



## CALIFORNIA REGIONS

### CENTRAL PACIFIC

720 Market Street, Suite 800  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 981-3500  
san-francisco@adl.org

SETH BRYSK  
Regional Director  
LINDA HORODAS  
Chair, Regional Board  
GILBERT R. SEROTA  
Interim Chair, Civil Rights

### LOS ANGELES

10495 Santa Monica Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90025  
(310) 446-8000  
LA@adl.org

ARIELLA LOEWENSTEIN  
Interim Regional Director  
SCOTT J. HARRIS  
Chair, Regional Board  
BRENT SOKOL  
ERIC KINGSLEY  
Co-Chairs, Civil Rights

### ORANGE COUNTY/LONG BEACH

1201 Dove Street, Suite 550  
Newport Beach, CA 92660  
(949) 679-3737  
orange-county@adl.org

PETER LEVI  
Regional Director  
MICHAEL ROSEN  
Chair, Regional Board  
DAN TARMAN  
Chair, Civil Rights

### SAN DIEGO

4950 Murphy Canyon Road, Suite 250  
San Diego, CA 92123  
(858) 565-6896  
san-diego@adl.org

TAMMY GILLIES  
Regional Director  
ELAINE FEUER-BARTON  
Chair, Regional Board  
ADAM ROSENTHAL  
Chair, Civil Rights

### SANTA BARBARA

1528 Chapala Street, Suite 301  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 564-6670  
santa-barbara@adl.org

DAN MEISEL  
Regional Director  
MARINA STEPHENS  
Chair, Regional Board  
JASON EBIN  
Chair, Civil Rights

### NANCY J. APPEL

California Legislative Director

### NATIONAL STAFF

STEVEN M. FREEMAN  
Vice President, Civil Rights  
KAREN LEVIT  
Civil Rights National Counsel  
LAUREN KRAPP  
National Policy Counsel  
KIMBERLEY PLOTNIK  
Western Counsel

### OFFICERS OF THE

NATIONAL COMMISSION  
ESTA GORDON EPSTEIN  
National Chair  
JONATHAN GREENBLATT  
CEO and National Director  
KEN JACOBSON  
Deputy National Director

August 11, 2020

### By electronic delivery only

Members of the Instructional Quality Commission  
California Department of Education  
1430 N Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901  
[ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov](mailto:ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov)

### RE: Revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:

On behalf of ADL's (Anti-Defamation League) five California offices, I write to comment on the revised Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) released on July 31. ADL endorses the teaching of Ethnic Studies and was an early supporter of Assembly Bill 331 (Medina). Adding Ethnic Studies to California's high school curriculum will, among other things, foster respect between students and an appreciation for our nation's rich and diverse history.

Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of antisemitism and bigotry, ADL has since become a leading anti-hate organization. Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bigotry as we seek to create a more just and inclusive society. Our ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination or hate.

ADL welcomes the removal of overt antisemitism and extreme and gratuitous anti-Israel bias from the revised ESMC draft. In addition, we are grateful that the new draft recognizes antisemitism as a form of historical and continuing bigotry.

The new ESMC could be further improved, however. For example, we recommend the curriculum include a definition of antisemitism. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition and contemporary examples are well-regarded. As respected experts, ADL refers to it explicitly in our guide *Antisemitism Uncovered* (<https://antisemitism.adl.org/>) and more broadly in our resources and lesson plans on antisemitism.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the U.S. State Department has used this definition since 2010, along with the European Union and others. The definition may be found at [www.state.gov/defining-anti-semitism](http://www.state.gov/defining-anti-semitism).

Moreover, we suggest that the ESMC recognize that the American Jewish community includes people of color and that many Jewish Americans trace their family roots to the Middle East and North Africa. For example, we draw your attention to a suggested lesson plan entitled "Irish and Jewish Americans: Redefining White and American."<sup>2</sup> The title and description give the impression that American Jews are uniformly of European descent and as such have all attained "white identity" and "racial privilege," to quote the lesson plan. It is an ironic conclusion as white supremacists explicitly reject the "whiteness" of any Jew. Indeed, their hate-filled worldview sees Jews as a critical player in the destruction of the "white race." Failing to acknowledge the ethnic diversity of the Jewish community will mislead students about the complexity of contemporary Jewish identity and the hatred targeting Jews.

In general, the ESMC would benefit from an overarching statement similar to the Los Angeles Unified School District's "[Elements of a Balanced Curriculum](#)." As stated in its introduction:

*At the college and university level, ethnic studies and related courses are sometimes taught from a specific political point of view or frame of reference. In K-12 education it is imperative that students are exposed to multiple perspectives, taught to think critically and form their own opinions on these and other issues.*

Such guidance is a useful tool in addressing this complex subject.

Finally, we are pleased to see that the ESMC includes ADL's educational programming in the Lesson Resources for educators.<sup>3</sup> ADL Education Division professionals work tirelessly to develop lessons that "promote[] critical thinking and learning around historical and current events topics through the lens of diversity, bias and social justice."<sup>4</sup> We are pleased that our materials can be a resource to California students and teachers.

As we wrote in August, a pedagogically sound Ethnic Studies course incorporating "core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations"<sup>5</sup> will enrich California students' understanding of American history and current events. The revised ESMC is a significant step towards achieving that goal. We look forward to following the ESMC review process and providing additional comment, as warranted.

Sincerely,



Nancy J. Appel  
California Legislative Director

cc:

State Superintendent Tony Thurmond  
Dr. Stephanie Gregson  
Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond  
Shanine Coats  
Senator Ben Allen  
Assemblymember Jose Medina  
Assemblymember Shirley Weber  
Assemblymember Das Williams  
Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez

---

<sup>1</sup> Specific lesson plans may be found via the following links or by searching these titles at [www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org): [Antisemitism Around the World](#), [Deadly Shooting At Tree of Life Synagogue](#), [Antisemitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate, Activist](#), [The Resilience Antisemitism: The Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#), [Challenging Antisemitism: Debunking Myths and Responding with Facts](#), [Discussing Antisemitism: A Guide for Reflection and Conversation](#), [Alt-Right and White Supremacy](#), [Swastikas and Other Hate Symbols](#).

<sup>2</sup> ESMC Appendix A – UC-Approved Course Outlines, lines 8159-69.

<sup>3</sup> ESMC Appendix C – Lesson Resources, lines 119-24.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 121-23.

<sup>5</sup> Education Code § 51226.7.