

OPEN LETTER TO BAY AREA JEWISH LEADERS ON ADVOCATING FOR JEWISH PARENTS IN K-12 EDUCATION NOVEMBER 2023

TO:

Joy Sisisky, Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund
Seth Brysk, Chief Officer, External Affairs & Partnerships, Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund

David Bocarsly, Executive Director, JPAC

Tyler Gregory, Chief Executive Officer, JCRC Bay Area

Marc Levine, Director, Central Pacific Office, ADL

Oleg Ivanov, Assistant Director, AJC San Francisco

Dear Bay Area Jewish Leaders, We, the undersigned Jewish parents of the Bay area, want to thank you for your tireless efforts in countering antisemitism and extremism in our schools and, at the same time, urge you to consider a shift in approach in your future advocacy on our behalf.

Hamas' brutal attacks on October 7th were a horrifying but clarifying moment. As you know, some of the same organizations and voices promoting Liberated Ethnic Studies in California K12 schools shared memes on social media praising the "resistance" and calling for "liberation" of all of Palestine. These educator-activists espouse a pedagogy of "decolonization" that falsely characterizes Israel as a "settler-colonialist" state. As the preeminent historian Simon Sebag Montefiore recently stated in *The Atlantic*, "The decolonization narrative has dehumanized Israelis to the extent that otherwise rational people excuse, deny, or support barbarity." We are sure you agree that these extremists have no business designing curriculum, training teachers, or teaching in our schools.

In previous communications, however, Jewish organizations have urged community members not to oppose the broader ideological concepts behind Liberated Ethnic Studies, such as "decolonization" and "systems of power" in their interactions with school officials about ethnic studies. While we desire that our children are exposed to a wide range of perspectives on controversial issues, we strongly oppose the teaching of these views uncritically, with no opposing perspectives and no alternative explanations.

In such a skewed, dogmatic pedagogy, especially given age-old antisemitic tropes related to Jewish power, many will automatically place Jews into the oppressor slot, as we've heard and seen repeatedly in the incendiary rhetoric of the past few weeks. Inculcating our students in decolonial ideology need not specifically invoke Israel for it to fuel antisemitism and antiZionism. Such hostility is a feature not a bug of decolonial precepts.

In the days ahead, we urge you to speak forthrightly about the dangers of the moment and to specifically oppose decolonial and other forms of extremist ideology in our schools. Thank you for your consideration and continued leadership.

CONCERNED JEWISH PARENTS OF THE BAY AREA