

Antisemitism and the Politics of Ethnic Studies in California's K-12 and Higher Education Classrooms

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Director, AMCHA Initiative**

March 26, 2023

I. The Birth of Ethnic Studies

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SUPPORT THE STRIKE AT STATE

The student strike at SF State is mushrooming. The united strength of the Third World and white students has pushed two administrations up against the wall. In a desperate attempt to break the strike and preserve their racist policies, Hayakawa and Alioto have again called cops on campus to terrorize the students. But students are fighting back, and the strike is growing and is almost totally effective. Yesterday, thousands of students fought back against the cops and for the 15 demands of the SDS and TMLP. Pass, militant action is winning the strike at State.

The main reason that the strike at SF State is winning is that students are fighting around concrete demands aimed at stopping the college's racist policies. Black and brown students realize that the university is a tool to oppress their people and they are ready to fight to win their demands. White students increasingly see that the racism of the college hurts them too. The united leadership of the SDS, TMLP, and SDS has shown students that the racism perpetrated by the university is used to hurt all people (students and workers) by keeping them from uniting to win their common objectives. The students at SF State are fighting for the millions of people around the world who are oppressed by this racist system.

The students have been fighting the college administration for a month. When the strike began, a minority of students actively participated in it. Discussions in the classrooms won many more students. When the administration still refused to meet the demands, students began to disrupt classes. They realized that the fight against racism is a serious one. Those not on strike had to make a choice between supporting the racist policies of the college or the demands of the Third World students. Most chose to support the strike. At that point ex-president Smith pulled out his bag of tricks to fool the students -- phoney negotiations, phoney arbitration, and a smoke-screen convocation. His last resort was to call the pigs on campus. Hayakawa (like Hoynes) is continuing this policy (leaving out the tricks that didn't work) and has called the cops on campus in increasing numbers to break the strike. Hayakawa has instituted a state of martial law, of fascism, on the campus, where people are arrested and beaten for picketing! If the students had been intimidated by the cops they would have lost the struggle. Instead, they drove plainclothesmen off and chased the tactical squad off several times. They are fighting back heroically against this last trump card the power structure has to safeguard its interests -- its cops.

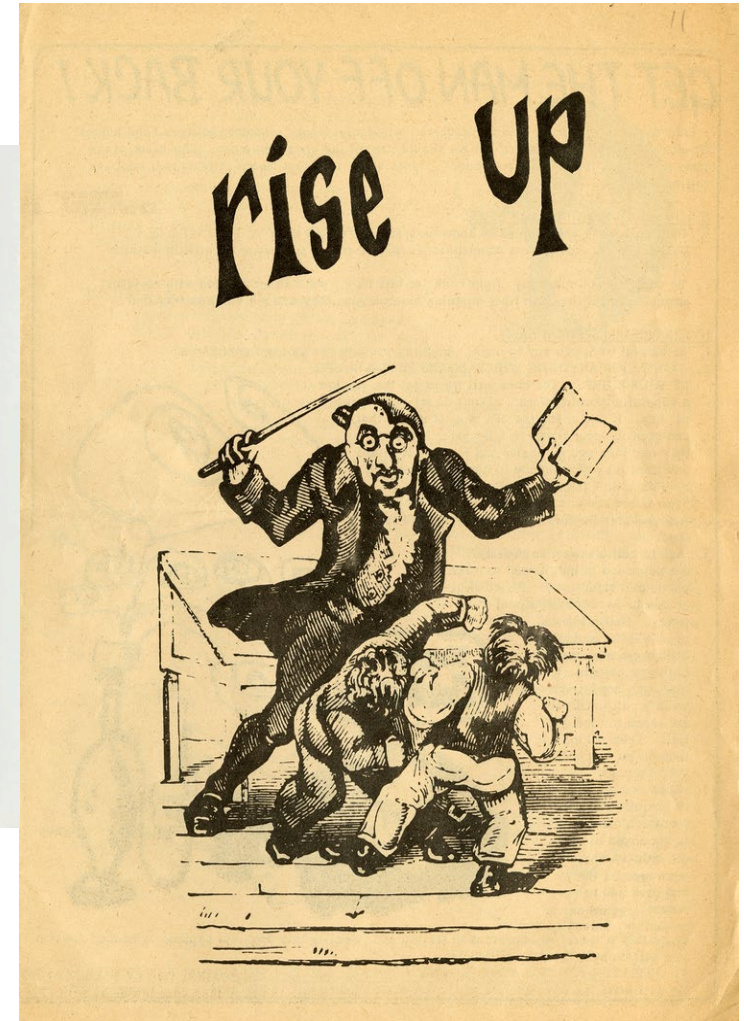
The Strike Committee at State has called on all Bay Area students to support them in their struggle against racism. Join the solidarity demonstration:

SDS SUPPORT RALLY: S.F. STATE SPEAKERS' BUREAU
1 p.m. THURS. NOV. 5
SPROUL HALL STEPS

SOLIDARITY DEMONSTRATION
"HALL OF JUSTICE" (7th and Bryant) San Francisco
3 p.m.
CAF FOOL LEAVING FROM HAINCROFT and DANA 2 p.m.
THURSDAY, NOV. 5...

SOLIDARITY DEMONSTRATION

Campus S.D.S.



II. Ethnic Studies – A Radical Break From Academic Tradition

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- **Established through force**

Unlike other disciplines that entered the academy by proving their scholarly worth, ethnic studies was established as a response to the threats of its student proponents.



Black Panther founders

Brown Berets founders

II. Ethnic Studies – A Radical Break From Academic Tradition

- **Political Mission**

“Our [ethnic studies] field was not birthed by research questions, but by a resistance movement entrenched in community calls for liberation.”

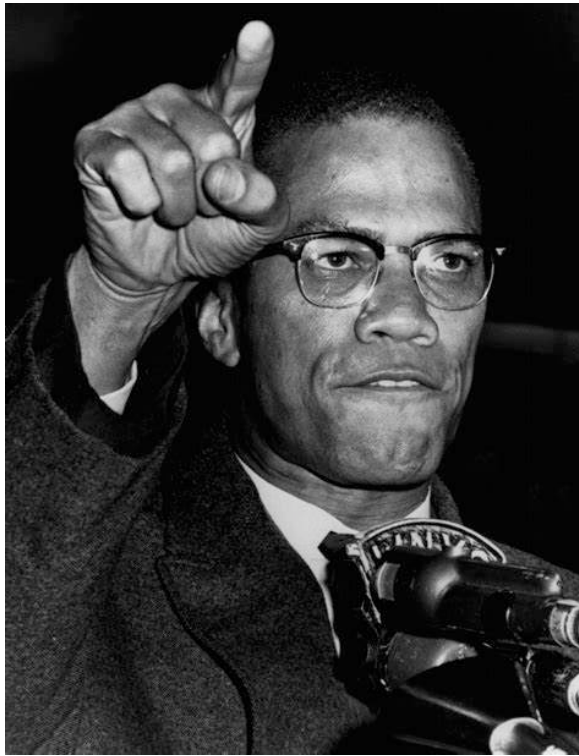
– Melina Abdullah, “What the Black Lives Matter Movement Demands of Ethnic Studies Scholars,” *Ethnic Studies Review*”



Brian van der Brug / LA Times

II. Ethnic Studies – A Radical Break From Academic Tradition

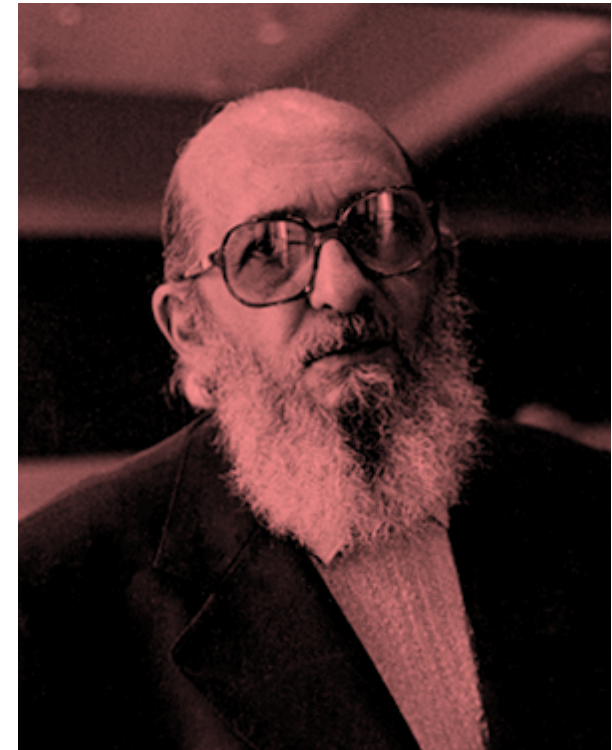
- **Politicized Curriculum**



Malcolm X



Che Guevara



Paulo Freire

II. Ethnic Studies – A Radical Break From Academic Tradition

- **Ideological and Political Coercion**

“It’s not ethnic studies if it doesn’t challenge whiteness...making the powerful person uncomfortable... We actually prepare our teachers to know that...you may have students who are sobbing. This is the first time they’ve had to be this uncomfortable.”

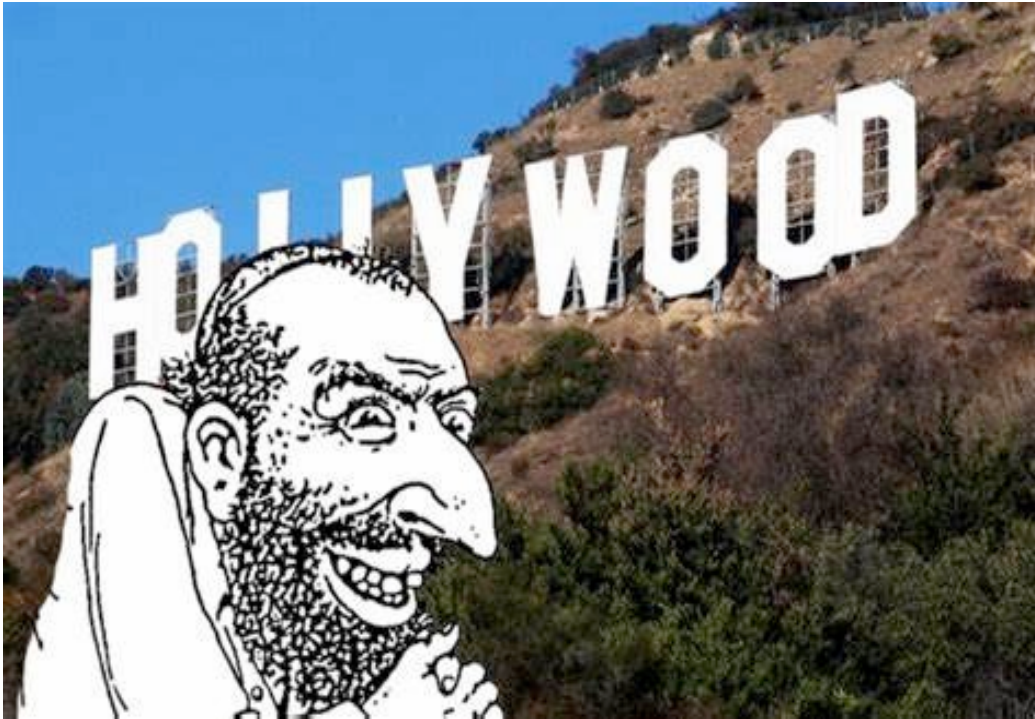
- Kenneth Monteiro, Dean of the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University



III. The Antisemitism of “Critical” Ethnic Studies

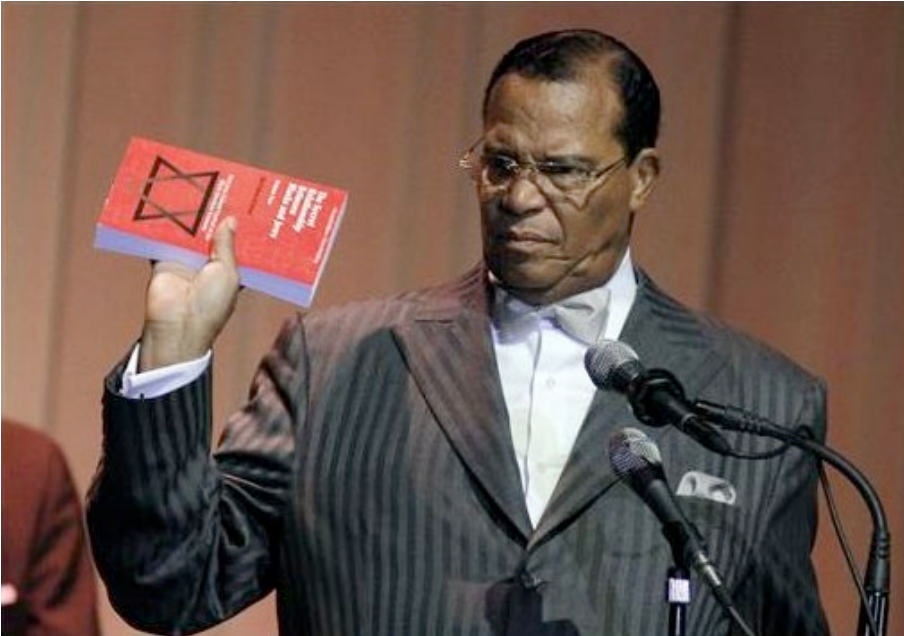
III. The Antisemitism of “Critical” Ethnic Studies

- **Conceptual Antisemitism**



III. The Antisemitism of “Critical” Ethnic Studies

- **Conceptual Antisemitism: Black Nationalist Antisemitism**



Nation of Islam Leader Louis Farrakhan Holding a copy of *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, which claims Jews controlled the Atlantic slave trade.

“That was a conspiracy, planned and plotted and programmed out of Hollywood, where [there were] people called Greenberg and Weisberg...and what not...Russian Jewry had a particular control over the movies, and their financial partners, the Mafia, put together a system of destruction of black people.”

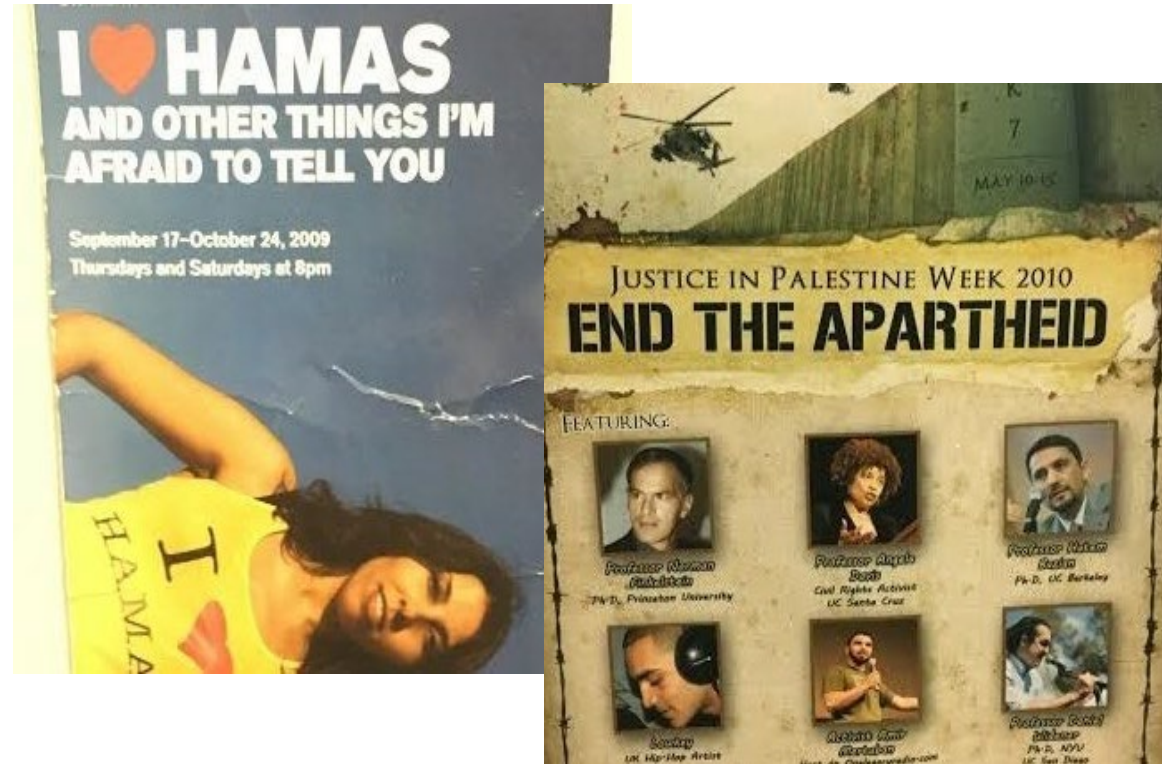
- *Leonard Jeffries, chair of Black Studies Department at City College of New York for over two decades, at a talk in 1991*

III. The Antisemitism of “Critical” Ethnic Studies

- **Conceptual Antisemitism: Post Colonial Anti-Zionism**

“It’s a no-brainer to say that all of the veterans of the...San Francisco State and Berkeley [strikes] would have...understood Zionism as a form of Imperialism and settler colonialism...And settler colonialism is central as a critical analytic to the larger field of ethnic studies.”

– Christine Hong, chair of the Critical Race and Studies Department at UC Santa Cruz



Posters on the office door of UC San Diego Ethnic Studies Professor Yen Le Espiritu

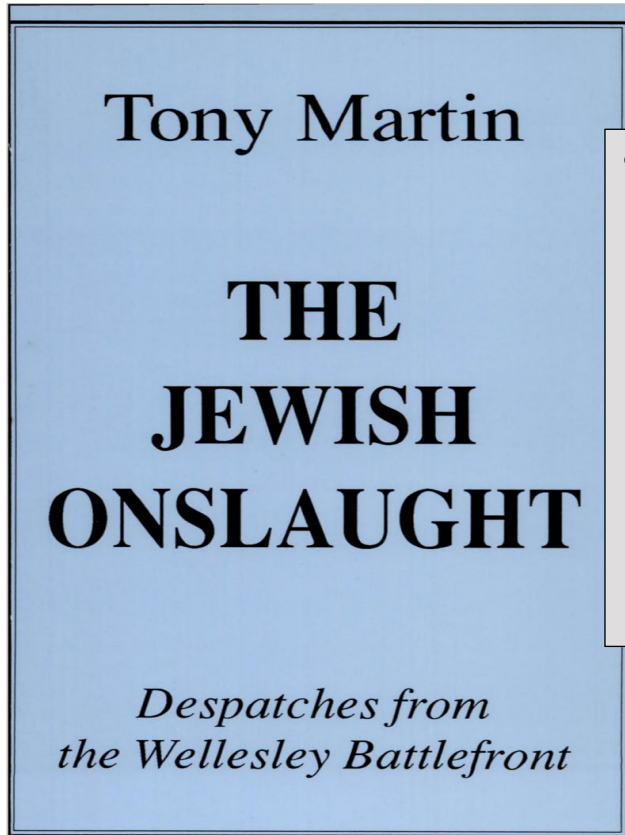
III. The Antisemitism of “Critical” Ethnic Studies

- **Conceptually: Post Colonial Anti-Zionism**

- **More than 1/3 of all U.S. faculty who support an academic boycott of Israel have a primary or secondary affiliation in a university Ethnic Studies program.**
- **More U.S. departments of Ethnic Studies were headed by academic BDS-supporters than any other discipline.**
- **All 13 members of the founding board of the Critical Ethnic Studies Association signed petitions endorsing BDS.**
- **The Critical Ethnic Studies Association and three of the four professional organizations of “foundational groups” that make up the discipline of ethnic studies – the Latino, Asian and Native American associations – have all passed resolutions endorsing academic BDS.**

III. The Antisemitism of “Critical” Ethnic Studies

- **Conceptual Antisemitism: Backlash Antisemitism**



Tony Martin, Founder and Chair of Black Studies at Wellesley College 1973-2007, published this broadside on the Jewish community in 1993.

“[A] very rich, very wealthy, very well-connected segment of the community [Jews]...pushed back on the curriculum... It taught us that white privilege and white racism in the State of California is alive and well.”

– CSUN Chicano Studies Professor Theresa Montaña from a 2021 podcast on Liberated Ethnic Studies

III. The Antisemitism of “Critical” Ethnic Studies

- **Antisemitism in Effect**

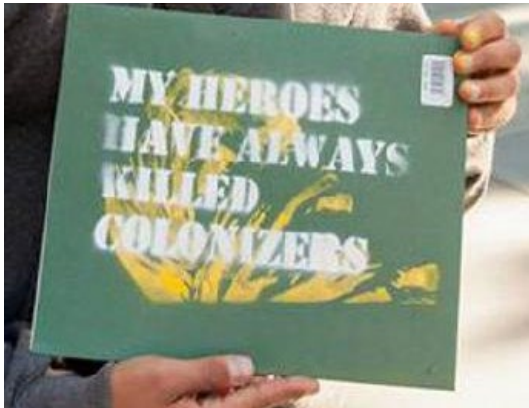
From a 1997 talk at San Francisco State University by Khalid Muhammad, former assistant to Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, hosted by the **Pan African Students Union**:

“Who are the rich power brokers behind the scenes? . . . Why is the Federal Reserve controlled by the so-called Jew?”

"Our entertainers, our basketball players, our football players, our track stars, our baseball players, our entertainers and athletes are in the palm of the white Zionist Jew's hand."

III. The Antisemitism of “Critical” Ethnic Studies

- **Antisemitism in Effect**



**“I love this blade...
it makes me
want to stab an
Israeli soldier.”**
- Mohammed G. Hammad,
President of a University-Funded
Palestinian Student Group
at SFSU

Above: Tumblr posting from president of GUPS at SFSU
Left: Stencils from a GUPS event at SFSU

III. The Antisemitism of “Critical” Ethnic Studies

- Antisemitism in Effect



IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies

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The Trajectory of Ethnic Studies at CSU 1970 -2013

1970's

**Major Growth of
Ethnic Studies**

1980 – Mid-2000's

**Slow growth, struggles for
support**

Mid-2000's – 2013

**Major cuts and
downsizing**

IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies

2013: Launch of Campaign to Save Ethnic Studies at CSU

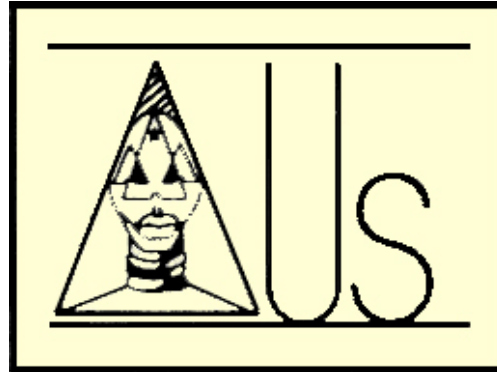
- 1) **Make ethnic studies courses a system-wide requirement on all campuses**, thereby guaranteeing student enrollment.
- 2) **Bring “critical” ethnic studies to K-12 classrooms**, thereby ensuring a reliable pipeline to provide Cal State ethnic studies majors with employment opportunities as K-12 ethnic studies teachers.



IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies



Maulana Karenga
Chair Africana Studies
CSU Long Beach
Founder of US Organization



Top: Organization US Logo / Karenga at Malcolm X Birthday Rally 1966

IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies



Melina Abdullah
Pan African Studies
CSU Los Angeles
Founder of BLM-Los Angeles



Graffiti at Congregatio Beth Israel, May 30, 2020

“We were very deliberate in deciding to disrupt spaces of white affluence. We want to make sure that it's not just black people who are suffering at the hands of white supremacy.”

– Melina Abdullah during a KCRW interview, June 4, 2020

IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies



Theresa Montañó

Chicano Studies

CSU Northridge

**Founder of Liberated Ethnic Studies
Model Curriculum Coalition**

**LIBERATED
ETHNIC STUDIES**
MODEL CURRICULUM COALITION

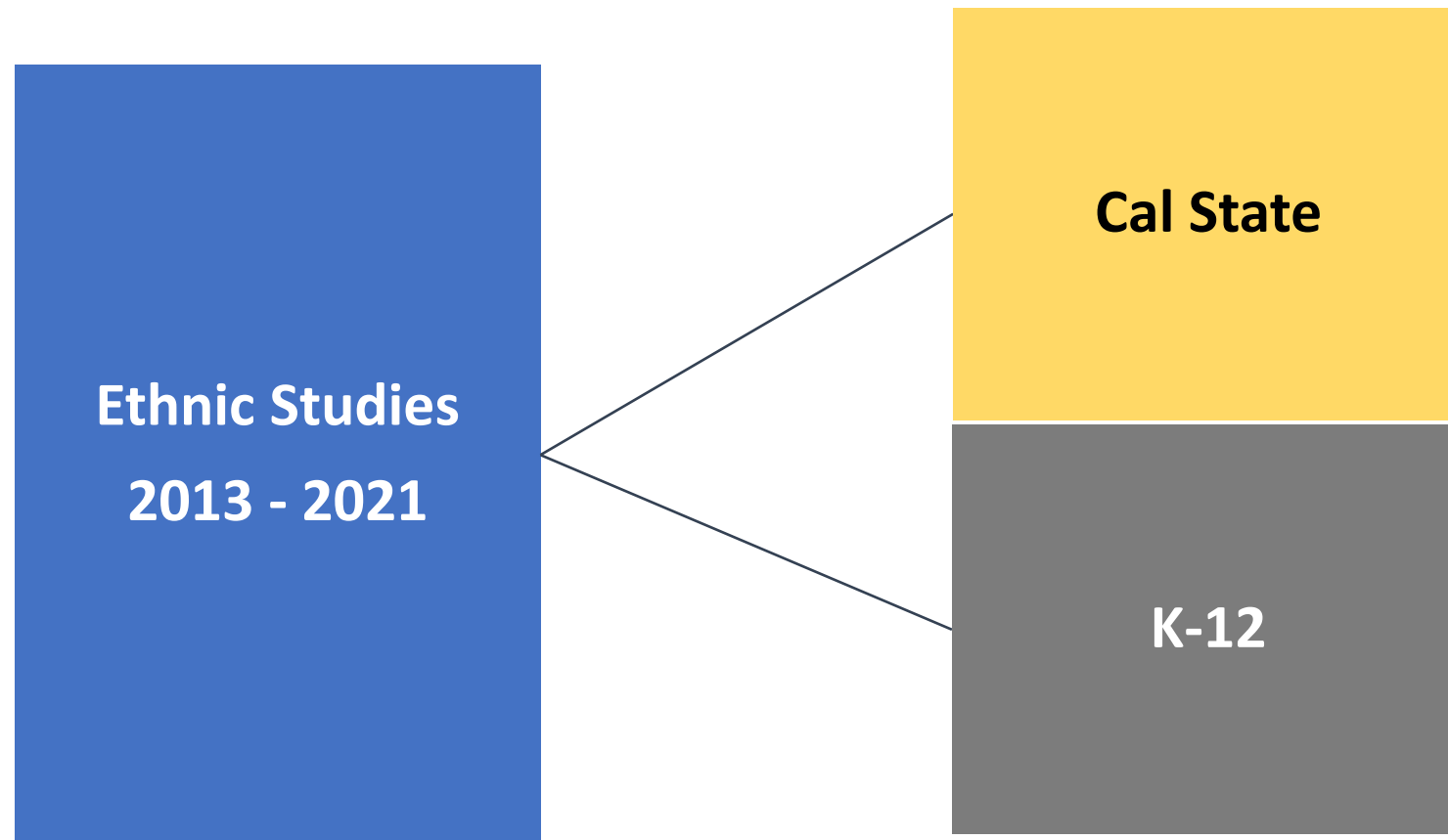
Preparing to Teach Palestine: A
Toolkit



The California Department of Education has caved to **“white supremacist, right-wing, conservative organizations...and yes, even the ADL.”**

– Theresa Montañó, during the Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC) Webinar “The Fight for Ethnic Studies” in 2021

IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies



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CSU: Efforts to Establish Ethnic Studies Requirement 2013 - 2017

2013

**State Assembly Member
Shirley Weber:**

Successful Assembly
Resolution in support of
Africana Studies at
Cal State

2014

CSU Chancellor:

Establishes Task Force on
the Advancement of
Ethnic Studies and
promises halt on cuts to
Ethnic Studies

2016

**Ethnic Studies
Task Force:**

Recommends CSU
make ethnic studies a
general education
requirement

2017

CSU Chancellor:

Issues executive order
that eliminated ethnic
studies courses from
general education
requirement

IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies

CSU: Efforts to Establish Ethnic Studies Requirement 2019 - 2020

2019/2020

**State Assembly Member
Shirley Weber:**

Introduces AB 1460 mandating
ethnic studies graduation
requirement

July 2020

**CSU Chancellor and
Academic Senate:**

Oppose AB 1460 on the grounds
that the state legislature should
not mandate CSU curriculum

Aug/Sept 2020

State Legislature and Governor:
Pass AB 1460 and sign it into law,
making CA first state to mandate
ethnic studies graduation
requirement in state university

IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies

CSU: Efforts to Establish CSU Ethnic Studies Requirement

2013

**Ethnic Studies at Cal State
on the proverbial
chopping block**



2020

**Ethnic Studies at Cal State
is one of the most
essential departments**

IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies

K-12: Efforts to Establish High School Graduation Requirement 2014 - 2017

2014

**Ethnic Studies
Now Coalition:**

Successfully petitions
Los Angeles Unified
School District to
establish ethnic studies
high school graduation
requirement

2015/2016

**Assembly Member
Luis Alejo:**

Introduces
AB101/AB2016
mandating the
development of a state-
approved ethnic studies
model curriculum

2016

**State Legislature and
the Governor:**

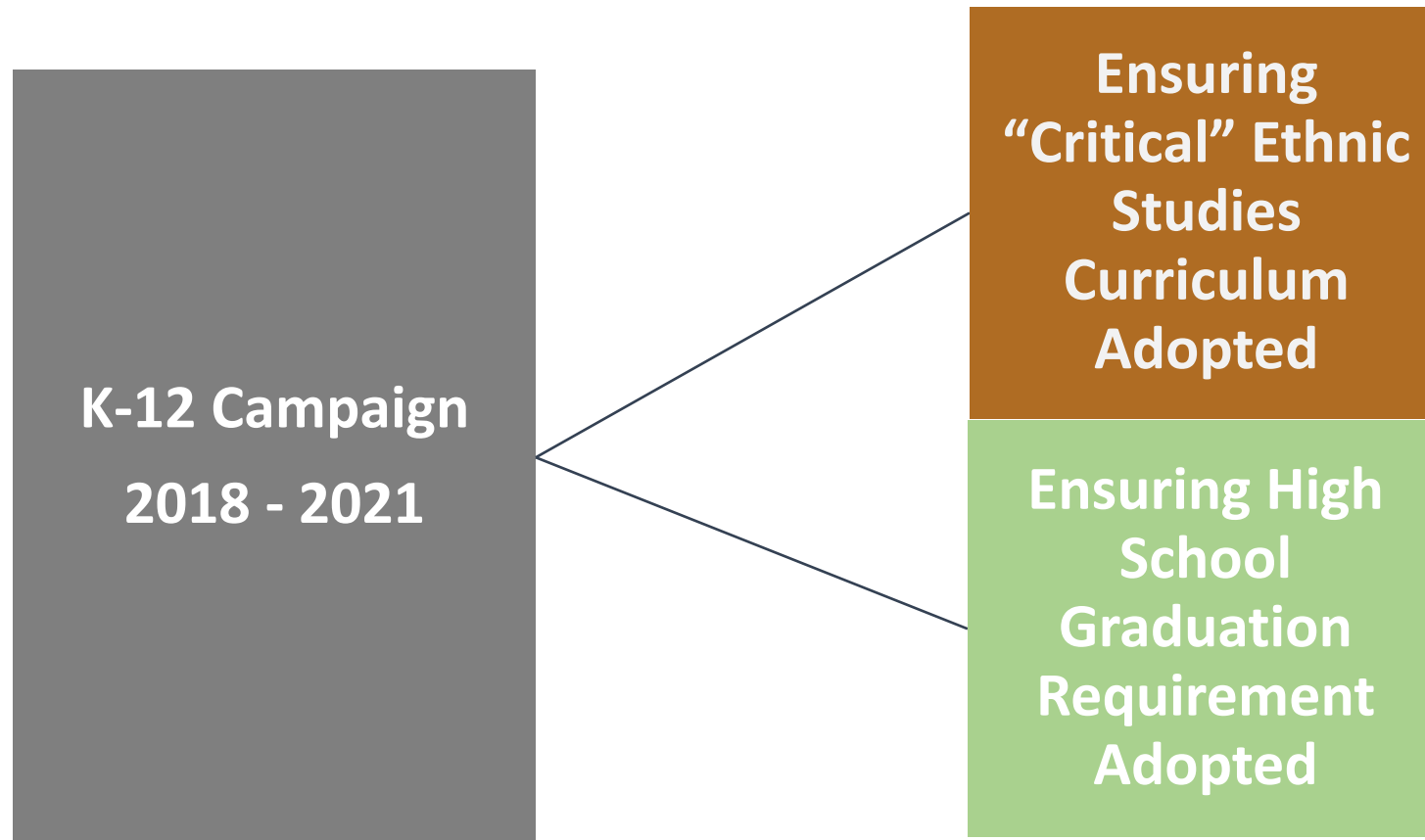
Passes and signs into
law AB 2016, which
directs the State Board
of Ed to draft an ethnic
studies
model curriculum

2017

**Assembly Member
Shirley Weber:**

Introduces successful
House Resolution to
formalize assembly's will
to mandate ethnic
studies grad
requirement

IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies



IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies

K-12: Efforts to Ensure “Critical” Ethnic Studies Curriculum Adopted 2018 - 2021

2018

IQC/José Lara:

Picks members of ethnic studies model curriculum committee, most from ESNC

Aug. 2019

State Board of Ed:

Releases first draft of model curriculum, meets with outrage and charges of antisemitism, first draft rejected.

Sept. 2019 - 2021

Save CA Ethnic Studies Now Coalition:

Launch campaign to get SBE to adopt the first draft of the model curriculum

March 2021

State Board of Ed:

Approves a fourth draft of the ESMC, which has no overt antisemitism but same “critical” Guiding Principles as first draft

IV. The Politics of CA Ethnic Studies

K-12: Efforts to Establish High School Graduation Requirement 2020 - 2021

Jan. 2020

**Assembly Member
Jose Medina:**

Introduces AB 331
requiring all high school
students to take an
ethnic studies course

Sept. 2020

**State Legislature and
Governor:**

Legislature passes but
Governor vetoes AB 331
because of concern over
which curriculum would
be used by students

Jan 2021

**Assembly Member
Jose Medina:**

Introduces AB 101,
identical to AB 331,
requires all high school
students to take an
ethnic studies course

Sept. 2021

**State Legislature and
Governor:**

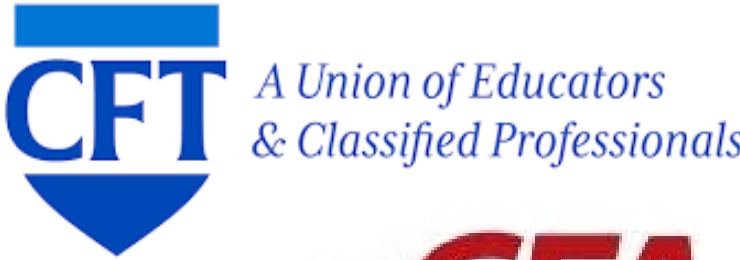
Legislature passes AB 101
with several “guardrails”
to discourage school
districts from adopting
first draft ESMC,
Governor signs into law

V. Lessons Learned

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California LEGISLATIVE



California Educators



V. Lessons Learned

Activists' Goal:

Save ethnic studies departments at Cal State.

Strategy:

- 1) Make ethnic studies essential to the University with an ethnic studies graduation requirement at Cal State and in all CA high schools.**
- 2) Ensure that what is being taught in high schools is "critical" ethnic studies, that requires Cal State faculty expertise.**

V. Lessons Learned

The activists' game plan *should*, be challenged, on two grounds:

- 1. Question its very legitimacy because of its use or promotion of antisemitism**
 - The curriculum's antisemitic portrayals of Jews or the Jewish State
 - A state requirement that forces *all* students to take a course likely to use an antisemitic curriculum
 - Departments whose faculty traffic in antisemitism and transmit it to their students and colleagues, claiming it is part of their disciplinary mission
- 2. Question its value to respective stakeholders**
 - Unproven educational benefits for students
 - Implementation will cost the state \$250M/year
 - Highly politicized, coercive departments may not add academic value