

Over 200 Holocaust Survivors and Descendants Urge CA Legislative Jewish Caucus to Oppose AB 101

Sent via email

August 12, 2021

Dear Members of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus,

We are Holocaust survivors and the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, who are deeply alarmed by AB 101, the ethnic studies graduation requirement bill, and the likelihood that it will lead to overtly antisemitic curricula making their way into every high school in the state and inciting hatred and hostility towards Jewish students and the Jewish community in California and well beyond.

We are aware that AB 101 would allow local school districts to use *any* curriculum they approve, including the highly controversial **first draft** of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC), whose lessons on Arab Americans included the antisemitic portrayal of Jews, a singling out of the Jewish state for condemnation and opprobrium, and a [glossary](#) that described BDS as a “global social movement ... to establish freedom for Palestinians living under apartheid conditions.” Your caucus vigorously opposed the first draft of the ESMC because of its overtly anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist content and BDS promotion, rightly [stating](#) that it would “institutionalize the teaching of antisemitic stereotypes in our public schools” as well as “marginalize Jewish students and fuel hatred and discrimination against the Jewish community.”

Disturbingly, although you worked hard to ensure that the final State Board of Education-approved curriculum was free from antisemitic content, the rejected first draft - including its anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist lessons - was enthusiastically [supported](#) by the state’s two largest teachers unions - the California Teachers Association (CTA) and United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) - as well as dozens of ethnic studies departments on California State University and University of California campuses.

Even more alarming is that the CTA, UTLA and influential ethnic studies professors on several CSU and UC campuses have warmly endorsed the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Institute ([LESMC](#)), a for-profit organization launched by the original ESMC drafters to market a “liberated” curriculum that incorporates the main elements of the rejected first draft. While their full curriculum has not yet been published, several webpages under the heading “Preparing to Teach Palestine: A Toolkit” on the LESMC website strongly suggest the “liberated” curriculum will be even more dangerously antisemitic than its predecessor.

One LESMC [webpage](#) vilifies Israel with false and defamatory charges of “settler colonialism” and “apartheid” and uses classic antisemitic tropes of Jewish wealth and power to denigrate Jewish organizations that speak out about antisemitism - including ADL, JCRC and the Simon Wiesenthal Center; [another](#) webpage encourages teachers to “create a space within your school” to engage in anti-Zionist activism and fight the “Zionist backlash,” which is identified as “white supremacy”; and a [third](#) offers resource websites and webinars that vilify Zionism and Zionist organizations, champion anti-Zionist groups calling for Israel’s destruction, [acknowledge](#) the key goals of BDS, whose achievement will result in an end to the Jewish state, and [offer](#) training on “how to start your own BDS campaigns.”

Despite the LESMC’s disingenuous claims that such rhetoric constitutes legitimate criticism of Israel’s policies, these webpages are clear proof that anti-Zionism - an eliminationist ideology that denies Israel’s very right to exist and calls for both violent and non-violent action to bring an end to the Jewish state and silence its supporters - is a core tenet of the “liberated” ethnic studies curriculum.

Please understand that eliminationist anti-Zionism not only poses a genocidal threat to the more than 6 million Jews - nearly half of world Jewry - who live in Israel; it also threatens the safety and well-being of Jews throughout the world, especially Jewish students in classrooms where anti-Zionist propaganda is promoted.

That such a morally reprehensible ideology would form a core tenet of a curriculum taught in California high schools is unthinkable! Yet, with the support of the state's two biggest teachers unions and the ethnic studies higher education community, it is clear that many if not most school districts in the state will choose to adopt and implement just such a virulently antisemitic curriculum, if AB 101 becomes law.

As Jews, and particularly as Holocaust survivors and their descendants, we say “never again!” Never again will we permit antisemitism to flourish. This is a moment when we cannot remain silent - and you must not, either.

We implore you to stand up for Jewish students and the Jewish community in California and beyond, and to oppose this very dangerous bill.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Holocaust Survivors and Descendants of Holocaust Survivors:

[Names withheld from online version]