

From: Samuel Lepler
Sent: Wednesday, August 14, 2019 8:02 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Ethnic Studies Curriculum Concern

Dear CDE,

First, as a teacher myself, let me congratulate you on your goal of inclusivity and bringing to light the experiences of many marginalized, attacked, and misunderstood populations in the state of California. Your goal is a noble one, and certainly worth exploration.

However, I have serious concerns about the portrayal of the Jewish/Israeli minority in the state. First, the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction movement regarding Israel is highly controversial with some minorities believing it is an essential movement of positive change while others feel it is an attempt to single out the only Jewish state on Earth and demonize the only place where Jews are safe (Clearly Jews are not safe in Europe, Africa, Asia, the rest of the middle east, and now with the massive spike in hate crimes toward Jews in the US and the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, it should be clear that Jewish safety in the US is tenuous at best). As such, an exploration of this movement only in the context of the Palestinian perspective decidedly marginalizes the hundreds of thousands of Israeli-Americans and the vast majority of the American Jewish community.

Second, the curriculum states that the cause of the tensions between the US and the Arab is based solely on US imperialism. This is both simplistic and inaccurate. While US imperialism (how exactly is that defined?) plays a role, there are also fundamental differences with regards to governmental structure, economic structure and interests, religion, language, and many other factors that can account for some of those tensions. Just as similar economic and governmental issues account largely for the US-USSR tensions during the cold war. As such, blaming US policy entirely for the struggles of the Arab world and the tenuous US-Arab relationship is once again one-sided, dangerous, and inaccurate.

Furthermore, analogizing the US-Mexico border with the Israeli-Palestinian border is both inaccurate and offensive. First, Israel-Palestine have a long history of violence on both sides. Rockets, market and bus bombings, etc from one side, airstrikes and invasions from the other. There is a ton of violence sanctioned by the governments on both sides and the border is a national security issue. On the other hand, Mexico is the #1 trading partner of the US. The governments of both countries get along (despite some minor differences). They are both democracies. As such, demonizing Israel for building a fence in the same way as the US is demonized for building a fence faces the same issue as the BDS movement discussed above. It is one-sided, marginalizes and demonizes Israeli-Americans and by extension the vast majority of the American Jewish community.

If the committee wishes to take on the Arab experience, perhaps it would be best looked at as a semitic/middle-eastern course? This can include the Arab-American experience but also the Jewish and Israeli experience giving a complex and two-sided view of the Israeli/palestinian conflicts, the stereotypes on both sides (the arab stereotype is included but what the the stereotype of the greedy, money grubbing, media and government puppeteering jew? The stereotypes against jews have led to mass murder and persecution against jews for millenia)

Overall, I applaud your goals and efforts, but please be aware of the consequences and effects of enacting such a one-sided, antisemitic, anti-Israeli, and ultimately dangerous curriculum. I urge you to revamp the material to be truly inclusive rather than repeating hateful tropes and further marginilizing israelis and jews.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Samuel Lepler
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