

From: Priscilla Read

Sent: Thursday, November 12, 2020 10:12 AM

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] SAVE CA ETHNIC STUDIES MODEL CURRICULUM

To Members of the Instructional Quality Commission :

I write you to urge you to Save the CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. My concerns about attempts to sabotage it are the following.

Pro-Israel interest groups should not define antisemitism. Definitions that name criticism of Israel as antisemitic are opposed by many Jewish organizations, both within the United States and internationally. These definitions violate our constitutional right to free speech because their application censors virtually all criticism of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian human rights and equality. These definitions also downplay the main source of antisemitism in the United States, which is white nationalism.

I therefore ask that you please substitute for the definition of anitisemitism being proposed by opponents of this curriculum the following: **antisemitism is discrimination against, violence towards, or stereotypes of Jews for being Jewish.**

We know, from the demands for racial justice sweeping this county, that it is offensive and dangerous to shunt the histories and perspectives of people of color to the sidelines. These revisions are tone-deaf to the political moment we are living in. Proposed changes to the model curriculum neglect Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian perspectives.

Our children are once again being left to fend for themselves in an increasingly racialized and polarized political climate. California should be a sanctuary, not a place of danger for our students and their families.

Young people in particular face the consequences of Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism. Arab and Muslim youth are simultaneously invisibilized and targeted. I have worked for years countering Islamophobia in the NYC area and am intimately aware of how devastating its effects. The CA curriculum was intended to help overcome prejudice and discrimination. Its sabotage will have the opposite effect.

For too long, Arab youth have learned little about their history besides offensive and racist images and stereotypes. Arab-American studies curriculum provides a critical intervention to these stereotypes in K-12 education.

I urge you to save the CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

Sincerely,

Priscilla Read

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