



Jewish Voice for Peace

Bay Area

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JEWISH-AMERICANS SUPPORT MODEL ETHNIC STUDIES CURRICULUM

Jewish Voice for Peace-Bay Area responds to accusations of antisemitism in the curriculum

Jewish Voice for Peace – Bay Area Chapter (JVP-BA) supports the proposed model Ethnic Studies curriculum for California, including the modules on Arab American history.

Ethnic Studies was created through the struggle of communities of color to make sure their rich history and perspectives are included in public education. Students and educators across the country have made it clear that Ethnic Studies is a critical component of education for the 21st century.

JVP believes that it is essential that a module on Arab-Americans be included in the Ethnic Studies curriculum. The Arab-American experience, including the impact of Islamophobia, is rarely taught in schools, even in many schools with Ethnic Studies programs. That absence results in Arab-American students feeling both invisible and targeted.

During the period of public comment on the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum a wide range of Israel-aligned, Zionist organizations have publically attacked the curriculum for being antisemitic and anti-Israel. As usual, they claim to speak for the entire Jewish community when they do not.

It's very important to teach students about antisemitism and about Jewish American history and content is already present in the California standards. For example, the 8th grade core literature curriculum includes *The Diary of Anne Frank*; in the Los Angeles School District, 8th graders take a field trip to the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust; the 10th grade core literature curriculum includes Elie Wiesel's *Night*. In high school US History and World History classes, core curriculum includes anti-semitism, Jewish immigration through Ellis

Island, and extensive study of the Holocaust during World War II. In addition. There exists a Model Curriculum for Human Rights and Genocide which covers the Holocaust and other instances of genocide. The model Ethnic Studies curriculum includes mention of antisemitism as as a distinct form of social oppression related to others such as racism, sexism and anti-Arabism. It is also important to note that the Jewish community is a multiracial community with members who belong to communities of color whose experience is captured in ethnic studies.

The purpose of the model Ethnic Studies curriculum is to center the history of people of color who have been marginalized or ignored by the current curriculum. Curriculum about Arab-Americans is not antisemitic. Arabs have been coming to the United States since before it was formed as nation.

Pro-Israel, Zionist organizations are weaponizing the charge of antisemitism to shut down diverse perspectives on how Israel treats Palestinians. Relevant history that includes a discussion of the *Nakba*, or “catastrophe”, in the module on Arab-Americans, is not antisemitic. (The *Nakba* refers to the forced displacement of approximately 750,000 Palestinians that began before Israel’s establishment in 1948, and that continues to this day.) This is absolutely pertinent to the history of forced immigration by Palestinian-Americans to the United States and worldwide.

Racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism are on the rise today in the United States. At JVP we recognize that our common enemy is white supremacy and that our safety as communities will come through solidarity with each other and with all communities demonized by white supremacy.

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Jewish Voice for Peace-Bay Area is a chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), a national grassroots organization with over 70 chapters, 18,000 members, and over 250,000 supporters working for justice, equality and freedom In Palestine and the United States. JVP opposes anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab bigotry and oppression. We work with diverse communities across the U.S. to achieve a lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis based on equality, human rights, and freedom.