

As someone who served as an educator in California for 10 years, I understand the need for new approaches in education, and, as I understand, the origins of Ethnic Studies lie in just such an attempt. However, I was distressed to see that this program has been used by some as a platform to taint the base idea of Ethnic studies, inserting propaganda in place of balance, and propagating dangerous stereotypes instead of (as your curriculum suggests) creating an environment when these stereotypes can be discovered, discussed, and hopefully dispelled.

While it is true that the materials presented are called samples and are not required, we all know that people will use these materials as their templates (and eventually as standards for assessment. Given these facts, it would seem prudent for the committee to go out of its way to make sure that the sample curriculum presents a set of best practices.

For instance, looking at the materials (from the introduction through the appendices, I hoped to find an introduction explaining the choices made for the groups chosen/highlighted in this course. Additionally, I was looking for a definition (even a family-resemblance or tentative attempt) of ethnicity, to better set the course's heading. I found neither of these. Believing that this was because those creating the course simply went to the data, finding those ethnic groups who were most subject to hate crimes or other dangers in either California or the United States and modeling the course to correct for these abuses. However a cursory look at the FBI's website shows that this was not the case.

As an example, a quick search of the FBI's website shows that Jews are one of the most targeted groups per capita in the US (with far more incidences of hate speech and hate crimes than other groups highlighted in your curriculum). There are many examples in the media, from members of congress, from case law, and from popular culture (mirroring the units you used in your curriculum) that could have been used to put together a unit on this group. Instead, the mentions of Jews in the curriculum instead are relegated to stereotypes, arguing for Jews as white (inaccurate, as Jews as late as WW2 were designated as non-white), colonialist (also inaccurate, as Jews have been residents of just about everywhere, being forced to migrate from each country as they were threatened with extinction but still maintaining small populations in almost all cases), and as powerful leaders of a worldwide conspiracy (laughable, except that this course of study was designed to engage dangerous stereotypes).

This is but one example, but the example is designed to highlight that the current Ethnic Studies Draft program contains oversimplifications, stereotypes and biases, and thinly veiled (and in some cases unveiled) attacks on groups that it should be attempting to engage.

The best tonic for this would be to open the draft up to other groups (as the best means to engage potential bias), to provide a rationale for this course that is founded in good scientific and humanistic practices, and to not rush this through absent thorough review.

Again, I applaud your efforts. You have a lot of work to do here (in my opinion), but I look forward to the product, one that I hope will serve as a model for the rest of the US.

Yours Respectfully,

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