

From: ashley bank

Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 11:28 AM

To: Ethnic Studies; [emails redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Antisemitism and the Middle Eastern-American Experience.

I would like to thank the California Department of Education for working so hard to improve the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

I am the descendant of the one million Jews who were ethnically cleansed or fled antisemitic persecution in the Middle East and North Africa. I am troubled to see their stories and the diversity and oppression of Mizrahi Jews and of other Middle Easterner communities omitted from this curriculum.

2018 California Hate Crime Statistics noted that Anti-Jewish events increased by over twenty percent while Anti-Muslim bias events decreased by more than forty percent. As a Jewish person who has experienced/witnessed religiously motivated hate, I believe our students deserve to learn about both Islamophobia and Antisemitism in an ethnic studies framework.

When the primary reference of Jews in the revised Ethnic Studies curriculum is in the context of our communities being the beneficiaries of white privilege – my Middle Eastern Jewish community, which is comprised of multiple immigrants and people of color, is completely erased. I fear this unit will contribute to the dangerous antisemitic trope that, “[Jews Have Too Much Power](#).” Furthermore, this reference ignores the experiences of European Jews who continue to be personally impacted by violent white-supremacy, genocide, and acts of antisemitism.

At a time when there is great need to provide our students with high-quality educational content related to bigotry, **it is essential to incorporate adequate instructional material on antisemitism – not just simplistic references to it**

All references to Middle Eastern people in the curriculum should include, specifically name, and teach on the diverse groups of Mizrahi Jews, Coptic Christians, Kurds, Iranians, Assyrians, and other minority groups from the region who together represent 60% of California’s Middle Eastern population and have asked for inclusion. In order for the curriculum to avoid an essentialist understanding of Arabs and the Middle East, and in order to be well balanced, each group should be equally and equitably represented in the Ethnic Studies Curriculum.

Thank you so much for your time and attention.

Best,

Ashley Bank