

**From:** Cheryl Smith  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 21, 2021 1:40 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies curriculum

I am writing to add my voice to those of the many Californians raising objections to the current proposed curriculum for Ethnic Studies in the public schools. As a CSU professor, I was very familiar with Ethnic Studies when the goal was to offer a broader and more inclusive curriculum, helping students to learn about the many ethnic groups that make up the US and the State of California. These university courses often focused on the histories, literatures, traditions, and struggles of African-Americans, Asians, Native Americans, and Latinos and the contributions of these groups to America. Such valuable courses are a far cry from what is proposed in the new ES curriculum. Rather than celebrating the diversity that is America, there seems to be an emphasis in this curriculum on demonizing some categories of Americans and at the same time insisting that other categories of Americans will always be seen as second-class citizens.

I am particularly disturbed by the way Jews are denigrated in the curriculum and by the confusion created about Jewish ethnicity. As an ancient, indigenous people Jews have experienced persecution, expulsion, genocide, and antisemitism throughout their history based on their unique ethnicity. Like other immigrants who fled to America, Jews also experienced bias and prejudice in the US and, like other minority groups, they worked hard to participate in and contribute to American life.

Jews are not identifiable by color (there are white, black, brown, Asian, and multi-racial Jews) and throughout their 3500-year history Jews have considered themselves a people. Because they do not fit simply into the category of religion (Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people) and because there are Jews of every skin color, the prejudice against Jews at times has been against their religion, in more recent times against them as an ethnicity, and even against them as if they were a race. Just this week a synagogue in Los Angeles was defaced with "I hate your race." In America today, Jews are the victims of more hate crimes per capita than any other minority group.

There are many educators and scholars who are available to help create a unit or to make changes in the curriculum that will give students a more accurate picture of the Jewish minority. I urge you to not approve the curriculum until this problem, among others, is resolved so that Ethnic Studies in the public schools becomes the positive, multicultural experience that California voters expected.

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