

From: Nilou Sherf [email redacted]  
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 12:31 PM  
To: Ethnic Studies  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studied Concerns

To whom this may concern,

I am requesting that the California Department of Education, Instructional Quality Commission, and State Board of Education revise the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) to address the gross misrepresentations and inaccuracies of Jews.

The curriculum states that “descendants of Jewish immigrants often assimilated and changed their position on the racial hierarchy from their immigrant parents, gaining racial privilege.” Based on the three most comprehensive data sets available (the 2013-2019 American Jewish Population Project, the 2011 New York Community Study, and the 2017 San Francisco Bay Area Community Study) researchers estimate that Jews of Color represent at least 12-15% of American Jews, or about 1,000,000 of the United States’ 7,200,000 Jews.<sup>1</sup> This curriculum completely disregards the experiences and identities of Jews of Color, as they were, and still are, unable to gain “racial privilege” simply by changing their names. Jewish people of color do not possess any additional racial privilege in America than non-Jewish people of color; any belief otherwise is a claim rooted in anti-Semitic theory about Jewish power.

The curriculum also ignores the identities of the millions of Middle-Eastern and North African Jews living outside the U.S., and all other Jews of Color, by inaccurately painting Jews as a mono-racial group. Judaism is an ethnoreligion, not a race, and consists of individuals from a wide range of racial identities. The “racial privilege” you mention Jews can gain has absolutely nothing to do with their Judaism, but rather with that individual’s race, and therefore should not be conflated with the Jewish narrative. Additionally, the curriculum makes it seem as if white-passing Jews had simply “chosen” to change their names, when in reality many were forced to in order to survive yet still faced constant discrimination afterwards, as a name change alone was not enough to make white-passing Jews accepted as “white” by many social circles (which still persists to this day).

The curriculum further states that “anti-Jewish prejudice decreased” post 1945 as Jews were able to gain “conditional whiteness”. The above explanations already illustrate why the “conditional whiteness” argument is extremely harmful, and stating that prejudice is decreasing is also grossly inaccurate. According to the FBI's 2018 Hate Crime Statistics, “a breakdown of the bias motivation of religious-biased offenses showed: 57.8 percent were anti-Jewish.”<sup>2</sup> In 2014, 609 anti-Jewish hate crime incidents were reported to the FBI. By 2018, the most recent year for which statistics are publicly available, that number had increased nearly 40 percent, to 835 incidents.<sup>3</sup>

The current drafting of the ESMC paints a false narrative that all Jews are white, and therefore privileged, and that Jews as a whole face consistently less discrimination. Although many white and/or white-passing Jews are more privileged than other racial/ethnic groups in America, that privilege has nothing to do with their Judaism—but rather that individual’s race. This curriculum would indoctrinate the Californian youth by teaching an anti-Semitic narrative consisting of dangerous tropes about Jewish

power, minimizing prejudice against Jews, and erasing the identities and hardships faced by millions of Jews of Color both domestically and worldwide.

Sincerely

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