

August 15, 2019

Ms. Soomin Chao  
Chair, Instructional Quality Commission  
California Department of Education

Dear Chairwoman and Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:

I am responding to the draft of the California “model” ESMC put forth by the California Department of Education and the subsequent call for public comment. I am compelled to add my voice to this matter. My response is based on my role as a California educator, a humanitarian, a US citizen and a 1st generation American Jew.

As an educator, I understand the development and adoption of curriculum and the intention to educate all students. A thoughtful and appropriate ethnic studies curriculum would serve to:

- define clearly the terms **ethnicity** (which may or may not include race) and **ethnic group**
- validate the identity of ethnic minorities
- give credence to the value of diverse ethnic groups
- provide context for attitudes and beliefs held within and outside an ethnic group
- grow a meaningful understanding of one another as classmates
- provide a fuller understanding of the global composition in the classroom, school house, community, state, country and world

As a humanitarian I have respect for the importance of inclusivity, and the sense of belonging. Within the educational system, children have the opportunity to develop that sense of belonging, through the acquisition of knowledge and social interaction with educators and peers.

As a US citizen, I am terribly disturbed by the unprecedented rise in the rate and volume of overt prejudice. I support the importance of a curriculum that fosters understanding designed to build knowledge, belonging and intention to reduce prejudice.

As a first generation American Jew, I am familiar with historically established prejudice toward the minority ethnic group to which I belong...that of Jews...the origin/heritage which began in countries outside of the United States. I have experienced prejudice since the time of my grade school years and for generations since, both directly and indirectly. I am painfully aware of prejudice from verbal slurs to oppression and murder directed toward my own and other ethnic minority groups. As an educator, humanitarian and 1st generation American Jew, I have worked with 1st generation youth and easily related to challenges they face. These students would often be surprised to learn that I, too, am a 1<sup>st</sup> generation person.

It befuddles me that Jews are not identified and included as an ethnic group in the presentation of this draft of an ethnic studies curriculum for high school students. The omission is striking in general, and especially, given long-standing historic and ongoing anti-Semitism and decimation, which includes the Holocaust years between 1941-1945. The omission, which does not even reference anti-Semitism as a term in the glossary, excludes one of the significant minority ethnic groups of the country and world.

The ESMC draft, as recently published, does not speak to a thoughtful and robust curriculum. The value of an ethnic studies curriculum with intention to raise awareness of our youth cannot be exclusive. A model curriculum would include an overarching theme of cultural diversity encompassing many, not only, selective cultures. Finally, as presented, the ESMC draft does not demonstrate a participatory process, which is inclusive of diverse stakeholders in development of an ethnic studies curriculum.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond. I am hopeful that a revision of the current draft will lead to a more inclusive and comprehensive 2<sup>nd</sup> draft, which will be made available for review in a timely manner. I look forward to the ongoing development of this educational program in California.

Cordially,

Linda Davis