

From: Amy Overgaauw
Sent: Thursday, January 21, 2021 3:44 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] comment on ethnic studies curriculum

Good Afternoon,

I have been reading through the proposed ethnic studies curriculum, and was disturbed to see that the primary goal seems to be pointing out how every racial group has been oppressed by white people, and how all of our institutions are racist. I wonder, how exactly does this create unity, as the curriculum claims? How does this create critical thinkers? How does this foster pride in and respect for our nation? As an educator, I can say that it clearly does not. This appears to be nothing more than taking to task an entire racial group – large and varied though it is – and claiming that it is responsible for all the ills faced by every other racial group. Martin Luther King, Jr. must be rolling over in his grave; he was not concerned with shaming white people and blaming them for every setback or atrocity, but instead in creating a society where people can be appreciated for all of their inherent traits and abilities – not merely their race. Instead of judging others on their intelligence, morality, kindness, skills, work ethic, talents, etc., the ethnic studies curriculum asks us to judge each other by which oppressed group we are a part of – or, if white, judged as the *cause* of any negative experiences that members of the other groups had.

Infusing identity politics into education will do nothing but create more division and racism. The curriculum claims to create unity, but the only unifying idea presented here is the one where white people are the oppressors, so everyone else should be unified in their acknowledgement of how racist, oppressive, and hateful white people are. While this curriculum will certainly serve to keep those who make a living off grievance politics employed, I am hard-pressed to find any redeeming features in it. Identity politics is at the root of this curriculum, and although it is a hot trend now, it is a short-sighted and divisive strategy for educating our children. They deserve better, and would be better served by learning the things that have been hard to find in our schools: how our government works, basic grammar, mathematics that isn't dumbed-down to the lowest common denominator (as Common Core math is), and history that highlights the achievements and victories of our nation – in addition to its failings. Achievements of minorities can and should be celebrated – however, it is hard to understand why that must come at the expense of other groups. Having never held slaves or actively oppressed anyone, it is deeply hurtful to be characterized in such a negative and disingenuous way simply because of my skin color. It's the very definition of racism.

I am hopeful that the CDE will rethink this biased and deeply flawed program, as our nation could use more unity, not the division that this curriculum fosters.

Amy Overgaauw