

August 12, 2019

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education:

The proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum worries us greatly. We support the idea of teaching an ethnic studies class, but we would like for you to make major revisions or a significant rewrite of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, consistent with the recommendations from the California Legislative Jewish Caucus letter, and others you have received.

We support diversity and inclusion, but oppose a curriculum that erases the American Jewish experience, fails to discuss antisemitism, reinforces negative stereotypes about Jews, singles out Israel for criticism, and would institutionalize the teaching of antisemitic stereotypes in our public schools. The sources of problems in the Middle East are complex in origin, and are not the fault of one side or the other. We support a two state solution in the Middle East to allow all parties in the region to prosper, but one way to ensure that never happens is for each side to demonize the basic nature and sincerity of the other. There are many places in that region, and historically in other parts of the world, that preach antisemitic ideas in schools and in places of worship. The result is that generations of people exposed to those ideas have come to view Jews with a sense of hatred. That is not a recipe for peace.

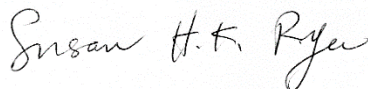

Antisemitism is not a problem limited to the Middle East. You only have to go back three years from the founding of the State of Israel to experience the horrors of the holocaust. 450 years before that, Jews were expelled from Spain during the Spanish Inquisition, which peaked in 1492, but extended from 1478 to 1834. Two hundred years earlier in 1290, Jews were expelled from England.

Religious or ethnic hatred is not limited to Jews. Muslims were subject to attack during the Crusades early in the last millennium (1095-1492). More recently, Muslims were victimized during the Bosnian war from 1992 to 1995. After that, Muslims were expelled from Myanmar in 2016. Islamophobia is now a problem in America. Racism focused on African-Americans is another longstanding form of discrimination that has been a particular problem in our country for hundreds of years. More recently, asylum seekers escaping persecution have been the focus of unwarranted condemnation. All of these problems involve the indoctrination of children with the hatred harbored by their parents. When those young people grow up, they become the leaders of their world, continuing the cycle of discrimination.

The Ethnic Studies Curriculum is aimed at students who are at a very impressionable age. One only needs to observe the effect of unbalanced education, to see how young minds can be irreparably taught to believe that a particular ethnic or religious group is in some way less worthy than another, or even responsible in some way for the world's problems. That has been a source for ingrained racism and religious intolerance, that the world has seen far too much of, for much of recorded history. Examples of that are seen in many places throughout the world, where ethnic struggles never seem to end. An Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum for California should not add to that problem by giving students an unfair and unbalanced view of the world and the people who inhabit it.

We urge you to make major revisions or a significant rewrite of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum to address these concerns. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Michael Gaynon and Susan Ryu Gaynon