

Linda Festa Plack  
San Francisco, CA 94127  
August 14, 2019

Ms. Soomin Chao  
Chair, Instructional Quality Commission  
California Department of Education  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Ms. Chao,

Discrimination hurts. I know. I experienced it as a child when my father, serving in the military during World War II and stationed in Key West, Florida, brought us to live with him. The children in the neighborhood would not play with me because I am a Jew.

When attempting to purchase a house in San Francisco I learned about the exclusionary deeds for the neighborhood I chose to live in, that forbade the sale of houses to Jews. They were no longer enforced, but there they were.

I believe in Ethnic Studies. I endeavored to do what I could to teach diversity and inclusivity during my teaching career spanning forty years, and my service in the Peace Corps in El Salvador. Although there was no “ethnic studies” curriculum to rely on, my social studies classes were exposed to a rich educational program that included the study of many ethnic groups. They were taught to understand the values of our multicultural society and the harm that accrues to individuals and the society in general from discrimination of any kind.

And when employing learning exercises my students never experienced a “privilege walk.” I would never expose them to that type of humiliation. But rest assured that they learned what privilege means.

In light of current events and the uptick in attacks on Jews – remember Charlottesville: “Jews shall not replace us,” the attacks in Pittsburgh and San Diego, I find it extremely hard to understand the neglect of the history of anti-Semitism in this curriculum. I am dismayed at the mischaracterization of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the history of Israel.

I believe that there should be an ethnic studies curriculum. The proposal, as it exists, should be revised. It is not acceptable.

Sincerely,

Linda Festa Plack