

Factsheet: Liberated Ethnic Studies in California

California state law and guidance regarding K-12 ethnic studies

AB101, the bill to create an ethnic studies high school graduation requirement, [states](#) that:

- *Ethnic studies, “curriculum, instruction, and instructional materials” must:*
 - *Be appropriate for use with pupils of all races, religions, nationalities, genders, sexual orientations, and diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, pupils with disabilities, and English learners.*
 - *Not reflect or promote, directly or indirectly, any bias, bigotry, or discrimination against any person or group of persons on the basis of any category protected by Section 220.*
- *“it is the intent of the Legislature that local educational agencies not use the portions of the draft model curriculum that were not adopted by the Instructional Quality Commission due to concerns related to bias, bigotry, and discrimination.”*

The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC), approved by the State Board of Education, [states](#) that:

- *In K–12 education it is imperative that students are exposed to multiple perspectives and taught to think critically and form their own opinions.*
- *Curriculum, resources, and materials should include a balance of topics, authors, and concepts, including primary and secondary sources that represent multiple, and sometimes distinctive, points of view or perspectives.*
- *Students should actively seek to understand, analyze, and articulate multiple points of view, perspectives, and cultures.*
- *The instruction, material, or discussion must be appropriate to the age and maturity level of the students and be a fair, balanced, and humanizing academic presentation of various points of view consistent with accepted standards of professional responsibility, rather than advocacy, personal opinion, bias, or partisanship.¹*

California Attorney General Rob Bonta [provided](#) guidance to school districts, which states that:

- *School districts and their governing boards should take steps to ensure that any locally-developed curricula and materials purchased from third parties are consistent with the provisions of the Education Code to avoid the costs associated with having to redesign a compliant course. They must take care that in presenting diverse perspectives they do not end up discriminating against other groups or communities.*
- *Due to the unfortunate recent rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia, educators must be attentive to the discrimination these communities are facing. While criticism of any country’s policies is permissible, care must be taken not to blame any racial, ethnic, or religious group for the actions of a government and schools must always strive to present factual and unbiased information whether discussing communities or countries.*
- *Ethnic studies... requires diligence and care in presenting the cultures of different peoples and the teaching of sometimes controversial or divisive subjects. Such subjects should not be avoided, but approached in a balanced and sensitive manner to ensure that all students “see’ themselves in the fabric of our state.”*

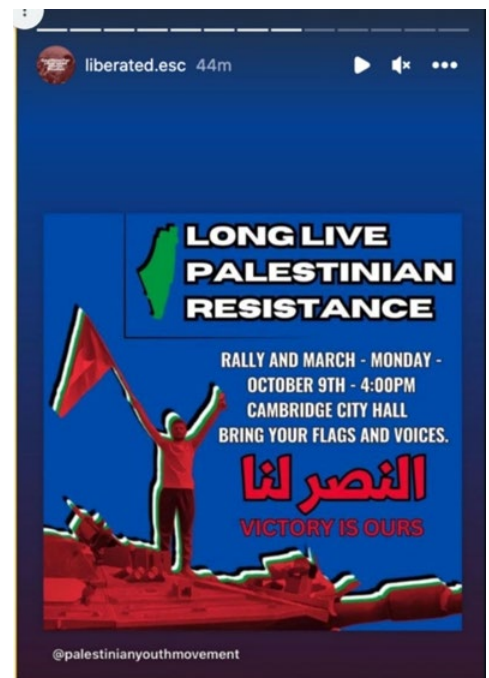
¹ This guidance also reflects common local school district policy regarding how to teach controversial issues.

What is Liberated Ethnic Studies (LES)?

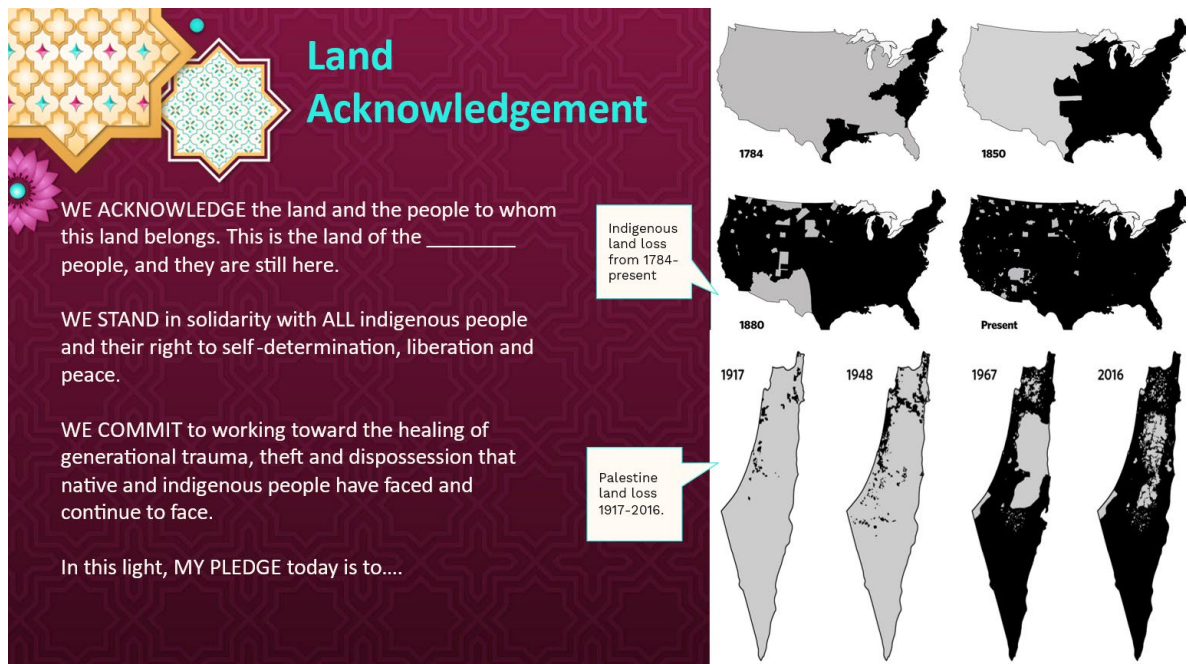
- A coalition/faction of education-focused organizations and activists within the field of ethnic studies. Those active in California include the [Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Consortium](#), [Coalition for Liberated Ethnic Studies](#), [UC Ethnic Studies Faculty Council](#), [CSU Council on Ethnic Studies](#), [Xicanx Institute for Teaching & Organizing](#), [Association of Raza Educators](#), [National Association for Multicultural Education](#), [Acosta Educational Partnership](#), [Community Responsive Education](#), [Arab Resource & Organizing Center](#), and the [Teach Palestine Project](#).

Examples of how the Liberated Ethnic Studies (LES) approach to Jews, antisemitism, and Israel does not align with the above laws and State Board of Education guidance

- CLES [launched a campaign](#) opposing the California anti-discrimination policies listed above.
- The Coalition for Liberated Ethnic Studies posted imagery on social media celebrating the horrific massacre of Jews on October 7th as a “victory.”
- LES leaders have [repeatedly stated](#) that “Palestine and Arab American Studies” are [central](#) to ethnic studies, but that [including](#) Jewish American Studies is, “arguably racist.” This means that by design, LES covers the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other issues in a way that actively silences Jewish perspectives. Among the voices LES refuses to include are Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews who fled or immigrated from the same exact region as Arab Americans.
 - Jewish American Studies is included in the [ESMC](#) and the [California Regional Ethnic Studies Collaborative](#), as well as in Ronald Tatakis’ [A Different Mirror](#) and James A. Banks’ [Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies](#). This shows that ethnic studies courses can certainly include Jews.
 - The U.S. [National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#) calls for increased education about antisemitism and Jewish Americans in K-12 schools, including in ethnic studies courses.
- LES has contributed to and/or promoted biased ethnic studies courses in multiple school districts.
 - Jefferson Union HSD (JUHSD) [approved](#) an ethnic studies course [developed in partnership](#) with a consulting company [directed by](#) an [LES leader](#). The [course](#) compares the colonization of the Americas and Philippines with “Zionist settler colonialism,” and promotes “Anti-Zionism” as a positive example of activism and solidarity. No alternative perspective is offered, meaning this course erases 3,000 years of the Jewish people’s history, identity, and connection to their ancestral home, while encouraging students to oppose Israel’s existence.
 - LES [pressured](#) Santa Ana Unified School District to ignore [concerns](#) raised by the Jewish community, and not revise biased content in their [ethnic studies courses](#). Similar to JUHSD, these courses inaccurately frame Jews as colonizers in their ancestral home and [include](#) dehumanizing language about “Jewish land grabbing.” One covers the tragic situation in Gaza while barely mentioning the role of Hamas, which rules the territory.
 - LES has [encouraged](#) educators to “fly under the radar” if their school administration does not support promoting anti-Israel bias in the classroom.



- After October 7th, LES distributed at “critical media literacy” [toolkit](#). This toolkit [promotes](#) the antisemitic BDS movement, which [seeks](#) to end Israel's existence, is [directly tied](#) to Hamas according to the New York Times, and was removed from the ESMC due to concerns about bias and bigotry.
- Since October 7th, there have been multiple LES teach-ins encouraging educators to promote anti-Israel bias in their classrooms, including “[How to be a badass teacher and not get fired!](#)” and “[Teaching Palestine in Liberated K-12 Ethnic Studies](#)” (featuring [multiple](#) speakers with [records](#) of [antisemitism](#)).
- The slide below appears in multiple LES [lesson plans](#). This dehumanizing narrative erases 3,000 years of Jewish history in Israel and promotes misinformation. MSNBC [publicly apologized](#) for airing a similar map of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza because it is, “not factually accurate”:



- LES [leaders](#) have [repeatedly](#) attacked and misrepresented the California Legislative Jewish Caucus and [mainstream Jewish organizations](#) such as the [ADL](#) and [Jewish Community Relations Council](#). One of the [founders](#) of the Coalition for Liberated Ethnic Studies is [on record](#) saying that “bringing down Israel really will benefit everyone in the world.”
- The Coalition for Liberated Ethnic Studies (CLES) has made it a “point of unity” to oppose the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\) Working Definition of Antisemitism](#) (the world’s most [widely adopted](#) definition). CLES also promotes misinformation by claiming IHRA “equate[s] criticism of Israel with anti-semitism,” even though it explicitly states that, “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.”
- CLES [launched a campaign](#) to professionally harm a Jewish ethnic studies scholar by pressuring an academic journal to retract a [peer-reviewed article](#) he published. Instead of responding to his critiques of LES with arguments of their own, the group is trying to silence conflicting perspectives and discourage other scholars from publicly challenging their ideas. Disturbingly, the ethnic studies faculty councils of both the UC and CSU systems signed on to this campaign.