

76 Organizations to CA Legislative Jewish Caucus: Ensure Bill Enabling Classroom Antisemitism Stays Unfunded and Inoperative

August 29, 2023

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Members of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus,

We are 76 religious, civil rights and education organizations, writing in support of the more than 1,500 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
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 Deborah Project
The Lawfare Project
World Jewish Congress North America
Zachor Legal Institute
Zionist Organization of America