

From: Colin Bookman
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 10:35 AM
To: [email redacted]; Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] ESMC2 Comment

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission,

I appreciate some improvement in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC), but I am concerned by the proposed second draft of the ESMC.

Here are my major concerns.

- The experiences of Mizrahi Jews, Iranians, Kurds, Assyrian-**Christians** and other immigrant communities **must be represented on an equal basis with Arab Americans in the ESMC**. They should not be simply lumped together as, "Arab Americans and other Middle Easterners". The current language unwittingly reflects a long history and ongoing reality of imperialist oppression and erasure of non-Arab and non-Muslim ethnic and religious groups in the Middle East.
- The BLM lesson in the African American section lists the following as THE resource: <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2017/bringing-black-lives-matter-into-the-classroom-part-ii> In it, Palestine equated with South Africa and Stonewall. This is the same article that describes non-violent civil rights leaders as "passive" and "docile" and condemns considering them to be "heroes."
- Appendix A lists a course with the following lesson plan: "Students will write a paper detailing certain events in American history that have led to Jewish and Irish Americans gaining racial privilege. They will be asked to think critically about why and who is allowing this evolution in white identity." Among the many issues with this assignment is that it, in itself, can be considered anti-Semitic.
- One of the approved courses in Appendix A uses Amal Amireh's essay 'Palestinian Women's Disappearing Act: **The Suicide Bomber Through Western Feminist Eyes.**' <https://serendipstudio.org/oneworld/system/files/AmirehPalestinianWomen.pdf>
- - *Maira and Shihade 2006* calls Israel a "settler-colonial" state - terminology which erases over 3,000 years of Jewish history, identity, and rights in the historic home of the Jewish people. It also falsely accuses Israel of "annexation of the West Bank and Gaza" in 1967. In fact, Israel did not annex these territories after the 1967 War.

Having been born in the 90s, and growing up in North America, you'd think I'd have never experienced Anti-semitism, but that's not the case:

- In elementary school I was told I'd be going to hell as I'm Jewish.
- My teachers asked me to write letters to Santa, and Santa even visits us Jews!
- I was often not included in social groups as those groups all socialized in Church in their Church studies.
- I was forced to do a prayer to Jesus before playing school sports.

- I had tests on major Jewish holidays, so the teacher could single out the jews...I also had to take a 0 on the test without ability to do-it over (yes went to Dean of Students of top 10 university of USA).
- My Fraternity, JCC, and multiple other jewish organizations had to hire an increase in armed guards due to violent attacks against our facilities and members.
- My French Family is being forced out of their neighborhood as they wear a yarmulke and don't conform, leading the French government to hire Armed Guards to protect them.
- I've had multiple Friends murdered in the middle east due to their religious beliefs.

We talk all the time about racism in the US, but what about our historical Anti-Jewish stance, such-as the [Jewish Discrimination in Higher Education](#)? This is all sadly but a subset from the past & current occurrences of anti-semitism in the USA and California.

I urge you to make significant further revisions to the ESMC to address these concerns. Please revise the Guiding Values and Principles of the ESMC to use more precise and inclusive terminology, to align with the ESMC Guidelines, to build bridges of intergroup understanding, and to ensure critical thinking. Then adjust the lessons and sample topics accordingly to match the revised principles.

Thank you,
Colin Bookman - East Palo Alto, CA