

## 78\* Organizations to CA Legislative Jewish Caucus: Ensure Bill Enabling Classroom Antisemitism Stays Unfunded and Inoperative

August 29, 2023

SENT VIA EMAIL

*\*Original letter was 76. Updated to 78 organizational signatories.*

Dear Members of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus,

We are 78 religious, civil rights and education organizations, writing in support of the more than 1,600 members and supporters of the California Jewish community who [urged](#) you earlier this month to address the alarming problem of anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist curricula making their way into classrooms throughout the state in the wake of the passage of the ethnic studies graduation requirement bill (AB 101), which your caucus unanimously supported.

We would like to provide some new information that has come to light, which underscores how dire the situation is and why **you must take immediate action to support the Jewish community on whose behalf you advocate, by fighting to ensure that AB 101 stays unfunded and inoperative.** This would give the Legislature time to address the many serious problems with the bill, including and especially the virulent antisemitism it will inevitably unleash in California classrooms.

The [University of California Ethnic Studies Council](#), representing 300 faculty in ethnic studies departments throughout the University, recently launched a campaign to revive and aggressively [promote](#) within the Academic Senate a proposal to make a university-style “critical” ethnic studies course a requirement for UC admission. The proposal’s authors, who are members of the Council’s leadership team, [argue](#) that post-AB 101, a UC ethnic studies admission requirement with course criteria developed by the Council’s “experts” would allow them to “set the standard of what a college preparatory ethnic studies course should consist of,” since every high school would be forced to adopt a curriculum consistent with these criteria in order for their students to be UC-eligible. **This is a deeply frightening prospect, given the anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist sentiments of the UC “experts” behind this proposal and their contention that their sentiments about Jews and Israel constitute core elements of “authentic” ethnic studies.**

Christine Hong, chair of UC Santa Cruz's Critical Race and Ethnic Studies (CRES) department, director of its affiliated Center for Racial Justice and a leader of the UC Ethnic Studies Council, is co-chair and spokesperson of the UC Academic Senate-appointed Working Group for developing the ethnic studies admissions requirement and lead writer of the course criteria aiming to set the state-wide standard for high school ethnic studies courses.

Hong is also part of the [Founding Collective](#) of the recently established Institute for the Critical Study of Zionism, whose mission is "to support the delinking of the study of Zionism from Jewish Studies" and, according to a recent [podcast](#) showcasing the new Institute, "to locate [Zionism] instead in the context of radical ethnic studies." Interviewed in the podcast alongside Emmaia Gelman, her fellow Institute founder and acting director, Hong stated, "Is there a place within ethnic studies to discuss the extraordinary violence of Zionism, the settler-colonial violence, the militarism that is inflicted on Palestine and the Palestinian people? Absolutely!... A critique of Zionism is part and parcel of the field [of ethnic studies]." According to both founders, an important goal of their Institute is "pushing back" against American Zionist organizations, which they called the "antagonists" in all of ethnic studies' struggles against racism and colonialism. Hong asserted that Jewish groups' attempts to keep anti-Zionism out of high school ethnic studies classrooms in California - such as your own caucus' efforts - are examples of "US fascism," while her colleague Gelman accused Zionist groups, especially the ADL, of "racism" and "white supremacy."

Hong is also helping to organize the Institute's inaugural [conference](#) in October, part of which will take place at UCSC. Entitled "Battling the 'IHRA Definition': Theory and Practice," the conference is intended to provide academics and activists with tools for attacking the most widely-accepted definition of antisemitism, which rightly identifies anti-Zionism as a form of antisemitism. Before they can register for the conference, participants are required to "confirm their agreement" with the Institute's unabashedly anti-Zionist '[points of unity](#),' which identify Zionism as "a settler colonial racial project" linked to "group supremacy," "ethnic cleansing," and "racism," and urge "join[ing] in resistance" against Zionist repression.

The Institute's conference, an antisemitic broadside attack on Jewish identity and the Jewish state, is co-sponsored by Hong's CRES department at UCSC and its affiliated Center for Racial Justice. **It is also sponsored by the UC Ethnic Studies Council – the group behind the UC ethnic studies admissions requirement proposal.**

Furthermore, like many of her UC Ethnic Studies Council colleagues, Hong is a vocal proponent of the academic boycott of Israel, has signed a [statement](#) pledging to bring the antisemitic boycott to her university and integrate it into her academic work, including her teaching, and has [committed](#) her entire UCSC department to doing the same. In addition, Hong and her Council colleagues are strongly aligned and work closely with leaders of the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Consortium

(LESMCC), whose professional development and curricular services have been gaining a foothold in school districts throughout the state. As you know, LESMCC, whose founders and affiliated educators were involved with developing the antisemitic first-draft of the state-mandated model curriculum, include in their curricular materials the virulently anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist "[Teaching Palestine: A Toolkit](#)". Nevertheless, a large advertisement for the LESMCC's services is prominently [displayed](#) on the homepage of Hong's CRES department, and a [CRES course](#) on K-12 ethnic studies, "with a particular focus on the Liberated Ethnic Model Curriculum," is being taught for the third year in a row by an LESMCC leader who is also on the Steering Committee of the UC Ethnic Studies Council and helped to write the UC ethnic studies admissions requirement proposal and course criteria.

**If the Council-backed proposal is ultimately approved, virtually every high school in the state will be offering ethnic studies classes based on the anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist version of ethnic studies promoted by UC "experts."** At the June [meeting](#) of the UC Academic Senate Board of Admissions and Relations with Schools committee, its members voted to endorse the proposal's draft course criteria, moving the Council's proposal one step closer to approval. However, even if the proposal is not immediately approved, schools struggling to meet AB 101's impending deadlines are likely to opt for a university-style "critical" ethnic studies course anyway, since a UC ethnic studies admissions requirement could be approved soon after the requirement goes into effect.

After the passage of AB 101, your caucus [announced](#):

"While we are pleased that AB 101 includes explicit guardrails to protect our community, our work is far from complete... [T]he Jewish Caucus will continue to remain actively engaged to ensure that the teaching of ethnic studies is free from any anti-Jewish bias or discrimination and adheres to the highest educational standards."

**The guardrails you added to AB 101 *have not* worked and simply *cannot* work in the face of such an effort by university ethnic studies faculty**, who contend that antisemitic portrayals of Jews and Israel are core elements of their field and are furiously working to ensure that their biases are incorporated into high school curricula.

There is, however, a way to apply the emergency brake on this runaway antisemitic ethnic studies train. As you know, a last-minute amendment to AB 101 stipulated that the bill's provisions "become operative only upon an appropriation of funds by the Legislature for these purposes," and according to a recent [memorandum](#), no such legislative funding has been allocated for AB 101's graduation requirement since the bill's passage.

**If you truly want to “ensure that the teaching of ethnic studies is free from anti-Jewish bias and discrimination,” you must act now to keep AB 101 unfunded and inoperative.**

Thank you for your consideration,

Academic Council for Israel  
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Davis  
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Riverside  
Alums for Campus Fairness - UCLA  
Amariah  
AMCHA Initiative  
American Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists  
American Council of Trustees and Alumni  
American Jewish Congress  
American Russian-Speaking Jews Alliance  
American Values  
Americans Against Antisemitism  
Americans for a Safe Israel  
Americans for Peace and Tolerance  
Atlanta Israel Coalition  
B'nai B'rith International  
Boston Israel Action Committee  
Bulldogs for Israel  
California Association of Scholars  
Californians for Equal Rights  
CAMERA Education Institute  
CAMERA on Campus  
CAMERA's Partnership of Christians and Jews  
Campus Anti-Semitism Task Force of the North Shore  
Christians and Jews United for Israel  
Club Z  
Coalition for Jewish Values  
Coalition of Hindus of North America  
Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA)  
Creative Community for Peace  
Davis Faculty for Israel  
Educators Caucus for Israel - LA  
EndJewHatred  
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)  
Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)  
Fight Back Now  
Hillel of Silicon Valley  
Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel

Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism  
Iranian American Jewish Federation  
Iranian Jewish Women's Organization  
Israel in NYC  
Israel Matters  
Israel Peace Initiative (IPI)  
Israeli-American Civic Action Network  
Israeli-American Civic Education Institute  
JAM  
Jerusalem Education Fund  
Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana  
Jewish Institute for Liberal Values  
Jewish War Veterans of the USA  
LatinX for Quality Education  
Legal Insurrection Foundation  
Michigan Jewish Action Council  
Middle East Forum  
Middle East Political and Information Network (MEPIN)  
National Association of Scholars  
National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel  
National Jewish Advocacy Center  
NH4Israel  
North Carolina Coalition for Israel  
Peer K-12  
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations  
Rabbinical Alliance of America  
Rhode Island Coalition for Israel  
Russian Jewish Community Foundation  
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East  
Simon Wiesenthal Center  
Stop Anti-Semitism Now  
Stop BDS on Campus  
StopAntisemitism  
Students Supporting Israel National  
The Daniel Pearl Foundation  
The Deborah Project  
The Lawfare Project  
World Jewish Congress North America  
Zachor Legal Institute  
Zionist Organization of America