

**From:** Mike Lefkowitz  
**Sent:** Friday, August 9, 2019 11:41 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies  
**Subject:** ESMC

Dear Chairwoman Chao and California Department of Education committee members,

Please accept this letter as an expression of my deep concern over the current proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). At a time of rising incidences of anti-Semitism across the country, and around the world, it is more important than ever that young adults of all backgrounds understand the Jewish experience. Part of this understanding is the appreciation for the Jewish cultural, religious, historical and spiritual connection to the land and State of Israel.

The current curriculum shows a shocking indifference, and even hostility towards the American Jewish experience and community. The curriculum erases American Jewish history by failing to include Jews in a meaningful way, and it neglects any discussion of anti-Semitism. It is important for society to understand that Judaism is first a Peoplehood with its original homeland in the land of Israel. Judaism is not simply a religion. Jewish identity encompasses not just a connection to a faith tradition; it is also an ethnic and cultural identification as a People, just like Irish, Italian, Latino, African, Arab or Asian Americans. Jewish Americans are a distinct and diverse ethnic group deserving fair and respectful inclusion in any Ethnic Studies curriculum. The ESMC as it is currently drafted however, fails to impart these basic lessons.

The introduction of the proposed curriculum states that, "The implementation of Ethnic Studies presents an opportunity for teachers to... enable students to develop a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion, and aids in the eradication of bigotry, hate, and racism." Despite this stated goal, the curriculum does not feature a single lesson about the Jewish community, mentioning Jews only in passing. With anti-Semitism rising and ignorance about the Jewish people still a major problem in our society, the exclusion of Jews from this curriculum is deeply disappointing.

As a member of the Jewish community of California, whose children have gone through the California public school and university system, and whose eight grandchildren are also attending the public school system here, I urge you to add lessons about American Jews contributions to our society, and as an ethnic group, including those who fled the horror of the Holocaust like my parents, oppressed in the Middle East, and discriminated in former Soviet Union. These lessons are more important than ever in our school system. Thank you for your attention to these concerns, and myself and my fellow Jewish community look forward to seeing these proposed changes addressed by our State's Department of Education.

Sincerely yours,

Mike Lefkowitz