

From: Nora Rouso

Sent: Wednesday, January 20, 2021 9:14 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Latest proposed revision to proposed ethnic studies curriculum

Dear IQC,

Thank you for your hard work on this challenging issue. Although the proposed curriculum and additions and revisions to the proposed lesson plans are an improvement on what was proposed earlier, the current iteration of the proposed ethnic studies curriculum still has major flaws.

The big problem is that the proposed curriculum and attendant lesson plans still follow the "critical" ethnic studies model, where all communities are lumped into two broad categories of "oppressed" and "oppressors." Under this overly simplistic model, all members of any community of color are in the first group and all "whites" are in the second. This model wrongly homogenizes all Jews as "Euro-centric, white and privileged." As has been pointed out by other Jewish communities such as "MENA" Jews (Jews from the Middle East and North Africa) the notion that all Jews are "white" and therefore "privileged" is totally false. And yet, Lesson Plan 41 has the following offensive statement: "By examining how Jews have been stigmatized as outsiders, sometimes seen as a racialized other, and sometimes have experienced conditional whiteness and privilege...." It is no help to Jews to talk about "stigma" while in the same breath claiming they "experience conditional whiteness and privilege."

Make no mistake: Characterization of Jews as "white" and "privileged" is no accident and this notion has no place in an "ethnic studies" curriculum. The characterization of Jews as "white" and "privileged" also is what bolsters the new anti-Semitism: Zionophobia or anti-Zionism. Casting Jews in the role of "oppressors" is what allows those who would destroy Israel to claim that "Anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism" because "Jewish is a religion and being against Israel does not mean that one is against Jews."

When I last wrote to you I also noted that in Sample Lesson 7 in African American studies, "redlining" is discussed. This practice, which legally allowed landowners to exclude various racial and ethnic groups was outlawed as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1968. However the current lesson essentially suggests that only African Americans suffered the discrimination of redlining. That is not true. My own husband's family was limited to where they could buy a house based on redlining in the form of restrictive covenants preventing Jews from buying homes in a given neighborhood. Under a "constructive" ethnic studies approach, all groups who suffered from redlining could be discussed, which, in turn, would foster greater understanding and a shared experience between students of all races and ethnicities.

This is a dangerous notion and, sadly, it is finding currency all over the country, especially on college campuses. Jewish students are persecuted for being openly Zionist.

I also wish to note that the emphasis on a "critical" ethnic studies model vs. a "constructive" ethnic studies model means presently, Lesson 6, which lists "important people of color" includes Malcom X and Angela Davis but not Martin Luther King or John Lewis. How can this be? Similarly, this same lesson includes Linda Sarsour and Rashida Tlaib as notables from the

"Arab American" experience. Both of them openly support BDS; Ms. Sarsour was pointedly disinvited from the Women's March because of her openly anti-Semitic views. What was the point of eliminating the BDS narrative from the curriculum if you are going to hold up its fiercest proponents as "important people of color?" Not to mention the fact that Linda Sarsour is no more a "person of color" than I am. Finally, need I point out that it seems very biased to include a list of "Arab Americans" among "important people of color" but no Jews? Again, this promotes the BDS narrative that all Jews are "white" and "Eurocentric." Neither of these statements are true.

The Ethnic Model Studies Curriculum should be revised to provide a balanced range of perspectives, remove the political agenda, and inspire mutual respect and dignity.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,
Nora Rousso
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