

From: Melissa Davis
Sent: Wednesday, August 14, 2019 4:53 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Please adjust the proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

I am concerned by the proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. I support the idea of teaching an ethnic studies class, but urge 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, Stand With Us, Jimena, Amcha and others.

Per California Legislative Jewish Caucus letter: We support diversity and inclusion, but oppose a curriculum that “erases 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.”

Despite the significant contributions of Jews to California’s history, politics, culture, and government – and our community’s longstanding struggle against hatred and discrimination – the ESMC erases the Jewish experience in America. The exclusion is offensive and inconsistent with the purpose of ethnic studies to promote inclusion and tolerance. This is indefensible in light of rising antisemitism in America and especially on college campuses. The ESMC omits any mention of antisemitism though there are **three times as many hate crimes in America against Jews as against Muslims**. The most recent FBI statistics record 938 antisemitic incidents and 273 Islamophobic incidents. **Hate crimes against Jews rose by 37% according to 2018 FBI statistics**, accounting for over half of religious-based hate crimes in the United States. Though a great deal of curriculum is devoted to Islamophobia, there is absolutely none devoted to anti-Semitism Furthermore:

- The curriculum denigrates both Israel and Jews.
- The curriculum supports the antisemitic BDS movement. As Asad AbuKalil, Professor of Political Science and BDS leader at the University of California has said, “The real aim of BDS is to bring down the State of Israel.”
- The one-sided framing of the Israeli Palestinian conflict in the ESMC creates a scenario where it’s likely that Jewish students may be stereotyped, accused of dual-loyalty, harassed and forced to face social litmus tests.

Per JIMENA letter, The state of California is home to some 236,000 Jews of Middle Eastern and North African descent. These refugees and immigrants arrived from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Turkey, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Iraq

and Iran. Notably, the Iranian Jewish community in Los Angeles comprises an estimated 60,000 individuals, making them one of the largest Middle Eastern diasporic communities in the United States. Despite the community's numbers, they have been completely omitted from the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Israel also receives sharp criticism in the draft curriculum, with little background information about the history of the Jewish state. The 1948 Arab-Israeli war, known in Israel as the War of Independence, is referred to as the "1948 Palestine War," and the creation of Israel is referred to as the "Nakba," Arabic for "catastrophe." The proposed curriculum erase core aspects of Jewish identity and the American Jewish experience.

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

Thank you,
Melissa Davis