

From: Asaf Ophir
Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2020 1:44 PM
To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comments on the curriculum

Hello,

I am sorry that I could not participate in the public forum about the Ethnic Studies Curriculum. I hope that you will still see my comment:

I was born in Israel, where I am sad to say that the conflict between Jews and Arabs is still as tense as it ever was. I came to live in the United States, where only a year ago a swastika was painted on the wall of the synagogue where I work. I am a musician. I played music with Arab friends in Israel, and I now play music with Arab friends in the US. One of America's greatest blessings is that Jews and Arabs learn together in the same classroom. I know that mutual understanding is real, and it's possible. But it begins when both sides can share their stories. In the case of a school curriculum, BOTH SIDES NEED TO AGREE TO THE WORDING.

I know that this can be very challenging.

But efforts toward peace on virtually every front have been locked in an "us and them" attitude, where the only possible way to approach a conflict is by determining who is right and who is wrong. I encourage you to go home, and try that in your marriage, and let me know how it goes.

Good guys and bad guys - are for the movies. It's easy, and emotionally gratifying, to believe that one is bad, and the other is good. But peace is about understanding both sides.

I highly urge anyone who needs to vote on this curriculum - to read it as if your child is Jewish, and then read it again as if your other child is an Arab. If your children cannot eat together at the same lunch table at the end of the lesson, then you have failed your children. And you need to go back to the drawing board.

Thank you,
Asaf Ophir