

## Example: Meeting Talking Points

Thank you for agreeing to talk at the XXX Board of Education meeting DATE at TIME. We expect the public comment period to start at approximately TIME OF PUBLIC COMMENT.

We will have the opportunity to speak during agenda item #4: *PUBLIC COMMENTS OF PERSONS DESIRING TO ADDRESS THE BOARD*. The link to the meeting can be found here: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Tips for Public Comment**

- Comments will be strictly limited to X minute (varies by school district), so please practice and time your comments beforehand. Modify to make what you say comfortable for you.
- Please use the statements provided (mix and match) to create a custom X (varies by school district) minute speech. We want to ensure that the issues specific to the (insert your specific issue here) are addressed and that we include specific requests of the Board. You will likely not be able to fit in more than 3 points.

Below is a structure for your comments, as well as topics that you can choose from.

1. **Introduce yourself.** Please feel free to personalize, but keep this brief!

Hello, my name is [name] and I am a [parent / voter / teacher] in [city]. (If you are part of one of the 4 foundational communities: African American, Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x, Native American, and Asian American, please include this in your introduction.)

2. **Please use the below talking points (mix and match) to create your one minute speech**

3. **End with this (below is an example - this should be an ask specific to your district):**

Please place the Ethnic Studies Initiative on the agenda for your next meeting to address its purpose and make the changes needed to ensure that our children are being taught a fair and balanced presentation of various points of view, and to ensure total transparency to the community.

4. **Thank you.**

## **Talking Points:**

### **Victim/Oppressor**

- Ethnic studies, when taught constructively, can build empathy and understanding while combating racism. Unfortunately, the ethnic studies that is being taught in this working group is based on Critical Ethnic Studies, which pits students against each other by defining them as victims or oppressors based on the color of their skin.
- The material found in the XXX (be specific) brings an extreme, one-sided political agenda into our children's classrooms, in all grades K-12. It segregates people by race and puts them into buckets of either oppressors or victims. Rather than raise awareness and have our students be advocates for positive change, the current Initiative pits them against each other because of their heritage and ethnicity.
- This material encourages students to define themselves and others as either oppressors or victims, based on their ethnicity. It asserts that all white people are inherently racist and that all people of color are fated to be victims. This approach is incredibly divisive. We should not be advocating for division among our teachers or our students. Please change this XXX (be specific) to be based on Constructive Ethnic Studies, which promotes critical inquiry, multiple points of view, and highlights the achievements of the BIPOC communities.
- I send my child to school with the expectation that the curriculum will help them succeed in life. Promoting a political agenda like the one in XXX should not be an inherent part of educational curriculum. This county has enormous diversity; people come here from all over the world for the opportunity that exists. Sowing seeds of division between people, especially in children, is not the way to ensure success. Telling one group of children that they are destined to be oppressed because of the color of their skin, and by the child sitting next to them because of the color of his or her skin, is not the way to ensure success. Teaching that religion and land ownership are equal to genocide is not the way to ensure success. Curriculum that combats racism, inspires mutual respect, and fosters balanced analysis ensures success. I believe that the militant, victim vs. oppressor Critical Ethnic Studies framework used by this county initiative undermines all three of these goals, and is likely to fuel racism rather than combat it.

### **Education Code/Academic Standards**

- California Education code forbids teachers from discriminating against students. When you teach that Whites are oppressors and that people of color are victims, you put kids into buckets that are inherently discriminatory.
- The material found in this training class counters the guidelines of California's History Social Studies Framework by forcing predetermined answers rather than promoting inquiry. Critical

Ethnic Studies is fundamentally a one-sided view of social issues, based on Marxist dogma that puts people into categories based on the color of their skin. California Ed Code 51500 states: A teacher shall not give instruction and a school district shall not sponsor any activity that promotes a discriminatory bias on the basis of race or ethnicity, religion, or nationality. There are many other California Ed Code examples prohibiting the teaching of bias in our classrooms. This Ethnic Studies initiative should be based on Constructive Ethnic Studies, which promotes critical inquiry, multiple points of view, and highlights the achievements of the BIPOC communities.

- The material found in this XXX counters the guidelines of California's History Social Studies Framework by forcing predetermined answers rather than promoting inquiry. Critical Ethnic Studies is fundamentally a one-sided view of social issues, based on Marxist dogma that puts people into categories based on the color of their skin. California Ed Code 51500 states: A teacher shall not give instruction and a school district shall not sponsor any activity that promotes a discriminatory bias on the basis of race or ethnicity, religion, or nationality. There are many other California Ed Code examples prohibiting the teaching of bias in our classrooms. This XXX should be based on Constructive Ethnic Studies, which promotes critical inquiry, multiple points of view, and highlights the achievements of the BIPOC communities.

### **Positive Aspects of Constructive Ethnic Studies**

- Constructive Ethnic Studies is a better approach to the Ethnic Studies Initiative because it emphasizes civic responsibility, builds inter-ethnic group understanding, exposes students to multiple perspectives, and teaches them to think analytically. It also leads to critical analysis of multiple perspectives, informed decision making, and respectful exchange of opinions.
- It's not necessary to sacrifice inquiry or impose a political ideology to achieve the engagement benefit of ethnic studies. A Constructive Ethnic Studies approach can work well to provide the success we are all looking for by promoting critical inquiry, multiple points of view, and highlighting the achievements of the BIPOC communities.

### **Radical Approach to Ethnic Studies**

- This material, based on Critical Ethnic Studies, seems designed to create radical leaders who, in the words of the group moderators, should "destroy" American systems of education, religion, and financial success. As the people who oversee and are responsible for this Initiative, I ask that you evaluate what is being taught to our teachers and students and make the necessary changes to ensure that our children are not being indoctrinated by teachers with a political agenda.

- The Critical Ethnic Studies approach that the Ethnic Studies Initiative is promoting is a divisive, politically motivated, and radical approach that pits students against one another by telling them that they are either a victim or an oppressor based on the color of their skin. What does this say to our students? That if they are BIPOC, they should assume others view them as perpetual victims? And that if they aren't BIPOC, they are inherently racist and they want to oppress their classmates? That their skin color defines them and their opportunities? That to be American is inherently shameful and that they are all stained with ancestral sins simply by being American? We should be finding ways to bring our children together, to teach them to truly be color-blind and supportive of each other, rather than sowing the seeds of division and hate.
- Critical race theory, the foundation of Critical Ethnic Studies, is said to “challenge the traditional claims of the educational system such as objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity.” CRT theorists claim that these values act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society. Objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness and equal opportunity are all things that make this country the most envied one on earth. Our educational system should be encouraging those attributes in our children, not villainizing them.
- My family came to America to save our lives from the Communist dictatorship in \_\_\_\_\_. We came because of America's opportunity for individuals and values of hard work and fundamental equal rights. It is very frightening to see a Marxist ideology now being spread in the schools, as XXX is encouraging teachers to do. I am not ok with my child being taught that people are oppressors simply based on the color of their skin, the house they live in, or the jobs their parents have or that American ideals such as Capitalism are wrong, or that we are racist for wanting to live and succeed in America. Our own lived experience teaches us that the opposite is true.
- The XXX equates economic success with racism and even genocide, grouping “land ownership” and “religion” with “genocide” and “white supremacy” as a “system of oppression. Children should not be taught that “land ownership”, which is the Critical Ethnic Studies way of denouncing capitalism and business success, equates to racism. Or that their religion is as oppressive as genocide. Does that mean if a Latino family owns their home, they're racist? If a Black woman owns a business, she's an oppressor? That if you succeed economically, then you are contributing to systems of racism? We want all our kids to succeed. They should be encouraged to succeed by all of the adults in their lives. They should not be told that it's not likely to happen for them because of the color of their skin, or that their success and faith inherently oppress others.
- The controversial material being taught to our teachers demands transparency with the public. We would like to work with you to ensure that any training on Ethnic Studies is done so with a Constructive Ethnic Studies lens, promoting critical inquiry, multiple points of view, and highlighting the achievements of the marginalized communities.

## **Political Indoctrination**

- There is some evidence that well-designed ethnic studies curricula have positive academic and social outcomes for students. These studies had nothing to do with colonialism, Critical Race Theory, or Critical Ethnic Studies political ideology, which all serve to segregate children instead of uniting them.
- Personal politics have no place in the classroom. Students should not be subjected to a one-sided political ideology when learning. And teachers should not be told that they have to have “the right kind of politics” to teach this lesson
- This Critical Ethnic Studies approach inherently prevents critical analysis because it prevents discussion and the addition of multiple viewpoints. We see a lack of discussion and cooperative education in the actions of the authors of the ESMC, when they demanded their names be taken off the ESMC and then resorted to name-calling people who asked for changes and inclusion.
- Critical Ethnic Studies, and the material presented and recommended by the Ethnic Studies Initiative, promotes a militant and anti-Western agenda. The academic proponents of Critical Ethnic Studies refuse to refer to the United States as a Democratic Republic.
- Teachers should not be encouraged to advocate for their own personal political views in the classroom, to circumvent school and district administrative directives, and to hide these lessons from parents. I oppose any training that encourages teachers to sideline parents, administrators, and education codes in favor of the teacher’s personal politics. Public schools exist to educate, not indoctrinate, and the job of the teacher is to provide students with an education that will help them succeed in life. As the body of elected officials responsible for the Office of Education, you need to review what is being taught and promoted. I ask that you make the changes necessary to remove the political agenda and the Critical Ethnic Studies approach from all programs.

## **Re-framing of History**

- I’m in favor of students learning unvarnished history. However, this XXX is advocating for a single and narrowly-focused view on one portion of history. Lessons about conquests and colonization should be taught in history class, but they shouldn’t be manipulated to indoctrinate our children into a political ideology. Every populated continent has had empires. Slavery was a universal phenomenon until recently in human history and it wasn’t limited to white supremacy, or else why was there widespread slavery in the kingdoms of Africa and South America? Students need to understand the human condition in order to understand how modern societies have improved themselves,

including how our society has improved itself. Otherwise, what's the point of progress and how do we encourage our children to continue that progress?

- The XXX takes a very limited view of history, particularly history of the US, and it does so through a politically controversial view. It's crucially important to learn our shared history, including its ugly aspects, but it's equally important to learn how obstacles have been overcome. Oppression is part of our history, but it's not the total sum. Students need to learn the successful efforts that have gone into making this a pluralistic society. They need to know what's worked in terms of social change and progress. You need to teach about people of color who are judges and scientists and astronauts, not just focus on violent figures as emblematic and a way to express racial pride.

### **General**

- If the county continues with an Ethnic Studies Initiative, it should follow a Constructive Ethnic Studies approach.