

Over 200 Holocaust Survivors and Descendants Urge CA Governor Newsom to VETO AB 101

Sent via email

September 23, 2021

Dear Honorable Governor Newsom,

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 strongly urge you to VETO this bill.**

While AB 101 was amended to encourage local school districts to use the state-approved Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) and to not use the rejected first-draft of the ESMC – the overtly antisemitic draft that met with outrage from the Jewish community and Jewish legislators, and which you yourself vowed would “never see the light of day” -- the reality is that under state law school districts can use *any* curriculum they choose, including the rejected first-draft ESMC, or an even more extreme and antisemitic “Liberated” curriculum being vigorously promoted to school districts by the first-draft’s authors.

Alarming, the state’s largest teachers’ unions and ethnic studies departments and faculty on UC and CSU 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. In addition, the LESMC group has already had considerable success in promoting their antisemitic curriculum and consulting services in school districts throughout the state, including Hayward, Santa Cruz, Jefferson, Salinas, San Francisco and San Diego.

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 largest 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 VETO this very dangerous bill.

Sincerely,

242 Holocaust Survivors and Descendants of Holocaust Survivors:

[Names withheld from online version]