

86 Organizations Ask How CSU Will Protect Students from Politicized 'Critical' Ethnic Studies Requirement

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL

October 27, 2020

Dear Chancellor White and CSU Trustees,

We are 86 organizations, many representing university faculty and other academic stakeholders, as well as a diverse array of ethnic groups throughout the state and across the country. Like you, we are deeply troubled by the recent passage of AB 1460 and the harmful impact that an ethnic studies graduation requirement will have on CSU students, faculty and the university system as a whole. Although this unprecedented incursion of the California state legislature into the academic programming of an institution of higher education has raised many causes for concern, our organizations are particularly alarmed by the highly politicized, coercive and divisive nature of the "Critical Ethnic Studies" courses that will form the basis for this requirement. We are extremely concerned that these required courses will be used as vehicles for indoctrinating students into a narrowly prescribed set of politically-motivated and directed values and practices that many students vigorously oppose, and will incite bigotry and harm against students based on their identities, beliefs and opinions. In light of this new requirement, we are writing to ask you to publicly state how you will protect the freedom of conscience and expression and ensure the safety and well-being of all CSU students.

The "ethnic studies core competencies" [developed](#) by the CSU Council on Ethnic Studies, and recently approved by both the [CSU Academic Senate](#) and [your own office](#), provide strong evidence that these required courses will be based on Critical Ethnic Studies, a very narrow conceptualization of the field that limits its focus to "four racialized core groups," is firmly rooted in ideologies that divide society into oppressed and oppressor groups based primarily on race, and, as part of its disciplinary mission, promotes political activism to challenge systems of "hierarchy and oppression" as defined by the discipline's practitioners. In fact, the CSU core competencies don't only *encourage* politically-motivated student activism based on these ideologies, they actually *require* it.

These core competencies and the controversial version of ethnic studies on which they are based are deeply troubling in several ways. Unlike other disciplines in the academy, which seek to instruct students in a body of knowledge and provide them with the analytical tools to objectively evaluate that knowledge and arrive at their own conclusions, Critical Ethnic Studies starts with a set of foregone conclusions and ideological commitments that are imposed on students and must be adopted by them without question or debate. We are concerned that students who, for example, reject the anti-capitalist stance of the discipline or other ideological

values espoused by its practitioners, would be penalized for expressing their views in an ethnic studies classroom, or would self-censor their expression for fear of public humiliation. In addition, requiring students to engage in politically-directed activism to advance ideologies and values with which they do not agree is nothing short of a coercion of conscience and a blatant violation of students' academic rights.

Moreover, the moral valuation inherent in Critical Ethnic Studies that encourages lionizing the "oppressed" and demonizing the "oppressor" directly and substantively harms many students, who, by virtue of their race, socio-economic status, gender, religion, political affiliation, etc., may well find themselves subject to opprobrium and hostility for being members, or perceived members, of an alleged oppressor group. According to [Kenneth Monteiro](#), head of the CSU Council on Ethnic Studies that developed the "core competencies" and former Dean of SFSU's College of Ethnic Studies, "We actually prepare our teachers to know that on the first day of class, or in the first week, you may have students who are sobbing. This is the first time they've had to be this uncomfortable." The fact that all students at a public university are forced to take a course that singles out some students for emotional abuse because of their identity is extremely troubling and can't help but foment deep divisions in the CSU student body and an unsafe, toxic campus climate for many.

In this regard, we are particularly concerned about the safety and well-being of CSU's Jewish students, who are not only likely to be targeted for hatred and harm because of their membership in what critical theory derogatorily labels a "racially privileged" identity group, but also because of Jewish students' identification with and support for the Jewish state of Israel. Since its inception, Critical Ethnic Studies and its practitioners have falsely and negatively portrayed Zionism as a "racist," "colonialist," "system of oppression" that must be dismantled, condoned terrorism against Israel as a justified tool of "resistance" and "liberation," and championed anti-Israel academic, economic and cultural boycotts as legitimate "anti-racist practices." For example, *Critical Ethnic Studies: A Reader*, a required textbook in an introductory course on Ethnic Studies at SFSU, includes several essays that demonize Israel with false accusations of "genocide," "apartheid," and "ethnic cleansing," and an essay by the volume's chief editor "calls on academics and others to mobilize support within the academy for the BDS Campaign." Alarming, CSU ethnic studies faculty who have long used their classrooms for anti-Zionist advocacy and activism can now find justification for their politically motivated and directed behavior in the recently approved "ethnic studies core competencies." Such highly politicized and unprofessional behavior on the part of ethnic studies faculty not only deprives CSU students of accurate information about a complex topic of global importance and tramples on their right to be educated and not politically indoctrinated, it has a [well-documented](#) history of inciting hatred and harm towards Israel's on-campus supporters, particularly Jewish students.

In light of the harms that the AB 1460-mandated ethnic studies requirement pose for CSU's 23 campuses, we ask you to publicly state how you will protect the freedom of conscience and expression and ensure the safety and well-being of all CSU students.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and your leadership in these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Academic Council for Israel
Alliance for Constructive Ethnic Studies
Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi)
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Davis
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Riverside
Alums for Campus Fairness - UCLA
AMCHA Initiative
American Council of Trustees and Alumni
American Institute for Jewish Research
American Truth Project
Americans Fighting Antisemitism
Americans for Peace and Tolerance
B'nai B'rith International
BEAR: Bias Education, Advocacy & Resources
Black Americans for Inclusive Ethnic Studies
Bobcats for Israel at Ohio University
Boston Israel Action Committee
Bulldogs for Israel (Brooklyn College)
California Association of Scholars
CAMERA on Campus
Campus Anti-Semitism Task Force of the North Shore
Center for Righteousness and Integrity
Christians and Jews United for Israel
Club Z
Coalition for Jewish Values
Combat Anti-Semitism Movement
Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA)
Conference of Jewish Affairs
Creative Community for Peace
CUFI on Campus
Davis Faculty for Israel
Education Without Indoctrination
Educators for Excellence in Ethnic Studies
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)
Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)
Fight Back Now
Fuel for Truth
Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors
Herut North America, U.S. Division

Hillel of Silicon Valley
Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel
Iranian American Jewish Federation
Iranian Jewish Women's Organization
Israel in NYC
Israel Matters
Israel Peace Initiative (IPI)
JAM
Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana
Jewish War Veterans of the USA
Latinx for Quality Education
Legal Insurrection Foundation
Magshimey Herut
Michigan Jewish Action Council
Middle East Forum
Middle East Political and Information Network (MEPIN)
National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel
National Council of Young Israel
National Jewish Advocacy Center
NCSY
NH4Israel
North Carolina Coalition for Israel
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations
Rabbinical Alliance of America
Religious Zionists of America
Rhode Island Coalition for Israel
Ruach Fund (Real Estate Against Crimes of Hate)
Russian Jewish Community Foundation
San Diego Asian Americans for Equality
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East
Stop Anti-Semitism Now
Stop BDS on Campus
Students and Parents Against Campus Anti-Semitism
Students Supporting Israel at Columbia
Students Supporting Israel at Drake University
Students Supporting Israel at Foothill College
Students Supporting Israel at San Jose State University
Students Supporting Israel at UC Santa Barbara
Students Supporting Israel at UCLA
Students Supporting Israel National
Students Supporting Israel of Santa Monica College
Swarthmore Alumni Against Antisemitism on Campus
The Israel Group
Tufts Friends of Israel

World Jewish Congress North America
Zachor Legal Institute
Zionist Organization of America

Cc: CSU Executive Vice Chancellor Academic and Student Affairs Loren J. Blanchard
CSU Academic Senate Chair Robert Keith Collins
CSU Academic Senate Director Tracy Butler
CSU Presidents