

**From:** Larry Kohorn  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 21, 2021 2:11 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] ESMC Model Curriculum

I have strong objections to the treatment of Jewish people in the ESMC Model Curriculum.

The brief section on anti-semitism and Jewish ethnicity needs some serious revision. This idea of "conditional whiteness" is a dangerous and malevolent way of fomenting a false clash of interests between Jews and other American groups who are currently and historically subject to ethnic discrimination, hate crimes, and murder. Although many, maybe most, American Jews emigrated from Europe and have the same pigmentation as other European people, they are still "others" as much as any group. Did the people of the Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh have some kind of "privilege" while they were being murdered at their house of worship? They had white skin. Is this what's meant by "conditional whiteness": you're white (and therefore privileged) as long as you don't go to your own church? To use the term "privilege" (which is not used in the definition of any other ethnic group, no matter how light skinned some of them may be!) in describing Jews, is grossly misleading and inflammatory, echoing racist tropes of Jewish control over some industries. Does an Asian man have "conditional whiteness" if he wears sunglasses and hides his non-European-looking eyes? Does a light-skinned black woman have "privilege" if she straightens and colors her hair? THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS CONDITIONAL WHITENESS.

If you're going to point out how some people may "fit in" better than others, despite prejudices against them, then do it for everyone, and don't just single out Jews. The fact that Jews often look and sound like people in the majority plays an insidious role in the conspiracy theories that fuel those dedicated to hatred and violence against Jews. If, by "white" you are referring to being part of the controlling faction of American life, then maybe what you need to say is "white Christian" – and there is no way that Jews ever fit into that category, conditionally or not. The emphasis on Jews changing their names to sound less foreign (and therefore be more "white" and more in control?) is another cheap way of singling out Jews as somehow less oppressed than other ethnicities. A lot of Europeans changed their names to sound more American or, in the case of actors, more PR friendly. Not just Jews. It's not a "Jewish" thing to do. It's a practical thing, about pronunciation. There are still plenty of "Cohen"s in American.

I am also shocked and offended that Jews are not part of the big 4 American ethnicities being studied in this curriculum. They are mentioned only in the Asian/Pacific group, even though most American Jews are NOT from the middle east. Just because they are not neatly defined by pigment or single country or even continent of origin, the need for understanding the challenges of Jews in America is certainly at least as important as for any other group, particularly in these days of increased extremist domestic terrorism largely directed at Jews! Jews in America have a complex and varied presence, but the ethnic hatred and violence against them applies to the group as a whole, the same way it does against Blacks, Asians, Latinos, and Native Americans. With "Camp Auschwitz" and "6MWE" clothing and Nazi emblems prevalent at recent "nationalist" gatherings, along with the Confederate flags and other emblems of hate, the stories of the Jews and their American experience now more than ever need to be taught seriously as a big part of any Ethnic Studies model, not marginalized, or, worse, pitted against the stories of other oppressed groups.

I have a son in public school, and I would be appalled if this current model were added to his curriculum.

Larry Kohorn  
Manhattan Beach, CA