

From: Shari Pratt
Sent: Wednesday, August 14, 2019 4:14 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Proposed California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

To our Honorable California Lawmakers:

I'm writing about AB 331, the proposed California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. My husband and I raised our two California born sons in this great state, and they are now raising their children here.

I believe in the need for an ethnic studies curriculum to help foster awareness of minority contributions and rights to our state and our nation.

My grandparents were all immigrants in the early part of the twentieth century, fleeing religious prejudice, government sanctioned limitations on property and income, and violent pogroms in Russia and Poland. They arrived frightened but determined to make the United States their new country and the home for their children. I'm proud of their humble but earnest contributions and of those subsequently made by my parents and the members of my generation. I'm proud of the industry of my sons and daughters-in-law and hopeful for the future of our four young grandchildren. I want my grandchildren to understand and respect all their neighbors.

The proposed curriculum, ESMC, is, however, deeply flawed and instigates exactly the kind of divisive finger pointing and negative accusations that an ethnic studies course should never promote. No curriculum should become a manifesto of hate and ignorance toward any other group.

This proposed curriculum:

- Does not include members of the Jewish faith though we are clearly a minority group, comprising approximately two percent of the nation's population.
- Excludes Anti-Semitism as a topic of discussion despite the fact that half of all religiously based hate crimes in the US are directed against Jews and Jewish institutions. Consider: Los Angeles Jewish Community Center shooting, 1999.
- Ignores multiple disruptions at UC Irvine of Israeli Ambassador to US, Michael Oren, 2010, preventing a speech he was invited to present.
- Ignores attack at Jewish Community Center of Greater Kansas City, (Overland) 2014. At Tree of Life Synagogue shooting, 2018. At Chabad of Poway shooting, 2019. All of these attacks resulted in the deaths of innocent people, many of whom were at prayer.
- Ignores displays of swastikas, destruction of Jewish sites, desecration of Jewish graves, and vandalism of Jewish homes and businesses primarily owned by Jews – committed since the Civil War, and too innumerable to list.
- Ignores proclamations against Jews and quotas limiting or denying Jewish access to social and educational institutions, too innumerable to list. My father was admitted to medical school under such a quota and considered himself lucky to be able to attend; I think this was in 1945.
- Ignores taunting of Jewish students in schools and other public places. We moved to Orange County in 1961 (I was 13) when the John Birch Society was very active. I was often ostracized by other students, called humiliating names, and left out of social activities throughout high school in Tustin, CA. It was not hidden that I was "different" and didn't belong.
- Ignores right wing sensationalist anti-Semites who claim that Israel planned the 9/11 attacks, despite irrefutable proof that most of the terrorists were identified, and none were Israeli; in today's news – again.

- Ignores the current rise of the neo-Nazi and white supremacist membership in the US, and their frightening perpetration of violent hate crimes and public avowal to destroy all Jews, among other minorities.
- Ignores those who deny and distort the history of the Holocaust and claim it to be a ruse and entirely false.
- Allows the nefarious Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, a transparent campaign to delegitimize the existence of the state of Israel. Nothing like this belongs in any high school curriculum – ever.
- Implies that the media is controlled by Jews, a situation that by its numbers cannot be true. We are too small a population. The only place where Jews dominate is on Jewish pulpits. To write any kind of curriculum that ignores the marginalization of American citizens of the Jewish faith, assigns us a conniving, manipulative persona, and demonizes Israel because of its Jewish foundation sidesteps the purpose of creating an ethnically sensitive curriculum. People of Jewish heritage must be included in any discussion of ethnic studies. The history and contribution of Americans of Jewish heritage must be depicted fairly. By its current proposal, the ESMC curriculum will promote ethnic hatred and marginalization, not dissolve it or create community.

I urge California lawmakers to proceed with wisdom and reason in the development of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. This is too important a subject to allow it to be co-opted by a small faction of people whose biased dissent will thrust an enormous social and political burden on Jewish Americans and make our lives dangerous.

I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sharon Lynne Pratt

Lake Forest, CA 92630