

From: Skylar A Clark BA

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To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Public Comment

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Name: Skylar Clark

Title/Affiliation: President of Education Reimagined in the Bay, a student organization at UC Berkeley

Public Comment:

I am an undergraduate student from the University of California, Berkeley and I support the original model curriculum from September 2020. I find the slew of commentary currently occurring in the live webcast alarming, especially given the amount of people referring to ethnic studies as 'biased political dogma' or furthering a 'marxist revolutionary agenda.' If you honestly believe that including BIPOC issues in K-12 education is akin to Marxism or any sort of political dogma, you are politicizing the history of oppression and throwing around terms like Marxism without any fundamental understanding of what it means. Why is the inclusion of BIPOC history, oppression, and culture a politically polarizing issue? Why does the history of people of color not deserve inclusion and representation in public education curriculum? There is nothing 'political,' let alone marxist, about teaching history, or being honest about the truth of America's oppressive past. How can we move forward to build a more equitable society for all if we can't even acknowledge what happened, whether it be owning the oppressive imperialistic history which our nation stands on, or shedding light on the accomplishments of people of color who are so often left out of the eurocentric narrative? Ethnic studies isn't intended to polarize people, to further political agendas, or integrate Marxism into public education; its purpose is to include and uplift the history/contemporary experiences of people of color in America. If you feel threatened by the inclusion of history, then that may be more of an issue with your discomfort surrounding the acknowledgment of our nation's past (and its present). Acknowledging America's mistakes doesn't have to be a politically polarizing issue unless it's made one. We can choose to be divided by not acknowledging marginalized experiences in our society and burying the past, or we can choose to come together by studying the past

and working towards a more inclusive future. And to do this, we must support Ethnic Studies, and make sure that it is centered around amplifying the voices of the Latinx, African-American, Asian-American, Native-American, and Arab-American communities. As a Jewish-American myself, I am ashamed that other Jewish people are trying to use their own privilege to repress the voices of people of color. Jewish American issues are real, important, and deserve attention, but that does not mean they belong in ethnic studies. Judaism is a religion, not an ethnicity, and not a race. Therefore, the history of the Jewish diaspora should indeed be studied either in general history curriculum, or in a dedicated religious studies curriculum. In some of the newer additions to the curriculum, I see a severe lack of representation for Black and Latinx folks, which is a huge problem, since the point of ethnic studies is to return power and visibility to these communities. Making space for everyone is important, but in that process we should not try to take space away from those voices which have already been historically left out of the American historical narrative to begin with.

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