

From: Charles
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 1:11 PM
To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] ESMC California

Dear Governor Newsom,

After considering the proposal for the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum for the state of California, I have seen that this revision is incredibly detrimental to the Jewish community and I am urging you to vote against it.

This proposed curriculum will directly endanger Jews both inside and outside of the classroom. Painting the Jewish people as a privileged, wealthy, and powerful group which has “managed to fit their way into white society” is a direct allusion to works such as The Protocols of the Elders of Zion and Hitler’s eugenics movement. The idea that Jews are “hiding in plain sight” and “masquerading themselves as white people” is the basis for Hitler’s removal of Jews from German society. White supremacists have historically touted the narrative that Jewish people are sneaking their way into white society and “polluting the white race”. This proposal erases this historical oppression, which led to the deaths of millions of Jews. This proposal erases Jewish history, and it is unacceptable. To repackage a sentiment coined by the USSR and Nazi Germany, which both enforced state-sanctioned violence against Jews, and to place it into this state-sanctioned curriculum is dangerous.

Furthermore, the word “privilege” is not mentioned when discussing any other minority group, which perpetuates antisemitism. The term “Jewish Privilege” is a term directly attributed to David Duke, the former Grand Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. The first step in allowing antisemitism to become normalized and accepted is to paint Jews as rich, powerful, global elites. It is the very nature of antisemitism to refer to Jews as powerful and privileged. Stating that being a Jew is a “privilege” is directly feeding into the nature of antisemitism. This perpetuates that idea that when tearing down Jews, tears down the powerful, which couldn’t be further from the truth. In reality, Jews make up 1.8% of the United States population yet constitute 63% of the religiously motivated hate crimes in the United States according to the FBI’s most recent Hate Crime Statistics.

Additionally, Jews of Color and “white” Jews should not be pitted against one another in a hierarchy of oppression. Many Jews face an intersection of racism and antisemitism in America, which must be acknowledged. However, it must also be acknowledged that all Jewish people can face oppression for their Jewish identity. To deny that all Jews may face prejudice retrofits a conception of oppression on Jews that is inherently rooted in antisemitism. While some Jews are affected by colorism in a way that Jews with lighter skin are not, anti-Jewish sentiment affects all Jews.

On January 27th, we will be commemorating Holocaust Remembrance Day. Even though most schools in America teach the basic history of the Holocaust, work must be done to understand the intellectual and societal mechanisms that allowed it to happen. Jews were targeted for their Jewishness — as apart from the “Aryan collective”. There was a gradual lead-up to what we call The Holocaust, which started with Hitler naming the Jews as too powerful and privileged. This pattern did not start with the Nazi party, and it should not continue to spread in state-sanctioned curricula over 80 years after the Nazis rose to power.

This curriculum does nothing short of gaslighting Jews during a sharp rise of antisemitism where Jews in New York are beaten on the streets, Jewish students are scared of being identified as Jewish because of increased harassment and physical violence towards Jews, and rates of antisemitic hate-crimes are at their highest since 1971.

This bill upholds a legacy of the same state-sanctioned antisemitism which uprooted millions of Jews throughout history, and will aid in creating an unsafe and antisemitic environment for Jewish students in California. I implore you to veto AB331.

Your sincerely,

Charles