

From: Linda Swenberg

Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2020 5:40 PM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Improvements needed to the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

To Whom it May Concern,

First of all, thank you for making efforts to modify the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum to reduce the frank anti-semitism and denigrating content which was found in initial draft. However, there is still a lot of work to be done.

I have lived in California for more than 30 years now. I have raised 3 children here and I've been very active in schools, serving as a volunteer and as a member of various boards and committees as a community representative or at-large member. I have a fairly decent knowledge of the curriculum due to this experience.

We don't "look Jewish." I'm not even sure what that means. In fact, my kids rightfully identify as multi-racial AND Jewish. Jews come in all colors. In fact, some of our better Jewish friends in our town are Israeli Jews with Ethiopian ancestry. We have Jewish friends from Egypt, who speak French, we have Jewish friends from Greece (a few survived the atrocities committed by Turks), who clearly appear to look more Northern African than anything. My own father (who had Eastern European heritage) was mistaken at various times as a "Moor" and also as a Navajo Native American. "Jewish" is a religious identity and really any discussion of what it means to be Jewish should reflect the diversity of Jewish Americans.

My grandfather came to this country ALONE at 8 years old in steerage. He was orphaned in what was formerly Austria and had to basically runaway to meet his father in New York. He worked for his fare along the way to the ship. When he got to this country, he had to learn English and learn period (I don't think he had ever gone to school). He ended up starting a company while he was still in his teens and never finished high school, as was normal at the time. My grandfather regularly served as "bodyguard" for older Jewish friends walking to synagogue through "rough" Italian neighborhoods. There was no "privilege." Jews were not allowed to work in many industries, including many banks, in Manhattan until very late in the 20th Century. My father told stories about how they were prohibited from staying at hotels in NH, where there were regularly signs posted, "No dogs or Jews allowed." (My grandfather used to tell my father, "What type of person dislikes dogs?")

The point is, in spite of this, my grandfather and then my father had to work hard to succeed in America. America offered them the best opportunities in the world but they had to work to merit success. Nothing was handed to them. It was not easy.

Unfortunately, my children have experienced anti-semitism at school. Worst yet, the teachers and peers of my children didn't have the cultural competency to understand that they were witnessing pervasive, repulsive behavior. My children did not even know until they were recounting stories at a later time. One child had coins thrown at his feet, an allusion to how Jews were treated during pogroms and the Holocaust. Another had to endure giggles and exclamations of "EWWW, Jews smell!" when watching the smokestack scene in Schindler's List during a high school class.

Here is what I request as further improvements:

- Since Anti-Semitic hate crimes are by far the most prevalent hate crimes based on religion in this country, it would be wise to include a meaning definition of antisemitism, and maybe something about the history of antisemitism and the (unfortunate) rise of antisemitism in this country and around the world.
- Nothing derogatory should be allowed in the classroom about Jews, Israelis, and Israel.
- Some discussion should be about the diversity of Jewish Americans, including Jewish Americans from the Middle East and North Africa and Jews of all colors.

Sincerely,
Linda Swenberg
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