

Friends,

The “template” doesn’t fit for general comments, hence this feedback.

POSITIVES

1. Our history has kept women and people of non-European backgrounds on the fringes of our approach to history. This effort makes many more people visible.
2. You emphasize sound educational practices: inquiry, critical thinking, research skills, integrating the arts, building community, and out-reach service projects.

CONCERNS

1. From 1979-1983, I was a principal in Covelo, California, that included our State’s second largest Native population. There was not even one US History book published in the US that told the truth about the “westward movement” and the genocide, displacement, and trampling of the Native peoples. We purchased our US History book from Canada because they told the truth. The same happened when I was a principal, 1983-1987, in western Los Angeles County, in a community that was about 80% peoples from Mexico, arriving mostly from the previous 3 generations but also included family lines that pre-dated US invasion. My point is, develop history books that tell the truth.
2. Ethnic Studies are fine but our goal should be broader “identities”. As a member of the Baha’i Faith we raise our children to see themselves as “world citizens” and to look for global trends, problems and solutions. For example, Capitalism is a global concern with a global history; poverty is a global issue with causes found here but, similarly, everywhere else; education, especially of women and girls is a global issue that has equivalents here; dominance of “majority” groups over minorities is universal; migration and immigration are universal issues with common causes. My point is, teach from a global perspective so that we don’t reinforce our tendencies to celebrate our victimhood or

to cast blame (even though some of that is needed to set the record straight).

3. Ethnic Studies are useful for many reasons stated in the documents. However, this effort must acknowledge that disparities in the “achievement gap” is not solely a racial or ethnic matter, despite some ethnic and racial groups, collectively, lagging behind in achievement or economic measures. The real causes are found in economic disparities and the damaging effects of poverty, and racism. Parallel efforts must have State Department commitments, including a California War on Poverty, an end to racial segregation (which is as bad or worse than when I was on the Board of Directors on the NAACP in Buffalo, NY), universal pre-school, and universal child care for working parents.

4. The Ethnic Studies are not inclusive enough. All peoples of European descent seem to be left out; only Arabs are considered from the vast areas of North African, the Middle East and Central Asia; “Asians” is a broad category of hundreds of groups with important histories; “African” backgrounds include a wide range of tribal groups with unique histories, former Europeans, Berbers, Arabs, Egyptians, Ethiopians, etc. Pacific Islanders, likewise, is rich and varied. Without fully embracing diversity, Ethnic Studies, subtly, says some groups may be more “valuable” and deserving of attention than others.

5. Ethnic Studies must also overlay our obsession with materialism without understanding how it distorts our lens; and with individualism and fail to understand its distortions. It is important to note our focus on “rights”, without an equal corresponding focus on “responsibilities”. For example, instead of our “right to vote”, what about our “responsibility to vote” : instead of “free speech”, what is our “responsibility to use our speech in responsible ways”; we have a “right to bear arms”, what are our “responsibilities”? If education fails to develop a broader sense of “citizenship”, filled with responsibilities, as well as opportunities, it is incomplete.

IN SUMMARY

It is a noble venture to help all students learn to search for and find the paths into their historic pasts and to remember and celebrate beautiful traditions of all kinds.

I wish you the best

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