

From: Martin Griss
Sent: Saturday, August 8, 2020 3:26 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Concerns about the revised ESMC proposal

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I have lived in the California Bay Area since 1982, as the grandparent of three young age boys in nearby schools. I am eager to see that Ethnic Studies are taught well. I was pleased to see some improvement in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC), such as the removal of explicitly anti-Semitic slurs from the ESMC, and the encouragement that teachers present "multiple and often competing sources of information" and so foster respect for diverse viewpoints.

However, I remain quite concerned by many remaining flaws in the proposed ESMC, such as:

- The ESMC guiding values and principles need revision because they are the basis of each unit and lesson plan. They do not accurately reflect California's shared values, nor the values laid out in AB 2016, and establish an "us vs them" agenda, rather than celebrating the contributions of each group
- Too many anti-Zionist references remain in footnotes, links, and bibliography, with too much reliance on the book *Education at War*, which encourages "solidarity" and "linkages" with BDS, and anti-Israel narratives, harmful to many Jewish students. Please remove advocacy of virulently anti-Israel pro-BDS sites with malicious slander about imaginary genocide, and add a definition of anti-Semitism that addresses sinister stereotyping and double standards against Jews and Jewish institutions.
- The few references to Jews are misleading and offensive. They do not include Jews of color, and should not favor one community over others; Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Eastern communities should be represented on an equal basis with Arab Americans, as well as many others.

I grew up in South Africa as a Jewish minority within a minority and had the opportunity to experience anti-Semitism, to observe how the various non-white races were treated, and to see how Jews were recognized in helping bring about change, yet today are vilified because of the Israeli-Palestinian problem. In Israel before coming to the USA, I saw the complexity of the Israel, Palestine and Arab situation firsthand. This will need careful treatment in the ESMC, and not just a simplistic "white occupation of the indigenous peoples" – there are many Jews of color, and many lived in the Middle East for many generations, long before the Arabs.

I want my grandsons to learn the real stories, and to appreciate the contributions of all races and cultures, and not to experience bigotry.

I urge you to make significant revisions of the ESMC to address these concerns, before encouraging widespread adoption by school boards.

Thank you,

Martin Griss, PhD
Mountain View, California