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To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Comment on Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

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I agree with the August 12, 2019, Joint Statement of President Linda Darling-Hammond, Vice President Ilene Straus and Feliza Ortiz-Licon, Board Member, and that the current draft model curriculum falls short and needs to be substantially redesigned. I also believe that the current draft model curriculum violates the California Constitution, and the individual rights of each individual student as expressed in the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution.

I offer the following comments.

Thurgood Marshall stated: ““In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute.”

And Thurgood Marshall also stated: “Our whole constitutional heritage rebels at the thought of giving government the power to control men’s minds.”

The revised “Ethnic Studies” curriculum should include the stories and philosophies of Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King, Frederick Douglas, and Booker T. Washington. It should also deal with Californian people of color who were successful and influential, such as Rafer Johnson from Kingsburg, California, Attorney Loren Miller (California attorney who argued against racial restrictive covenants; his granddaughter is Judge Robin Miller Sloan, a Superior Court Judge in Pasadena), Andres Pico (mixed race Californio, who led the military opposition of the Californios against American forces in 1846-1847, signed the Capitulations at Cahuenga with John C. Fremont in 1847, ending the hostilities between the Americans and Californios, became a US citizen in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, became a California state assemblyman and senator, and actively promoted the Union cause in the 1860s with his brother Pio Pico), and Californians who led the fight to make California a free state, Jesse Benton Fremont, William Shannon, and David Broderick.

Ethnic studies should also include the history and politics of ethnic immigrants from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America, including Irish, Italian, Polish, Greek, Portuguese and Scandinavian peoples. But it should also discuss “Gold Mountain,” the immigration of Chinese and Asian peoples, peoples from Hawaii, the Philippines, and Chile, Peru, and other Latin American places.

It should consider the ideas promoted the ADL, the anti-defamation league, including the work they helped publish, John F. Kennedy’s, A Nation of Immigrants (Harper Perennial, 2008).

The Board should invite participation from a broader variety of ethnic groups, and their representatives, such as the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles, the ADL, the Museum of Tolerance, the Korean Cultural Center, the Japanese American National Museum, the Chinese Historical Society, the Andres Pico Adobe, and the Pueblo of Los Angeles. It should invite the historian Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to comment, and the curriculum should refer to his book, Coach Wooden and Me.

The Central and Salinas Valleys have a rich history of ethnic immigration, and the development of ethnic communities dealing with agriculture that is totally absent from the curriculum. Rafer Johnson's autobiography of growing up in Kingsburg, CA, is especially noteworthy. The Central Valley has ethnic communities with distinctive Japanese, Armenian, Portuguese, Swedish, and Sikh roots. These ethnic groups have also brought new crops and focused on particular agricultural interests, and developed trade with their native countries. It is also a place where John Steinbeck wrote the Grapes of Wrath; the ethnic curriculum should devote attention to Steinbeck's The Harvest Gypsies.

There is a wealth of local ethnic history at local museums such as the Dana Adobe in Nipomo, the Andres Pico Adobe in Mission Hills, Colton Hall in Monterey, and the Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum in the City of Industry (William Workman married Nicolasa Uriste, a Taos indigenous American).

There are also ethnic stories at various historical places, such as Sutter' Fort, the 21 Missions of California, the ports, and the Indian reservations. Field trips to these places should be incorporated into the curriculum, whether the field trip is by the school, or by families visiting the place.

The current curriculum extols the notion of the French Revolution in overcoming "oppression," and creates a racial dialectic that white people and white European culture are the purveyors of "oppression." Although seemingly rejecting European culture, the curriculum then extols the virtues of various European political activists, whose writings are found at www.marxists.org. Karl Marx is a European author, and his main follower Joseph Stalin was also European. The curriculum does not deal with the violence of the French Revolution, its terror, and the spawning of dictators such as Napoleon and Santa Ana, the models for Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin. It ignores the evolution in the United States to universal freedom, with liberty of conscious, and freedom of religion with expanding democracy.

European Marxism, as applied by Stalin, suppressed freedom of conscious, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion, suppressed the history of the Torah and the Old Testament, and suppressed the teaching of the gospel; Stalin "oppressed" Jews, Catholics, Muslims, and Buddhists. The French Revolution by the time of the American Civil War had been wholly unsuccessful in sustaining democracy, and had led to the French imposing the Emperor Maximilian in Mexico at the same time as the Americans were ending slavery, and reestablishing democracy.

The curriculum should also examine the persecution of religious peoples in other countries, which has driven emigration from the persecuting states, to the United States. This includes the pogroms directed at Jewish peoples, including by the Soviet Union, and persecution of Catholics in Mexico, and other Latin American countries.

The gospel and the Torah has been an essential element of ideology of universal freedom – “our freedom,” as stated by the California Constitution of 1849 in its preamble. “Our freedom” respects the freedom of each individual, and each student; “our freedom” was the essential moving and transformative ideal of Frederick Douglass, and William Shannon, and Abraham Lincoln, and Martin Luther King, and why so many people of various ethnic and religious identities have migrated to California.

“Our freedom,” as noted by Abraham Lincoln, originates in the great words of the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal, and have inalienable rights. Although slavery was the antithesis of “our freedom,” slavery was not ended by Chief Justice Roger Taney or the Supreme Court, or by the intellectuals endowed by elite Universities with rhetoric derivative from the French Revolution or Karl Marx. Abraham Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address gave full credit to the “we the people,” “the brave men, living and dead, who struggled here.”

The European immigrants who fought and died at Gettysburg had immigrated to the free states, not the slave states, and they followed what Lincoln said at Gettysburg - “that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.

This “new birth of freedom” was already established in the California Constitution in effect since 1849 “We the People of the State of California, grateful to almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure and perpetuate its blessings, do establish this constitution.” California Constitution, Preamble. (Drafted by William Shannon, delegate born in Ireland, from the free state of New York.)

Lincoln’s “government of the people, by the people, and for the people,” expands on the Declaration’s unequivocal proposition that all people are created equal, and have inalienable rights. Inalienable right means that all persons individually have rights, and those rights were not alienated by associating white people with slavery or Jim Crow. The “oppression” curriculum requires that there be no democracy, but propaganda to inculcate a sense of self-loathing and intolerance, and suicide. It demands that a small minority, embraced by the rich endowments of elite Universities supplant the democracy of the people, by the people and for the people. The “oppression” curriculum will develop resentment and division, as it already has. Labeling our students and their families as “oppressors” is hardly “recognizing the humanity of our fellow human beings.”