts (or blowouts as they were also later known), and I was a part of the student body that either participated in the walkouts and/or engaged in discussion as to those that did.

So when ethnic studies was finally borne at the college level, I made it a part of my undergraduate studies. I've gained a much better awareness and appreciation for the struggles that people whom I was associated with and those whom we were educated about. The same can be had in our divisive, tumultuous times today especially at the high school level.

I would like to comment and make recommendations on the Model as follows:

1. The Japanese American Internment, I feel should not be an additional topic. It should be a section of its own. Why? Because it represents something of broader scope than just the incarceration of a particular ethnic group. It exposes how certain classes based on race are scapegoated and their civil rights are infringed. This happened with Native Americans and their forced removal, property stolen, and forced relocation to reservations. This also happened with Hispanic and other people of color detained and families separated at the Southern Border. It is a theme that repeats history with different players but somewhat similar circumstances.

SIDENOTE: Persons of Japanese ancestry also settled in Latin American and Canada with their own histories of discriminatory treatment. There is also the Manchurian settlers who fell for the Japanese government promises of bountiful land in Manchuria China, some of whom eventually became naturalized U.S. citizens.

2. There should also be a unit on biracial and multiracial ethnic groups. At least five public figures fit this category: Naomi Osaka (half Japanese, half Jamaican), Kamala Harris (half black, half Indian), Barack Obama (half black, half white), and Tiger Woods (Cablinasian—Caucasian, black, Indian and Asian).

3. There should also be a unit on cross-cultural ties, conflicts, and understanding. TsuruforSolidarity seeks to provide cross-cultural justice for persons at the Southern border. There was a march on Washington D.C. planned for 2020 to protest the Ft. Hood and ICE detention centers but that was physically scrapped due to the COVID-19 shutdown. It was eventually held virtually online. There are also support groups like Asians for Black Lives Matter, and a people of color unity based on hip hop music and messages.

4. In discussions of self-esteem and society tolerance/acceptance, there also needs to be a reckoning that not all Asians are alike. Unfortunately the disparaging comments from the president only fanned the flames of hate crimes directed at any person of Asian ancestry whether they are of Chinese descent or not. #wassthehate #stopaapihate <https://stopaapihate.org/reportspressreleases/>
Educator resources were developed <https://educators4sc.org/topic-resources/teaching-about-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia/> . One school district LAUSD, has implemented its own curriculum: <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/226/Ethnic%20Studies%20Survey%20Course%20.pdf>

5. What is an American? How do we define what constitutes what is American? The history of Eurocentric dominance and the notion by some that white people claim superiority to other ethnic groups, and thus entitlement to define America is a major cause for conflict with others. Some argue that white people should not be made to feel bad about what happens to people of color. When I was growing up and engaged in rap groups (not the music kind but the group counseling kind), we discussed what impact ethnic studies has on persons of European descent. We separated the cultural histories of individual European nations. How they related to one another. How they related to non-European descendants. Then in the US, what impact did persons of European descent both as settlers and as government representatives have on others. We learned that people should be held accountable to their actions good or bad. It does not mean to demean or put down persons of European white ancestry. It is to point out how certain events in history tied to race have caused significant suffering to others (including what happened to Irish Americans and others who came afterwards. Thus, it is a lesson in self-awareness and then how to exercise tolerance and acceptance of others as their equals. When that equilibrium can be established, there will be better racial understanding and harmony. The same is true if someone were to advance Black Lives Matter, in face of racial systemic injustice. But at the same time, if there are instances where blacks are causing deadly physical harm to other blacks, that this needs to be pointed out. Just as one of the police in the George Floyd death was Asian, that such indifference should be pointed out.

I had a question about the difference between AB331 and AB2016. It seems there was some controversy in the first bill. But they seem determined to make adjustments (as adjustments were made in the latter bill). Perhaps it is possible to combine the best that each has to offer into one superbill.

Thank you for this labor of love.
And thank you for listening,
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