

From: Courtney Rauchman
Sent: Tuesday, August 6, 2019 5:04 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Ethnic Studies Curriculum - A Student's Perspective

To whom it may concern:

I'm a Jewish student at UC Berkeley. I have opened my mind and my heart to every perspective on the issue of Israel and Palestine and understand how deeply nuanced the conflict is. However, the model curriculum being reviewed by the The State of California does not allow any student the ability to develop his/her/their own opinions. Aside from my many issues with its fallacies and biased rhetoric, my largest issue is that no student in this country should be told what to think or how to think on a subjective issue. California, a state of open minds and open hearts, should not be biasing it's curriculum and should not be promoting BDS, which Congress just openly condemned with overwhelming majority for its divisiveness - it is non American. This model curriculum is not only not American, it is not progressive. I am progressive. I can honestly say that this state's curriculum would benefit from factual lessons that promote cultural inclusion - inclusion of all historically marginalized communities. History is history, facts are facts. Please do not erase my identity and my culture from your history books and your ethnic studies lessons.

'The implementation of Ethnic Studies presents an opportunity for teachers to enable students to develop a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion, and aids in the eradication of bigotry, hate, and racism.' Despite this stated goal, the curriculum does not feature a single lesson about the Jewish community, mentioning Jews only in passing.

Glossary – includes a definition of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement against Israel. It claims the purpose of BDS is to “establish freedom for Palestinians living under apartheid conditions.” It then parrots more BDS talking points while offering no critical perspectives about this campaign of hate, which seeks to end Israel's existence.

Sample Lesson Plans

Page 234 – Encourage teachers to highlight BDS and a pro-BDS group called Direct Action for Palestine, but no voices critical of their perspectives.

Page 234 – Promotes a false equivalence between Israel's efforts to stop terrorists from entering communities to murder innocent people, and U.S. policies on the border with Mexico

Page 237 – Uses unclear language that implies “Israel-Palestine” as a whole is an Arab country

Page 242 – Frames the Palestinian narrative of the 1948 War as fact, with no alternative perspectives.

Page 256, 264-269 – Encourages teachers to use a poem featuring harsh criticism of Israel, but no content offering a positive perspective about Israel or criticism of Palestinian leaders.

With antisemitism rising and ignorance about the Jewish people still a major problem in our society, the exclusion of Jews from this curriculum is deeply disappointing.

As a California resident, student and voter, I would hope to see the State of California teaching inclusion and tolerance, rather than one-sided narratives to promote a political agenda.

Sincerely,
Courtney Rauchman