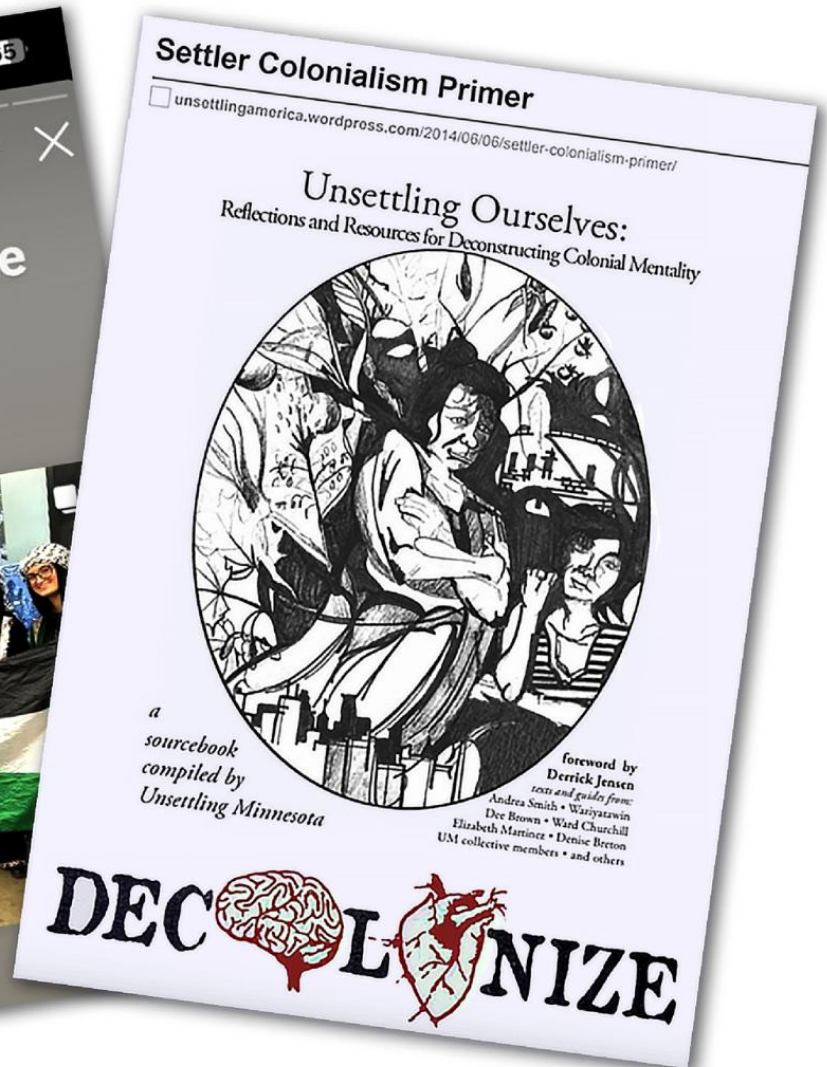


SHAPING MINDS, SPREADING HATE

How Antisemitism Took Root in the School District of Philadelphia

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A Note for Readers

Philadelphia parents, responding to multiple incidents of antisemitism after October 7, 2023 requested that CAMERA investigate the School District of Philadelphia's (SDP) use of the Zinn Education Project's lesson plans and resources, a curricula organization CAMERA has written about and criticized extensively. What CAMERA found was troubling: SDP had completely remade its social studies curriculum, adopting the critical race theory model of dividing people into oppressor and oppressed categories. For years, many activist SDP teachers have pushed anti-Israel and anti-American propaganda in their classrooms and on their social media which is knowingly viewed by their students. Using publicly available social studies curriculum materials, public records requests, and publicly available social media, CAMERA was able to detail how the underlying ideological agenda of SDP has created an environment hostile to Jewish students. CAMERA originally provided a briefing based on the preliminary research for parents to use in meetings with elected officials and has now published its extensive report. CAMERA has shared this information as well with elected officials investigating the School District of Philadelphia.

As of publication, the House Education and Workforce Committee has announced an investigation into three school districts: Berkeley Unified School District in California, Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia, and the School District of Philadelphia. CAMERA Education has contributed its knowledge and expertise to the investigations into the School District of Philadelphia and Fairfax County Public Schools, specifically regarding their compliance with Title VI obligations. CAMERA Education hopes these investigations will address the ideology fueling antisemitism described in this report and will ultimately lead to meaningful change.

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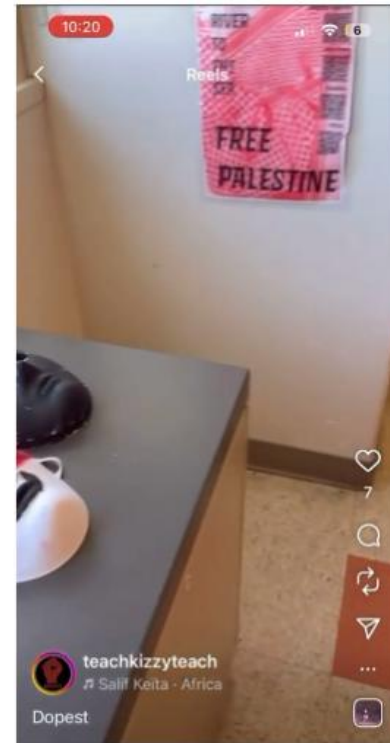
This report is based on a [briefing](#) written in January 2025 about the School District of Philadelphia's curriculum and outside influences.

Introduction

Since October 7, 2023, Jewish students and parents have reported multiple incidents of antisemitism in the School District of Philadelphia. According to the ADL Title VI complaint filed in the summer of 2024, the school environment is described as “viciously hostile” with students regularly facing antisemitic harassment from other students.¹ Jewish students are taunted with Nazi salutes, swastika graffiti, and pressure to say “Free Palestine.” One student is reported as coming to school in costume as a “Palestinian freedom fighter.” Worse, the principal reportedly praised this student’s costume choice. As the complaint details, school administrators have so inadequately responded to this harassment that one of the bullied Jewish students left the school district as a result.

However, what is truly shocking about the rampant antisemitism in SDP is that much of it emanates from the teachers themselves. In one of the most egregious examples widely reported in the media, high school history teacher Keziah Ridgeway threatened Jewish parents on social media with violence for daring to report the antisemitism coming from her. While Ridgeway was placed on leave for several months, she is back in the classroom teaching once again. Ridgeway is just one of several staff members at SDP who have made false claims about Israel and “Zionists” on their social media, at school board meetings, and in their classrooms.

The Title VI complaint explains how SDP allows antisemitism “to metastasize and fester without repercussions.”² While antisemitism continues to grow in K-12 schools across the country, SDP’s issues with antisemitism are some of the most extreme.



This study provides insight into how SDP created an environment where teachers use their classrooms to demonize and delegitimize Israel and those who feel an integral connection to it. It examines the underlying ideology that has driven major changes within the school district, especially within the social studies curriculum. These changes have led to an almost singular emphasis within SDP on not merely critiquing Western institutions and values such as democracy and capitalism, but effectively calling for their dismantling. Special attention is given here to the World History

¹ [ADL Civil Rights Violations at the School District of Philadelphia Complaint](#), July 23, 2024, p.1.

² [ADL Civil Rights Violations at the School District of Philadelphia Complaint](#), July 23, 2024, p.3.

curriculum, its use of ideological concepts, and how it covers Jewish and Israeli history. The collaboration between outside organizations and SDP teachers is also discussed.

The purpose of this study is two-fold:

1. To encourage an investigation by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the federal government into SDP's compliance with Title VI as well as other statutes, given the severity of SDP's issues with antisemitism.
2. To serve as a case study for community members, school districts, and elected officials so that they better understand the warning signs of an ideological takeover of their schools and can work to prevent the creation of an educational system that fosters anti-American and anti-Israel sentiment under the guise of social justice.

The City of Philadelphia and the School District of Philadelphia

The city of Philadelphia is often referred to as the poorest big city in the country. In 2025, SPD—the eighth-largest school district in the country, serving more than 197,000 students—reported that 75% of its students were economically disadvantaged.³

SDP is also a minority-majority school district. Black students comprise 49% of the student population, Hispanic/Latino students 25%, white students 14%, Asian students 8%, and multiracial students 5%. A fifth of the student population consists of English language learners.⁴

Compared to other large urban districts, SDP's performance lags behind. The 2025 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing data for fourth- and eighth- grade math and reading show SDP performs below the average for large cities, and below the Pennsylvania and national average.⁵ The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) shows similar results, with only about a third of SDP students scoring proficient or above in English Language Arts (ELA) and only a fifth doing so in math.⁶

Philadelphia has a sizable Muslim population. Known as the “Mecca of the West” by its tourism board, it became one of the few cities in the United States that count the Muslim holidays of Eid-al-Fitr and Eid-al-Adha as official holidays on the school calendar.⁷ Philadelphia's Muslim population is also overwhelmingly Black (some estimates indicate about 80% of Philadelphia Muslims are Black compared to only 20% of American Muslims⁸), with many of them converting to Islam in the 1960s and 1970s inspired by Malcolm X. Malcolm X and the history of black

³ [District Fast Facts - Philadelphia City SD - Future Ready PA Index](#). (2025). [Futurereadypa.org](#).

⁴ [Fast Facts - The School District of Philadelphia](#). (2019, August 9). The School District of Philadelphia - Philly Elementary, Middle & High Schools.

⁵ Sitrin, C., & Mezzacappa, D. (2025, January 29). [Philadelphia NAEP scores rise in fourth grade math but stay flat in other subjects](#). Chalkbeat.

⁶ Sitrin, C. (2024, November 26). [See how your Philadelphia school did on the latest state tests](#). Chalkbeat.

⁷ Clay, D. (2024, November 4). [Philadelphia's Black Muslims are crucial for Kamala Harris. Has she won them over?; A Guide to Halal Restaurants in Philadelphia](#). Visit Philadelphia.

⁸ Caiola, S. (2023, April 18). [During Ramadan, Muslim leaders hope to shield Philly youth from gun violence](#).

activism in Philadelphia play an influential role in SDP's curriculum.⁹

SDP, like many urban school districts, faces issues of poverty, poor academic performance, and a history of racial tension in the streets that has spilled into its classrooms. As discussed below, SDP has made race and racism the central themes of its curriculum.

Unlike other school districts where the school board is elected by the community's residents, SDP's school board is appointed by the mayor of Philadelphia. Significantly, this means taxpayers do not have direct control over their school board, whose members are political appointees and therefore partisan. The district's demographics and school board appointment system, combined with the minority status of Jewish parents within SDP, make efforts to address antisemitism particularly complex.

High School Social Studies Curriculum

While there is no national curriculum for social studies (or any other subject), most states have similar requirements. Typically, a high school history curriculum includes coverage of United States and World History taught over a two- or three-year time span. Additional coursework includes government, economics, and other electives, with only slight variations from state to state.

The key features of a social studies curriculum, chronology, causation, and historical methods, are almost entirely absent from the SDP high school social studies curriculum.

History courses also typically cover the subject matter chronologically and focus on developing some level of understanding of the discipline and the thinking skills used in history. Chronology is important for understanding the important concept of causation in history.

High school history courses usually introduce students to the methods historians use to analyze primary and secondary sources and construct arguments. These skills are often reflected in the questions on state exams or on the College Board's Advanced Placement exams.

The key features of a social studies curriculum, chronology, causation, and historical methods, are almost entirely absent from the SDP high school social studies curriculum. How has SDP been able to create a social studies curriculum that is so vastly different from other school districts?

Pennsylvania's Social Studies Standards

Since there is neither a national curriculum nor a national set of curriculum standards in the United States, each state creates its own social studies standards and graduation requirements.

Pennsylvania's Department of Education requires three planned 120 clock-hour courses for graduation. The history and government of the United States are the only required social studies subjects, with other course topics left to each locality to choose. Pennsylvania provides two guiding documents for school districts developing their social studies courses: a curriculum framework which includes "Big Ideas, Concepts, Competencies, and Essential Questions aligned to Standards and Assessment Anchors and,

⁹ Clay, D. (2024, November 4). [*Philadelphia's Black Muslims are crucial for Kamala Harris. Has she won them over?*](#)

where appropriate, Eligible Content,”¹⁰ and the Academic Standards for History.

The Social Studies Curriculum Framework for History states: “These standards do not specifically cite content to be learned, but concepts to be assessed. Pennsylvania relies on the locally elected school board to make decisions concerning the content of Social Studies to be taught in the classroom.”¹¹ Pennsylvania provides an essential question for history courses, whether Pennsylvanian, American, or World History: How does history reflect the struggle to balance the control of freedom and liberty?¹² While supporting documents list possible examples a teacher could use, no further clarification on the meaning of the question is provided.

Pennsylvania’s Academic Standards for History states: “The content within this document is general and does not represent a course or even a portion thereof. Every school is encouraged to move beyond these standards. These standards are merely a starting point for the study of history. Planned instruction to meet these standards is required; however, the methodology, resources and time are not recommended nor implied.”¹³

Pennsylvania has four categories of standards for all history courses grades 6-12:

1. Political and Cultural Contributions of Individuals and Groups;
2. Primary Documents, Material Artifacts and Historical Places;

3. How Continuity and Change Has Influenced History;
4. Conflict and Cooperation Among Social Groups and Organizations.¹⁴

More specifically, for World History, Pennsylvania schools are instructed to analyze political and cultural contributions of individuals and groups; analyze historical documents; analyze continuity and change regarding religion, the economy, and social issues; and analyze conflict. A few examples are provided, but specific content is not.

Compared to other state standards, Pennsylvania state standards are vague and open to wide interpretation. Pennsylvania also does not require a state social studies exam.

Why does this matter? Pennsylvania’s social studies requirements leave a lot of room for schools to interpret and implement them. In SDP’s case, a wide amount of latitude has been taken with the district prioritizing an ideological approach to the study of history that has contributed to SDP’s antisemitism problem.

Ideological Influences on SDP’s Social Studies Curriculum: Paolo Freire

Examining SDP’s social studies curriculum reveals three major interconnected ideological influences: Paolo Freire and the oppression binary, Malcolm X and racial capitalism, and antiracism.

¹⁰ [Curriculum Framework - SAS](#). (2019). Pdesas.org.

¹¹ [Curriculum Framework - SAS](#). (2020). Pdesas.org.

¹² “[Using the Social Studies Framework](#).” History Framework, Pennsylvania State Standards.

¹³ [Academic Standards for History Pennsylvania Department of Education XXII](#) (2002). p.3.

¹⁴ [Academic Standards for History Pennsylvania Department of Education XXII](#). (2002) p.4. See also, [Curriculum Framework - SAS](#). (2020).

SDP's curriculum "elevates the 5 Pursuits named in Dr. [Gholdy] Muhammad's text, Cultivating Genius."¹⁵ The five pursuits, taken from Muhammad's book *An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy* (2019), are:

1. Identity development
2. Skill development
3. Intellectual development
4. Criticality
5. Joy

While four out of the five pursuits are generally self-explanatory, what is criticality? Dr. Muhammad builds upon the framework established by Paulo Freire called critical pedagogy, which teaches students to challenge societal frameworks.

Freire's ideas not only permeate SDP's curriculum, but he is even quoted on SDP classroom walls.

In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which argues that education is a tool for liberation, Freire removes all agency and responsibility for violence from the so-called oppressed.¹⁶ He writes: "Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed. How could they be the initiators, if they themselves are the result of violence? How could they be the sponsors of something whose objective inauguration called forth their existence as oppressed? There would be no

oppressed had there been no prior situation of violence to establish their subjugation."¹⁷

Freire critiques traditional education systems as an act of "depositing."¹⁸ The solution, then, is to "correct" the student-teacher relationship so "both are simultaneously students and teachers."¹⁹ A revolutionary leadership must accordingly practice co-intentional education where teachers and students share in the process of "re-creating that knowledge" [of reality].²⁰ Freire's ideas not only permeate SDP's curriculum, but he is even quoted on SDP classroom walls.²¹

Both Freire and Dr. Muhammad's ideological approach have been enormously influential in transforming education nationwide. The controversial ethnic studies mandate in California, for example, which has been at the heart of many issues involving antisemitism and anti-Americanism, is based in large part on Freire's ideas.

Ideological Influences on SDP's Social Studies Curriculum: Malcolm X and Racial Capitalism

Malcolm X joined the Nation of Islam (NOI) and rose to national prominence as its most well-known spokesperson during the Civil Rights Movement. He helped establish NOI Mosque No. 12 in Philadelphia, which contributed to the spread of NOI's influence

¹⁵ *Curriculum and Instruction – The School District of Philadelphia*.

¹⁶ Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

¹⁷ Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. p. 55.

¹⁸ Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. p. 72.

¹⁹ Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. p. 72.

²⁰ Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. p. 69.

²¹ Freire Charter School in Philadelphia espouses the values of its namesake: Brown, J. (2024, May 3). ["I became a teacher at age 55. It's been daunting — and thrilling."](#) *Chalkbeat*. Mezzacappa, D. (2023, February 27). ["Philadelphia shrugs off national controversy as it updates and reinvigorates Black history lessons."](#) *Chalkbeat*.

among Black Philadelphians in the 1950s and 1960s. After his assassination in 1965, Malcolm X's ideas have had a lasting impact on Philadelphia's Black political and cultural movements, including the rise of the Black Power movement, the MOVE organization, and Afrocentric education efforts in the city.

Malcolm X is credited with formulating the idea of racial capitalism even though the term would be coined much later. Most famously, he said in 1965, "You can't have capitalism without racism." Capitalism, he argued, required a racial underclass to operate. As a corollary, Malcolm X also stated in 1964, at the Founding Rally of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, "The same man that colonized Kenya colonized Harlem," drawing a clear line between imperialism abroad and racialized poverty at home.

These ideas would later influence Cedric Robinson, who explored similar themes in his 1983 book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. According to Robinson, capitalism was racial from its creation and therefore is central to the struggle. While Marxism sees racism as secondary to class struggle, Robinson's argument places race at the center of global capitalism.²² As such, every foreign issue and conflict must be viewed through the lens of race. Marxism, by failing to amplify race, also then fails to account for colonialism. In other words, Marxism in Robinson's view is a Eurocentric system that fails to understand Black experience and liberation movements.

Malcolm X and racial capitalism's influence on SDP's teachers, the curriculum, and their social media is highly visible.

This history of Black radicalism is also transnational: the movement of people and ideas has led to the inclusion of marginalized groups and created a new paradigm for analyzing history. The histories of diverse places become connected and interdependent.²³ The nation-state is no longer treated as the primary unit of analysis, and even its very definition and existence have become highly problematic. International organizations like the United Nations and the International Court of Justice are elevated in the nation-state's place. It is through this lens that SDP's curriculum and many of its teachers view Western civilization, the United States, Israel and the Jews.



²² Robinson, Cedric. *Black Marxism*. p. 68.

²³ Transnationalism is a historical concept that argues that the social structures exist across national boundaries. Conceptually

it challenges the idea of nationalism and examines the discourse that transcends linear and physical boundaries.

Malcolm X and racial capitalism's influence on SDP's teachers, their curriculum, and their social media is highly visible. Social Studies Director Ismael Jimenez, for example, posted on his social media, "To base your entire life, struggle, worldview and politic on 'getting ahead' or being 'successful' in a racialized capitalist world that colonizes everything from your mind to Mars, has got to be the most puerile conception of reality ever."²⁴

Not surprisingly, SDP was one of the first school districts in the country that added African American history to its offerings in 1967 as an elective when Philadelphia residents demanded such a course during the Civil Rights Movement. In 2005, SDP made African American History one of three required courses for graduation, also one of the first school districts to mandate such a course.²⁵ The course's unit of studies include: African Civilization; Africa's Last Golden Age; Development of the Modern World System; Race, Slavery and Resistance in the Early U.S.; the Abolition Movement; Lincoln and the Civil War; Reconstruction; Domestic Terrorism; Black

Intellectuals and the Harlem Renaissance. Most notably, it also includes a unit called Confronting the Mystery of American Exceptionalism. American exceptionalism is the idea that the United States has a special mission in the world as a free, democratic state. The idea has been highly scrutinized in academia and in general discourse as critiques over the contradictions between American ideals and historical realities are emphasized. However, the critique has also led to the elevation of revisionist history and the erosion of national pride.

The African American history course underwent a revision in 2022. It used to rely on a textbook published in 2011, but now focuses on primary sources.²⁶ This alone is not a problem, but those in the revisionist history space have been trying to remove textbooks from classrooms for quite some time, arguing they only provide a Eurocentric view of history.²⁷ According to Social Studies Director Ismael Jimenez, the revision of the curriculum was led by SDP teachers who would be "looking into lectures and workshops from African study experts like Bettina Love and Hasan Jeffries."²⁸

²⁴ Appendix A23.

²⁵ [Graduation Requirements | The School District of Philadelphia](#). (2022, May 6). Postsecondary Readiness - The School District of Philadelphia. Janofsky, M. (2005, June 25). ["Philadelphia Mandates Black History for Graduation."](#) *The New York Times*.

²⁶ Former SDP teacher and Managing Editor at Rethinking Schools [Adam Sanchez](#) was one of the principal writers for the revised African American History curriculum.

²⁷ Zinn Education includes several articles using some variation of the title: "what students won't learn from their textbooks." [Zinn Education Project](#). (2025). For more trends in the teaching of history in public schools, especially the move away from textbook usage see: [American Lesson Plan | American Historical Association](#). (2024). AHA.

²⁸ Hanson, E. (2022, March 11). [African American History Courses Mandated In Major City's Schools](#). Go2Tutors. Hasan Jeffries stated, "It's [critical race theory] saying that people believe in racism because they are born in America. They are born into a society that has embraced and perpetuated these ideas and notions of white supremacy." The City Club of Cleveland. (2021, August 23). [\(Mis\)understanding Critical Race Theory 8.20.2021](#). YouTube. Situating America's founding in 1619 with

the arrival of the first slave, rather than in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence, Jeffries also stated, "Racism is encoded in our national DNA. When we think about the two strands of DNA in the American historical context, one of these strands is absolutely racism. The other is capitalism. And the two combined give us the institution of slavery." [Hasan Jeffries - Professor Watchlist](#). (2025). *Professor Watchlist*.

Bettina Love is the founder of the Abolitionist Teacher Network (ATN), which released the Guide for Racial Justice & Abolitionist Social and Emotional Learning in the form of a free PDF that frames abolitionist teaching with a Social-Emotional learning framework. Love claimed that schools "spirit murder" black and brown children. Love, B. L. (2019, May 24). ["How Schools Are 'Spirit Murdering' Black and Brown Students."](#) *Education Week*. Love also wrote, "To even begin to attack our destructive and punitive educational system, pedagogies that promote social justice must ... help educators understand and recognize America and its schools as spaces of Whiteness, White rage, and White Supremacy, all of which function to terrorize students of color." Love, B. (2019). *We Want To Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*. Beacon.

Jimenez expressed hope that the course will serve as an inspiration for other school districts.²⁹

SDP, George Floyd, and Antiracism

Like many school districts across the country, SDP embarked on an “antiracism” journey in the wake of George Floyd’s death. On June 17, 2020, three weeks after Floyd’s death, Superintendent William Hite Jr. released an antiracism resolution that cited the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and Floyd, and promised “an education that is truly liberating, protecting, and just.”³⁰ Hite declared that SDP would expand its efforts and “take collective action, challenging and changing the ways in which our norms, values, and structures uphold systems of racism.” This, he said, was part of the “necessary work to acknowledge and disrupt racist ideologies and behaviors within our own lives in an effort to dismantle racism within our school system.” Hite announced that, while SDP would continue to address all forms of inequity, it would take a “laser focus on acknowledging and dismantling systems of racial inequity.”

Hite made two very important points. First, this “antiracism” agenda would go beyond individual acts of prejudice and focus on “uprooting policies, deconstructing processes, and eradicating practices that create systems of privilege and power for one

racial group over another.” Dismantling perceived systems of power and privilege would now become the goal of an SDP education.

Second, to those questioning why the focus was solely on race, Hite responded: “Race is the social construction that set the foundation and built the infrastructure of the United States we know today. Racism is the root of all other forms of injustice and provides the nourishment needed for the other systems of oppression to thrive.” While at the time the resolution might have been interpreted as a narrow reaction to the deaths of several Black people at the hands of the police, Hite actually advanced an ideological framework for SDP that claims the United States is irredeemably racist and that all its institutions are oppressive.

As a result of the antiracism resolution, SDP required antiracism and anti-bias training for all staff and students and created a district-wide equity panel. The Equity Panel created the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, which is described as “the bedrock for the School District of Philadelphia’s commitment to anti-racism, providing the structure, strategic guidance, and organizational leadership needed to redesign a more equitable school district.”³¹

Most notably, the antiracism resolution was a call to

²⁹ Lower Merion, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, also offers an African American History elective. (2022, March 9). [Black History Course at Lower Merion draws mixed reactions](#). Acel Moore High School Journalism Workshop. Social Studies Director Ismael Jimenez is working on creating a yearlong local Black Philadelphia history curriculum Hill, C. (2024, February 19). [“Teaching Reconstruction in an era of denial.”](#) *The*

Philadelphia Tribune. Identity-based courses often serve as the gateway for introducing ideological concepts into schools and frequently evolve into graduation requirements.

³⁰ [Philadelphia School District Releases Anti-Racism Declaration](#). CNBNews.

³¹ [Newsletter](#) (2021, September 7). [Link is no longer live.]

change the curriculum to make it more “antiracist.” The curriculum changes went into effect that fall in social studies classes.³²

Antiracism and Dismantling Systems of Oppression

What is antiracism? Antiracism is the process of opposing racism, but it goes far beyond that. Antiracism, just as Hite explained in his resolution, focuses on dismantling the processes, policies, and systems that are deemed to perpetuate racism. Antiracism seeks to address power and privilege, not individual prejudices. As was often said in the immediate years after Floyd’s death, it was not enough to be “not racist.” One must constantly be engaged in this work of dismantling systems of oppression.

According to this antiracist paradigm, the world is divided into two groups of people: the oppressors and the oppressed. In this system, power and privilege are based on skin color with white supremacy viewed as the origin of all kinds of oppression. As such, antiracism initiatives in school systems, in both policy and curriculum, focus solely on fighting supposedly white supremacist systems of power.

In SDP, as in school districts across the country, some of this antiracism work entailed examining and revising disciplinary procedures (and switching to widely used restorative justice practices), access to Advanced Placement and honors courses, and admissions policies to public magnet schools.

Many school districts also made efforts to make their curriculum more “culturally responsive” by providing more “voices and perspectives” to their lesson plans. What differentiates SDP, however, from other school districts is that it completely redesigned its entire curriculum to be antiracist.

What differentiates SDP, however, from other school districts is that it completely redesigned its entire curriculum to be antiracist.

SDP Creates an Antiracist Social Studies Curriculum

While SDP officially underwent its antiracism journey in 2020, the school district had actually embarked on this path much earlier. In 2013, Philadelphia Councilman James Kenney introduced a resolution urging SDP to make Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* a required part of the high school U.S. history curriculum. The resolution declared a “need for students to be taught an unvarnished, honest version of U.S. history that empowers students to differentiate between moments that have truly made our country great versus those that established systemic inequality, privilege, and prejudice which continue to reinforce modern society’s most difficult issues.”³³

Although SDP did not provide copies of Zinn’s book to students, it has for at least a decade incorporated Zinn’s ideological approach to the study of history and

³² TRIBUNE, P. (2020, July 9). [School District of Philadelphia outlines anti-racism initiative](#). The Philadelphia Tribune. For more on SDP’s equity initiative see: [“Philadelphia schools](#)


[launch “comprehensive initiative” to end racism.”](#) *The College Fix*. (2020, September 20).

³³ Zinn Education Project. (2013, October 24). [Philadelphia Embraces People’s History](#).

included resources on its website from the organization named after him: the Zinn Education Project.³⁴ SDP also includes resources from Rethinking Schools, Zinn Education’s parent organization along with Teaching for Change, on their website.³⁵ This is not surprising: many of Rethinking Schools’ writers are SDP teachers, and former SDP teacher Adam Sanchez is the organization’s Managing Editor.



SDP’s social studies curriculum also makes use of another social justice organization’s resources: Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching for Tolerance).³⁶ Every quarter, each social studies course includes an entire unit titled “Anti-Racism and Social Justice Supplemental Resources.” These resources, based on the Southern Poverty Law Center’s (SPLC) Learning for Justice Social Justice Standards, focus on “Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action” and promote “prejudice reduction and collective action.”³⁷ Learning for Justice’s Social Justice Standards are widely used in school districts across the country.

Resources for lesson planning / Sample Lessons for SDP				
Bookmark  d History				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading Like an Historian (US & World History) (Digital Inquiry Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eyewitness to History (US & World), "eyewitness accounts"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online Newspapers (global)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Old Maps Online (global)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• World History Sources
<i>U.S. History / Philadelphia History</i>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore PA History / Teach PA History (lesson plans with primary sources; bottom right of the page by historical periods)• Library of Congress: Teaching with Primary Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gilder Lehrman (teacher page)• National Archives Educator Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Historical Society of Pennsylvania Unit Plans (mostly Philly / PA history)• National Constitution Center: Constitution 101		
Zinn Education Project: Teaching Materials		Rethinking Schools - Explore Resources (bottom on page)		

The Three Sins of Western Civilization

As explained earlier, a traditional history course covers topics chronologically. SDP, however, provides a thematic approach to the study of history. Examining

³⁴ For more on the Zinn Education project, see CAMERA’s report: Sadick, J. (2025). *Zinn Education Project: Historical Revisionism Fostering Hostility Toward America and Israel*.

³⁵ *Rethinking Schools* describes itself as “a nonprofit publisher and advocacy organization dedicated to sustaining and strengthening public education through social justice teaching and education activism.” They produce magazines, books, and other resources to “promote equity and racial justice in the classroom.” One of their recent publications is *Teaching Palestine* which will be discussed later in this report. *Teaching for Change* also provides resources for teachers “to create schools where students learn to read, write, and change the world.” Teaching for Change’s other projects include Challenging Islamophobia and Black Lives Matter at Schools.

³⁶ *Learning for Justice* is the SPLC’s community education program whose mission “cultivates and nurtures dialogue, learning, reflection, and action from those closest to and harmed most by injustices in the South.” Founded in 1971 during the height of desegregation efforts, the SPLC originally focused on defending the civil rights of Black Americans and targeting groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. Today, the SPLC maintains a list of organizations it designates as hate groups. However, it has been criticized for concentrating almost exclusively on white supremacists and far-right movements, while giving comparatively little attention to ideologically motivated hate from the far left and other sources. As a result, the SPLC’s framework tends to frame hate as a uniquely white phenomenon.

³⁷ Learning for Justice. (2022). *Social Justice Standards: The Learning For Justice Anti-Bias Framework*.

the lesson plans within each unit reveals an almost singular obsession on studying what could be labeled the three sins of Western Civilization: capitalism, racism, and settler colonialism (although these are not exclusive to Western Civilization). The curriculum is not about the study of history, but the study of grievance.

The year-long World History course entirely omits or only superficially addresses major events and movements in world history. The SDP World History curriculum either ignores or gives minimal attention to the following: ancient history, particularly the Greeks and the Romans, the rise of Christianity and Christendom, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, WWI, WWII, the Holocaust, and communism. In other words, Western Civilization is essentially absent from SDP's course. The course similarly omits much of Eastern Civilization and South American history. Students do not learn about ancient Chinese and Japanese civilizations and empires, the Mongols, the Aztecs, the Incas, or the Ottoman Empire.

In October 2024, Director of Social Studies Curriculum Ismael Jimenez emailed staff inviting them to revise the curriculum further. The message stated: "We are excited to move towards a theme-based approach, integrating the major concepts of decolonization into our Social Studies curriculum. This shift will empower our students to critically analyze historical narratives and perspectives. Join us in crafting an inclusive and thought-provoking World History curriculum that resonates with the experiences of diverse cultures across the globe."³⁸

The email underscores the district's commitment to a thematic, ideologically-driven curriculum with decolonization and intersectionality as its guiding frameworks. This emphasis raises serious concerns about the depth and balance of the historical content students are actually receiving.

The curriculum is not about the study of history, but the study of grievance.

As a result of those efforts, SDP published their Social Studies Instructional Guide for 2024-2025 with an introduction entitled, "Decolonizing Social Studies: Implementing the Five Core Instructional Principles for Inclusive and Transformative Education." The guide, influenced by Paolo Freire and Gholdy Muhammad's "criticality," describes its purpose thusly: "This K-12 Social Studies Instructional Guide is a vital resource designed to equip educators with strategies to foster culturally relevant and decolonized social studies instruction. It aligns with the district's vision of nurturing students into critical thinkers and compassionate, informed citizens. The guide is structured around five core instructional principles: Collaborative Learning Communities, Dialectical Thinking & Multiperspectivity, Critical Literacies, Community Transformation, and Inclusive and Equitable Practices."³⁹

The guide provides recommendations for "decolonizing" each academic course. For sociology, for example, teachers are told: "A decolonized sociology seeks to root itself in historical understanding as well as a shift in cultural assumptions

³⁸ Ismael Jimenez, personal communication, June 10, 2023.

³⁹ [Social Studies Instructional Guide Draft \(Final Draft\)](#); p. 1

that can decenter mainstream Eurocentric notions. For example, if we look at European modernity and the belief that it is unavoidable from an indigenous perspective, we would focus on settler colonialism, displacement, genocide, how indigenous people view concepts like land and time, and the fight to preserve their language and culture.”⁴⁰

While challenging perspectives and thinking should be part of a well-rounded education, SDP’s Instruction Guide teaches students that the only perspectives necessary to challenge are Western, Eurocentric ones. Other perspectives are presented as valid and beyond scrutiny.

Capitalism

In the United States History course students are briefly introduced to the concepts of communism and the Cold War, but in the World History course students have an entire unit on critiquing capitalism. The unit reflects some modern trends in historiography with a lesson studying the commodity of chocolate, but the overall message relayed to students is that capitalism is an unjust economic system.

In a scenario on laissez-faire capitalism, students are told that twenty people are shipwrecked on an island where they must look for food. Students are tasked with conducting a “forced choice debate,” where different corners of the room represent different viewpoints and their job is to convince students to change their minds and move to another corner of the room. In the scenario, “Bill” manages to find three chickens providing him a continuous food supply. The three chickens appear to be the only ones on the island. The students are then asked, “What should Bill do?”

After the scenario is debated the teacher provides a brief mention of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* and Karl Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*. This lesson constitutes the entirety of students’ exposure to capitalism.

While SDP spends twenty days critiquing capitalism, communism is only discussed in relation to capitalism or as a response to European colonialism. The brutality of the Soviet Union including the gulag system, which murdered tens of millions of Russians and other nationalities, is not mentioned. Mao Zedong is included merely to point out that the U.S. was backing the Nationalists. The Cultural Revolution is only included in a set of primary source documents that are meant to explain that the youth followed the movement. The 1.5 million people murdered during the Cultural Revolution are not mentioned. While criticism of capitalism is valid, SDP provides no substantive critique of other economic systems.

Racism

In the early 2020s, many states introduced bills restricting how teachers could discuss race, racism, and so-called “divisive concepts” in classrooms. These topics were labeled as critical race theory (CRT). CRT is an academic framework that examines how laws and systems can perpetuate racial inequalities, even in the absence of overt racism. While many educators and districts denied that CRT was being explicitly taught, often claiming it served only as a lens for interpretation, some curricula clearly included concepts derived from the theory.

In SDP, for example, elements directly related to CRT are explicitly taught in the tenth-grade World History

⁴⁰ The School District of Philadelphia, *Social Studies Instructional Guide, K-12*. (2024-2025); p. 20

course. In the first unit, titled “Belief Systems and Understanding History,” students do not study world religions, as the unit title might suggest. Instead, they are introduced to the concept of intersectionality, a term coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how overlapping aspects of identity—such as race, gender, and class—shape individuals’ experiences. As part of the lesson, students watch a video titled *Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw Defines Intersectionality* and are then instructed to create a “River of Life,” mapping out moments in their lives where different aspects of their intersectional identity (e.g., race, gender) may have influenced their experiences.⁴¹

In a Teaching Tolerance video, students are told: “We all have multiple identities that make us who we are,” while terms like “race,” “gender,” “ability,” and “orientation” appear on screen. Intersectionality is presented as a framework for understanding how various forms of oppression and privilege intersect and reinforce one another.

The video presents three fictional students:

1. Gerry, a disabled youth from a low-income family who struggles to find work;
2. Fatima, a Muslim immigrant from Somalia who faces social exclusion;

3. Greta, a white girl from an affluent background who assumes she will attend college and secure a good job.

Students are instructed to compare Greta’s privilege to the challenges faced by Gerry and Fatima. A box is placed over Gerry and Fatima’s images to indicate their membership in “marginalized communities” who “don’t get to choose whether or not to think about their identity,” in contrast to Greta, who does.⁴²

By centering race and a CRT perspective throughout the history curriculum, SDP fails to offer alternative interpretative frameworks and instead presents a narrow, limited understanding of history that oversimplifies past events and, consequently, contemporary issues.

Settler Colonialism

One of the central themes in the School District of Philadelphia’s (SDP) World History curriculum is settler colonialism, which becomes a major focus in Quarter 1, Unit 3: “Migration and Belief Systems.”

While this unit introduces students to Indigenous Australians and defines settler colonialism, the lessons themselves quickly shift away from the Indigenous Australians. Instead, students are prompted to explore

⁴¹[Q1 Unit 1: “Belief Systems and Understanding History.”](#) In the African American History course, students receive explicit instruction in critical race theory during the third quarter’s “Anti-Racism and Social Justice” resources unit. Within the *Learning for Justice* “Justice Anchor” standards, students are expected to “recognize that power and privilege influence relationships on interpersonal, intergroup, and institutional levels and consider how they have been affected by those dynamics.” Understanding CRT is identified as an *Enduring Understanding*—a central learning objective of the unit. Teacher instructions direct students to “contextualize the topic addressed in the essential question by analyzing historical data and

investigating primary sources from Reconstruction, as well as reading articles outlining the theories of Afro-Pessimism and Critical Race Theory.” Students are then asked to consider the following: “If the African American community is living in a perpetual state of ‘social death’ and racism established by the white power structure in the United States, as the theories of Afro-Pessimism and Critical Race Theory contend, how can the Black community consolidate economic and political power?” [Grade 10 Quarter 3 “Anti-Racism and Social Justice Resources.”](#)
⁴² Another video in the lesson discusses queer identity, further reinforcing the unit’s focus on modern social frameworks rather than traditional historical content.

other examples of settler colonialism in U.S. and global history to identify “common threads” among them. This pedagogical approach is problematic. Students are given minimal historical content yet are asked to draw connections between disparate examples. As a result, any patterns or “common threads” they identify are likely to be superficial and unsupported by deep historical knowledge.

This thematic strategy aligns with SDP’s broader curricular approach, which emphasizes intersectionality from the outset. In fact, the very first unit of the World History course, “Belief Systems,” marks a significant departure from traditional world history curricula. While units on belief systems typically focus on world religions, SDP’s version centers on ideological and sociopolitical themes instead. For example, the vocabulary for this 14-day unit includes terms like absolute progress, anti-progress, everybody’s progress, relativism, colonialism, and intersectionality.

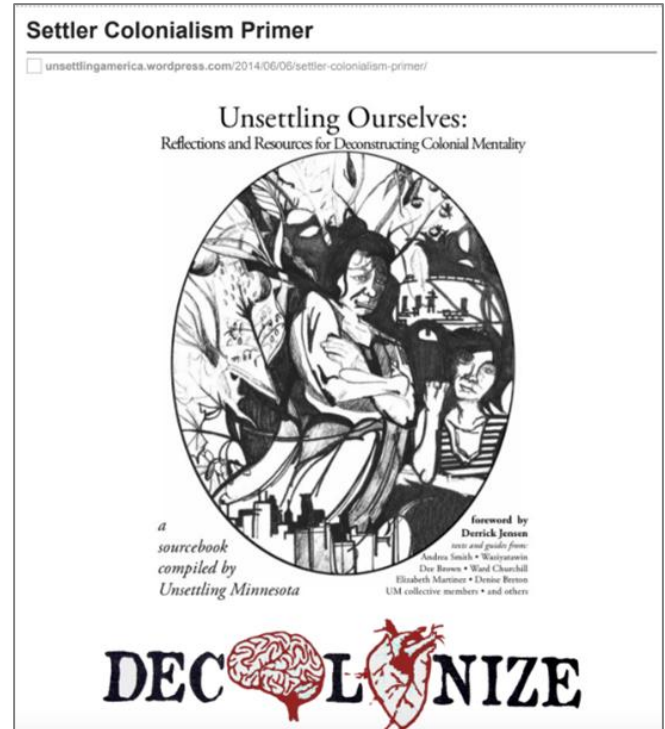
In another unit titled “Struggles for Liberation and Social Justice,” resistance to colonialism is explored over two weeks. The content centers on:

1. Frantz Fanon’s theories of colonialism and the dehumanization of colonized peoples;
2. The Bandung Conference, a Cold War-era summit of Afro-Asian nations;
3. The Soweto Uprising in apartheid-era South Africa.

These events are presented as case studies of resistance, but important historical context is noticeably absent. For example, the curriculum omits

the geopolitical tensions surrounding the Bandung Conference, particularly concerns about Soviet influence, leaving students with a narrow understanding of the Cold War era. Once again, SDP drops students into major global events without providing the necessary background to grasp their complexity, encouraging oversimplified conclusions.

Pulling together all three of these “sins” of Western Civilization is a reading found in Unit 3, Quarter1: “Migration and Belief Systems,” where students read *Unsettling Ourselves: Reflections and Resources for Deconstructing Colonial Mentality*, a sourcebook compiled by Unsettling Minnesota. The sourcebook states: “Marx’s theory of ‘primitive accumulation’ helps shine light on settler colonialism and places it in the context of capitalism.”⁴³ Primitive accumulation “involves dispossessing people from their land.”⁴⁴



⁴³ Hurwitz, L., & Bourque, S. B. (2014). *Unsettling Ourselves: Reflections and Resources for Decolonizing Colonial Mentality* p. 3.

⁴⁴ Hurwitz & Bourque, p. 3.

The article explains that, under settler colonialism, a system of racialization occurs. According to Andrea Smith, who is quoted in the sourcebook, “white supremacy [relates] to the foundations of settler colonialism in the United States,” as “the three primary logics of white supremacy in the US context include: (1) slaveability/anti-black racism, which anchors capitalism; (2) genocide, which anchors colonialism; and (3) orientalism, which anchors war.”⁴⁵

After explaining what settler colonialism is and how decolonization works (“the literal unsettling of settlers and ultimately the repatriation of land”⁴⁶), students are then given a list of ways a settler can be an ally to indigenous people. Activists, students are taught, “are in it for the long haul.”⁴⁷

SDP and the Teaching of Islam and Muslim History

While SDP’s coverage of belief systems does eventually address the major religions, this instruction is limited and framed primarily to serve SDP’s broader ideological agenda.

In the unit “How Do Belief Systems Develop?” students spend fifteen days discussing various belief systems, with two days devoted to the study of the major religions and their beliefs and practices. In Topic 5, “Philosophical Perspectives on Progress,” students study “the intricate relationship between belief systems and the concept of development. Throughout history, belief systems, including religious ones, have profoundly influenced societal values and perspectives on progress.”⁴⁸

Students then compare various work ethics, again with limited contextual knowledge. The teacher notes explain that the Protestant work ethic “significantly shaped the development of capitalist economies in Western societies, influencing attitudes towards labor, wealth accumulation, and societal progress.”⁴⁹ SDP resources juxtapose the Protestant work ethic with other belief systems including the Hindu caste system and Confucianism.

SDP ignores the widespread use of Sharia law to oppress individuals and minorities and instead highlights its promotion of “equitable financial transactions” and prohibition of money lending as superior to capitalist financial practices.

But SDP then offers a third example on work and finances from Sharia law: “Islamic finance principles, guided by Sharia law, prioritize ethical and equitable financial transactions, prohibiting practices such as interest-based lending and speculative trading. These principles have informed economic systems in Muslim-majority countries and Islamic financial institutions worldwide, shaping approaches to economic development and wealth distribution.”⁵⁰ Sharia law is the moral and legal code of Islam derived from its religious texts (i.e. Qur’an, Hadith). While there is some variety of interpretation of Sharia law, Sharia law has been used to oppress people, specifically women, the LGBTQ community, and religious minorities in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia, Nigeria, Sudan, Pakistan, Malaysia, and

⁴⁵ Hurwitz & Bourque, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Hurwitz & Bourque, p. 12.

⁴⁷ Hurwitz & Bourque, p.12.

⁴⁸ [Q1 Unit 2: “Development of Belief Systems.”](#)

⁴⁹ [Q1 Unit 2: “Development of Belief Systems.”](#)

⁵⁰ [Q1 Unit 2: “Development of Belief Systems.”](#)

others. SDP ignores the widespread use of Sharia law to oppress individuals and minorities and instead highlights its promotion of “equitable financial transactions” and prohibition of money lending as superior to capitalist financial practices.⁵¹

In April 2023, Social Studies Director Ismael Jimenez sent a district-wide email inviting teachers to a paid professional development training titled “Practicing Islam in Contemporary American Society.” Jimenez explained that the session will feature SDP educators who practice Islam “from various backgrounds and experiences, providing valuable insights into the subject matter.”⁵² Jimenez further shared, “This session is open to all, including students and community members who are interested in learning about the Islamic faith and its practice in contemporary American society.”⁵³ Even students were invited to learn from their teachers how they practice Islam. There appears to have been some backlash to this offering, which does not appear to have been held, but the original impetus to hold this session is deeply troubling.

In a unit titled “The Historical Development of Conflict,” students are taught, albeit very selectively, that religions by their very nature conflict with one another. While the unit covers numerous examples of Muslims in conflict with Jews, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, and even Sunni and Shia conflict, the unit fails to discuss why seven out of the ten conflicts listed involve Muslims. Despite its heavy emphasis on

settler colonialism, the SDP curriculum neglects to examine Islam’s own history of colonization and its role in generating conflicts throughout the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Despite its heavy emphasis on settler colonialism, the SDP curriculum neglects to examine Islam’s own history of colonization and its role in generating conflicts throughout the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

The unit also includes readings from the Qur’an on the concept of jihad, including in a paper titled “Jihad in Islam: Just-War Theory in the Qur’an and Sunnah.” The paper argues that jihad is about striving for justice, not unprovoked aggression.⁵⁴ According to the author, “Jihad in Islam, or warfare in defense of life and Muslim religious rights, is legally analogous to modern just-war theory as enshrined in international law.”⁵⁵ Jihad, meaning struggle, was also used in early Islamic history to justify wars against Jews who rejected Muhammad’s teachings. In modern times, terrorist organizations have called for jihad against Jews to justify their violence in religious terms. SDP’s inclusion of this paper ignores the historical usage of the term presenting only a controversial, narrow, and sanitized interpretation.

The paper is published by the Yaqeen Institute, whose self-described purpose is “to move people to a

⁵¹ The “Belief Systems” unit also serves as a vehicle for promoting Marxist intersectional themes. In an optional extension activity, students read an article titled “*Political Theology: Text and Practice in Dalit Panther Community*,” which discusses how the Dalit—formerly known as “Untouchables”—converted to Buddhism with the aim of establishing a democratic socialist state.

⁵² Ismael Jimenez, personal communication, April 10, 2023.

⁵³ Ismael Jimenez, personal communication, April 10, 2023.

⁵⁴ (2016). *Jihad in Islam: Just-War Theory in the Quran and Sunnah*. Yaqeen Institute.

⁵⁵ *Jihad in Islam: Just-War Theory in the Quran and Sunnah*, p.1

realization of Islam that inspires faith, grounds it with intellect, and creates a world of doers who are tranquil, confident, and purpose-driven.”⁵⁶ The Yaqeen Institute’s founder, Omar Suleiman, has a history of making antisemitic statements, including, among many examples:

1. “The Zionists are the enemies of God, His Messengers, sincere followers of all religions, and humanity as a whole.”
2. On [October 30, 2014](#), Suleiman [tweeted](#): “For the first time since 1967, Masjid Al Aqsa is closed. A third intifada is near insha'Allah. #FreePalestine.”
3. On [March 13, 2013](#), Suleiman appeared in a YouTube [video](#) speaking about the “Bani Israel,” an Islamic [term](#) for the Jewish people. He [quoted](#) [00:05:30] an Islamic text as [saying](#): “‘If it was not for Bani Israel, meat would not decay’ ... ‘food would never become stale.’”⁵⁷

SDP provides additional resources on Islam. The religious conflict unit includes a list of Jewish-Muslim conflicts for study. Examples provided in the list are:

1. Al-Aqsa (Second) Intifada (2000-2005)
2. Conflict over the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif
3. Jewish-Muslim Conflicts in Iraq, Arab Countries, and France
4. Farhud in Iraq (1941)
5. Jewish Exodus from Arab and Muslim Countries (1948-1970s)
6. Tension in France (2000s-present)

The headings given to these examples, however, whitewash the conflict and who is perpetuating the violence. “The Jewish-Muslim conflicts in Iraq, Arab countries, and France” gives the impression that there is just some disagreement between Jews and Muslims. In fact, Muslims ethnically cleansed Jews from Iraq and other Arab countries in the 1940s-1970s. The Farhud was an indiscriminate massacre of Jews. In France, it is Muslims who are violently targeting Jews.

SDP also includes a resource by Syed Muhammad Khan titled *Early Muslim Conquests: 622-656 BCE*. The article details Muslim conquest across the Middle East, North Africa, and islands in the Mediterranean. There are a few problems with this article. First, Khan asserts that Islam in its origins facilitated “equality, egalitarianism, and equal rights for women.”⁵⁸ Khan fails to explain that early Muslims regarded women as inferior to men, an idea deeply rooted in Islamic scripture, tradition, and legislation.

By the eighth century, the Pact of Omar, which drew upon earlier Qur’anic imperatives, declared that “people of the Book” (Jews and Christians) were to be kept alive as long as they were treated as second-class citizens and subjugated as dhimmis.

Second, Khan writes that, “[O]pposing forces and confederacies made vehement attempts to crush the Muslim forces but were all defeated; a Jewish confederacy was crushed in 628 CE at the Battle of Khaybar.”⁵⁹ However, the Battle of Khaybar was not a defensive war, as Khan claims, but an offensive campaign against Jews allied with Bedouin tribes. Muhammad launched a surprise attack not to defend

⁵⁶ Yaqeen Institute.

⁵⁷ [Canary Mission](#). (2025). Canarymission.org.

⁵⁸ Khan, S. M. (2020, June 25). “[Early Muslim Conquests \(622-656 CE\)](#).” *World History Encyclopedia*. p. 2.

⁵⁹ “[Early Muslim Conquests \(622-656 CE\)](#).” p. 3.

the Muslim community, but to secure a victory that would boost his followers' morale and persuade the Bedouin to join his cause. From his earliest raids, Muhammad targeted Jewish communities not out of self-defense, but because they rejected his claim to be the final prophet.⁶⁰

Khan describes Muslim colonialism merely as a "religious and socio-political force in Arabia."⁶¹ SDP, which revised its entire curriculum to "decolonize" it, oversimplifies the history of Muslim conquest and strangely never refers to it as settler colonialism. SDP provides no additional resources to suggest that they apply settler colonialism ideology to Muslim conquest. The "criticality" that SDP applies to history is noticeably absent here in their sanitized narrative of an oppressive force.

Additionally, SDP includes multiple readings on Islamophobia and Orientalism. A poem called "Islamophobic Lullaby" centers on a child named Jamal, who is meant to symbolize innocent children targeted and stereotyped because of their ethnicity. The poem criticizes the government and media for fueling prejudice highlighting the hypocrisy of demonizing Muslims while claiming that society enjoys their cultural contributions (i.e. food). The poem ties modern injustices, surveillance, Grenfell (a 2017 high-rise apartment fire in London), refugee deaths, torture,

and the erosion of civil liberties, to a broader history of colonialism and systemic oppression.⁶²

SDP provides three other readings on Islamophobia:

1. Tahir Abbas's "Reflection: the 'war on terror,' Islamophobia and radicalisation twenty years on";⁶³
2. Khaled A. Beydoun's, "Exporting Islamophobia in the Global 'War on Terror';"⁶⁴
3. Jack William Johnson's, "Edward W. Said's Orientalism: A lesson on Islamophobia"⁶⁵ (A *Teen Vogue* article reiterating many of Said's points is also included).⁶⁶

Abbas, Beydoun, and Said all have a history of minimizing terrorism, labeling the conflict in Gaza as a genocide, and labeling Israel an apartheid settler colonial state.⁶⁷ Strikingly, SDP does not include other forms of hatred and prejudice in the religious conflicts lesson.

The history and beliefs of the other major world religions receive minimal coverage by SDP, especially when compared to the many resources provided on Islam. Judaism, in particular, is largely missing from SDP's curriculum. The most coverage Judaism receives is in "The Historical Development of

⁶⁰ Pollack, E. G., & Norwood, S. H. (2024). *Uncle Tom and the Happy Dhimmi: Reimagining Subjugation in the Islamic World and Antebellum South*. Middle East Forum.

⁶¹ "Early Muslim Conquests (622-656 CE)." p. 1.

⁶² Lowkey – *Islamophobic Lullabies*. (2019). Genius.

⁶³ Abbas, T. (2021). "Reflection: the 'war on terror.'" *Islamophobia and radicalisation twenty years on.* *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 14(4), 1–3.

⁶⁴ Beydoun, K. A. (2020). "Exporting Islamophobia in the Global 'War on Terror.'" *New York University Law Review Online*.

⁶⁵ Edward Said's "orientalism" argues that knowledge about the East is a system of thought tied to colonial power created by the West. Johnson, J. (2017, December 30). "Edward W. Said's Orientalism: A lesson on Islamophobia." *Medium*.

⁶⁶ Verghese, N. (2021, October 13). "What Is Orientalism? A Stereotyped, Colonialist Vision of Asian Cultures." *Teen Vogue*.

⁶⁷ Tamir Abbas delivered an address in which he stated, "Many [the Israelis] suffered disturbing deaths at the hands of Hamas fighters. But these are the same Hamas fighters, of course, who were able to take 250 people hostage and keep them alive despite the endless bombs dropping on them all." Abbas, T. (2023, November 28). *Talking Palestine: The Politics of Narrating the Conflict*. See [Khaled Beydoun's social media](#).

Conflict” (Quarter 2, Unit 2), where it is compared to Islam and Christianity. In this unit, there is a section titled “Analyzing Religious Justifications for War,” where students are prompted, “How has religion justified warfare? How has it been used to mitigate warfare?”⁶⁸ Students are then given several excerpts on war and peace from the Qur’an, the Old Testament, and the New Testament.

SDP includes four excerpts from the Qur’an. For each excerpt, two interpretations are also provided. The examples are:

1. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256): “There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion.”
2. Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:32): “Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.”
3. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:190-193): “Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors. And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and fitnah is worse than killing... And fight them until there is no fitnah and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah.”
4. Surah At-Tawbah (9:5): “And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and

give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”

While SDP acknowledges that some of these verses have been used, or rather “misused... to justify acts of terrorism and violence against non-Muslims,” great effort is made to emphasize that this ignores historical context of the Qur’an or goes against “broader Qur’anic principles of mercy and justice” and the “overarching message of peace and coexistence.”⁶⁹

The same care, however, is not provided in commentary accompanying the passages from the Old Testament. For example, a quote from Deuteronomy 20:10-12 on offering peace before waging war is explained as influencing “Israel’s approach to peace negotiations and military operations.”⁷⁰ While there are almost thirty countries with Islam as their state religion and thirteen countries with Christianity as their state religion, in this entire lesson on religious justifications of war, SDP only calls out the Jewish state of Israel.

Teaching About Israel

While SDP’s World History curriculum is light on the history of nation-states, and barely even mentions particular nation-states, there are two countries that receive emphasis: the United States and Israel. Both countries, according to SDP, are settler colonial racist states. The following section explores how Israel is covered in the World History course.

In “The Struggles for Liberation and Social Justice Unit” (Quarter 2, Unit 3), students complete a “Resistance Movement Memorial Project” where they assume the role of a sculptor tasked with creating a

⁶⁸ Q2 Unit 2: “The Historical Development of Conflict.”

⁶⁹ Q2 Unit 2: “The Historical Development of Conflict.” p. 19

⁷⁰ Q2 Unit 2: “The Historical Development of Conflict.” p. 19

memorial to honor a chosen resistance movement. Students are given a lengthy list of choices with sources.⁷¹

One of the project choices is the Great March of Return in 2018-2019 when tens of thousands of Palestinians marched to the security fence on the Gaza-Israel border. Hamas and other terrorist groups were key organizers of the protests, launching incendiaries and firing on the Israeli military.

SDP shares five resources for this topic including articles by Médecins Sans Frontières, Amnesty International, Al-Jazeera, a video interview of Ramah Kudaimi, the Director of Programs and Operations for US Campaign to End the Occupation, and a video by the Turkish state broadcaster TRT. All these organizations label Israel an apartheid state and accuse it of genocide. In other words, SDP only provides students with anti-Israel sources for them to conduct their research. Ironically students are instructed to conduct further research and are expected to verify the reliability of their sources.

Israel is also discussed in the “Conceptualizing Peace and Conflict” unit (Quarter 2, Unit 1). In this unit students are asked to discuss International Humanitarian Law with respect to “Ukraine,

Palestine/Israel, Sudan, Congo,” and other conflicts.⁷² Once again students are asked to discuss these examples and draw conclusions about the conflicts with very little background knowledge.

That the hijacking of four commercial airliners and their use as weapons to murder nearly 3,000 Americans, including one plane diverted by heroic passengers to prevent further mass casualties, could be treated as a definitional puzzle is striking.

This unit also includes a lesson by Bill Bigelow of Rethinking Schools titled *Whose Terrorism?* In this activity, students are asked to define terrorism and then apply their definitions to world events. Bigelow introduces the lesson by questioning how to define terrorism in reference to September 11: “Shortly after the horrific September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, then-President Bush denounced these as acts of war and proclaimed a ‘war on terrorism.’ But what exactly was the target of this war? And what did the president mean by terrorism? Despite uttering the words terror, terrorist, or terrorism 32 times in a September 20 speech to the nation, he never once defined terrorism.”⁷³

⁷¹ Q3 Unit 3: “Struggles for Liberation and Social Justice.” For the Iranian Revolution, SDP provides a *CrashCourse* video, a timeline from the Brookings Institution, and an article by Qatari-owned *Al Jazeera* titled “The Iranian Revolution (1977–1979)” by Stephen Dunois, a professor who has publicly argued that Iran was not developing nuclear weapons and is an outspoken advocate for BDS. SDP lists the central topics of the Iranian Revolution unit as “democracy” and “religion.” However, based on the selected sources, it is unclear whether SDP intends for

students to view the Iranian Revolution as a democratic or anti-democratic movement.

⁷² Q2 Unit 1: “Conceptualizing Peace and Conflict.” SDP’s emphasis on international human rights law over the supremacy of United States law is significant, as certain groups, such as the Democratic Socialists of America, hold similar positions on issues including Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS).

⁷³ Bigelow, B. *Whose “Terrorism”?* Zinn Education. p. 1.



That the hijacking of four commercial airliners and their use as weapons to murder nearly 3,000 Americans and foreign nationals, including one plane diverted by heroic passengers to prevent further mass casualties, could be treated as a definitional puzzle is striking.

Students are then presented with several “what is terrorism?” scenarios meant to illustrate the difficulty of defining the term. The purported examples include: “Israeli soldiers taunting and shooting children in Palestinian refugee camps, supported by U.S. military aid; Indian farmers burning Monsanto-supplied genetically modified cotton crops and threatening to destroy Monsanto offices; the 1998 U.S. cruise missile

attack on Sudan’s main pharmaceutical plant; and sanctions against Iraq that, according to U.N. reports, killed as many as half a million children.”⁷⁴

Conspicuously absent are well-documented acts of terrorism by terrorists such as the Pan Am 103 bombing, the U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, the first and second intifadas, the Oklahoma City bombing, the Beslan school massacre, or the Mumbai attacks. Instead, the emphasis falls almost exclusively on powerful states, particularly the United States and Israel, portrayed as perpetrators of oppression. SDP’s inclusion of two democratic states instead of designated terror-sponsoring regimes, such as Iran—and their proxies—is deeply concerning.⁷⁵

Students are then provided ten scenarios based on historical events, but with critical context withheld to guide them toward the predetermined conclusion that the United States is a sponsor of terrorism. Two of the examples also implicate Israel. None of the scenarios involve recognized terrorist organizations or terror-supporting states.

Bigelow reports the conclusions students draw from the lesson: “Ever since they announced that we were going to have a war on terrorism I have wondered who or what a terrorist is. And ... it’s suspicious that they still haven’t defined terrorism.”⁷⁶ This is false. There has been a federal definition of terrorism since at least 1992.⁷⁷

When asked why President Bush had not provided a definition of terrorism after 9/11, one student answered, “If you don’t have any boundaries, then

⁷⁴ Bigelow, B. *Whose “Terrorism”?* Zinn Education. p. 28.

⁷⁵ The lesson cites Eqbal Ahmad, a Pakistani political scientist and activist who was indicted for conspiring to kidnap Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. The case was eventually dismissed.

⁷⁶ Bigelow, B. *Whose “Terrorism”?* Zinn Education. p. 29.

⁷⁷ 18 USC 2331: [Definitions](https://www.uscode.house.gov/). [Uscode.house.gov](https://www.uscode.house.gov/).

anyone can be a terrorist.”⁷⁸ Another concluded, “The U.S. government won’t define terrorism because they don’t want to be able to be considered terrorists.”⁷⁹

In other words, the lesson is not about clarifying the meaning of terrorism, but about indicting the United States and Israel as terrorist actors.

Bigelow concludes his commentary on the question “What is Terrorism?” by writing: “As many writers and activists, especially from the Third World, pointed out in the wake of September 11, the U.S. government is ill-placed to lecture the world about terrorism. Let’s clarify with students what precisely we mean by terrorism. And then let’s encourage students to apply this definition to U.S. conduct in the world.”⁸⁰ In other words, the lesson is not about clarifying the meaning of terrorism but about indicting the United States and Israel as terrorist actors.

SDP’s Response to October 7

On October 12, 2023, Superintendent Watlington issued a statement in response to Hamas’s October 7 attack only vaguely referencing “the violence in the Middle East.” The email included resources from Learning for Justice that stated: “We know this conflict connects to imperialism and other oppressive systems that we encourage educators to name and address with students. We know that people are dying, fighting for their lives and engaging in liberation movements to be heard and treated with dignity—and that they’ve been doing so for decades. And we know that all children deserve to be safe.”⁸¹

In response to the brutal rape, murder, and kidnapping of Israelis, Watlington’s impulse was to provide resources connecting October 7 to imperialism and liberation movements. In the antiracist settler colonial framework, the superintendent justified the horrific violence committed by Hamas, incapable or unwilling to provide the necessary moral clarity the community needed.

SDP’s response to October 7, however, got worse. In November 2023, Professional Learning Specialist Nureen Ignacio shared with staff a professional development session titled, “Decolonizing the Curriculum: Brief History of Palestine and the Creation of Israel: Contextualizing the Current Conflict and Genocide.” The session, led by Dr. Jubilee, the Chief of Equity, was described as “holding space” to “discuss ways to support Palestinian students and conversation about Palestine.”⁸² It does not appear SDP “held space” for Jewish and Israeli students.

In the antiracist settler colonial framework, the superintendent justified the horrific violence committed by Hamas, incapable or unwilling to provide the necessary moral clarity the community needed.

SDP staff have also shared numerous resources since October 7. On October 17, 2023, Curriculum Specialist Deborah Wei wrote to a few staff members, “In case anyone asks, I have been trying to look up resources that shouldn’t be questioned. One is an independent journalism newsite [sic] made up of Palestinian and

⁷⁸ Bigelow, B. *Whose “Terrorism”?* Zinn Education. p. 29.

⁷⁹ Bigelow, B. *Whose “Terrorism”?* Zinn Education. p. 29.

⁸⁰ Bigelow, B. *Whose “Terrorism”?* Zinn Education. p. 30.

⁸¹ Tony Watlington, personal communication, October 12, 2023.

⁸² Nureen H. Ignacio, personal communication, November 22, 2023.

Israeli reporters.⁸³ The website Wei recommends is +972 Magazine, a hardline, anti-Israel publication whose contributing writers label Israel an “apartheid” state to be dismantled. Wei then shared these two articles:

1. “Have We Learned Nothing? The current crisis in Israel and Palestine draws stark comparison to the aftermath of 9/11.”⁸⁴ Written just six days after October 7, the article slurs Israel as an apartheid state and draws a comparison to 9/11, asserting that “emotion and bloodlust overwhelmed reason” in the aftermath—an assessment the author directs at the United States. By characterizing the U.S. response to 9/11 as “bloodlust” the author implicitly suggests that Israel will “overreact” in a similar manner following the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust.
2. “We Cannot Cross Until We Can Carry Each Other” in *Jewish Currents*. Here the author criticizes Jews who pointed out that October 7 was the worst massacre against Jews since the Holocaust because “This language deploys the bombs that fall on Gazans.”⁸⁵

Not a single source is fact-based; they are all opinion pieces. Wei’s recommendations are deeply troubling: all three use “As a Jew” Jews; that is, Jews who tokenize their own Jewishness and credibility to demonize Israel. The two articles shamefully blame the Israeli victims (and the United States in the case of 9/11) and effectively silence any sympathy for the Jewish victims of Hamas’ terrorism. This is what the

SDP curriculum specialist believed were “resources that shouldn’t be questioned.”

SDP also compiled a webpage of resources. Those resources ranged from the relatively benign, focusing on how to talk about war in general, to biased, including Learning for Justice, Vox, and Human Rights Watch.⁸⁶

In addition to the Rethinking Schools and Zinn Education lesson plans included in the SDP curricular resources on their website, on September 11, 2024, Curriculum Development Specialist for grades 9-12 Dr. Donna Sharer also encouraged teachers to use the following resources “that may be beneficial to include in a World History unit on colonization [and] decolonization.”⁸⁷

1. Zinn Education: “Teaching the Seeds of Violence” by Bill Bigelow;
2. Rethinking Schools: “Independence or Catastrophe [sic]? Teaching Palestine through Multiple Perspectives” by Samia Shoman.

She also recommended using many resources from the Zinn Education Project. Zinn Education resources falsely label Israel an apartheid, colonizing state and accuse it of committing genocide.

Dr. Sharer also recommended two documents: SNCC’s 1967 Statement on Palestine and Albert Einstein, Hannah Arendt and Sydney Hook’s 1948 letter to the editor in *The New York Times* that compares the Freedom Party to a Nazi, fascist party. In other words, Dr. Sharer recommends not one resource that presents

⁸³ Deborah Wei, personal communication, October 17, 2023.

⁸⁴ Staff. (2023, October 13). [Have We Learned Nothing?](#) Truthdig.

⁸⁵ Angel, A. (2023, October 12). [“We Cannot Cross Until We Carry Each Other.”](#) *Jewish Currents*.

⁸⁶ [Current Events: Israel and Palestine Resources for Educators.](#)

⁸⁷ Donna Sharer, personal communication, April 18, 2024.

students with any evidence that Israel is anything but a settler colonial state.

While SDP was sharing with its staff factually inaccurate, anti-Israel resources promoting the Palestinian perspective on the conflict, several SDP teachers at Baldi Middle School filed a Title VI complaint alleging anti-Palestinian discrimination.⁸⁸ According to Al-Bustan News’ coverage of the complaint, the Baldi teachers requested approval of a chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) at Baldi and every other district school that requests it, an independent review of all teachers disciplined in the district purportedly for their support of Palestinian students, and district-wide training on anti-Palestinian discrimination.⁸⁹ SJP, was founded by Hatem Bazian who also founded American Muslims for Palestine (AMP) which is currently under investigation by the Commonwealth of Virginia for its alleged ties to Hamas.⁹⁰ SJP is also linked to terrorism and calls for Israel’s destruction.⁹¹

According to one of the teachers, Caroline Yang, ensuring systemic change within the district may be difficult because “[b]y implicating Israel, we implicate the U.S.”⁹² “We have to face the fact that we are settlers,” she told Al-Bustan. “I think America’s

military and industrial complex and the propaganda people are fed, combined with the Islamophobia of not just post 9-11 America but from long before that, is just a part of the way we, as Americans, are socialized.”⁹³ She claimed to recognize this even in the way a labor relations representative present at one of her disciplinary meetings chastised her for thinking she had the right to decide who was the oppressor [in the case of Israel and Palestine]. “It feels related to our ahistoricism as a country and our lack of interest in recognizing what settler colonialism is,” Yang said. Yang makes clear that Israel may be the first target, but the United States is the ultimate target.⁹⁴

SDP’s Activist Teachers and Outside Organizations

Across the country, there is a network of activists and organizations influencing K-12 education introducing students to so-called antiracism, decolonization, and Marxism, and ultimately creating the next generation of activists. Many SDP teachers are part of this activist educator network.

Former SDP social studies teacher Adam Sanchez is the managing editor at Rethinking Schools and a teacher leader at the Zinn Education Project.⁹⁵ Sanchez

⁸⁸ Abunassar, L. “[Baldi Middle School Teachers File Potentially ‘Precedent-Setting Civil Rights Complaint Over Anti-Palestinian Discrimination.’](#)” Al-Bustan News Service.

⁸⁹ See [Students For Justice in Palestine, SJP Supports Terrorism; Hatem Bazian](#); [Apartheidweekexposed.org](#), CAMERA. ISGAP. (2024). [National Students for Justice in Palestine \(NJSP\): Antisemitism, Anti-Americanism, Violent Extremism and the Threat to North American Universities.](#)

⁹⁰ “The Force Behind SJP.” *Canary Mission*. (2025).

⁹¹ [New Comprehensive Research Reveals Hamas-Linked Funding to Students for Justice in Palestine and Groups Growing Web of Influence Post October 7.](#) ISGAP.

⁹² Abunassar, L. “[Baldi Middle School Teachers File Potentially ‘Precedent-Setting Civil Rights Complaint Over Anti-Palestinian Discrimination.’](#)” Al-Bustan News Service.

⁹³ Abunassar, L. “[Baldi Middle School Teachers File Potentially ‘Precedent-Setting Civil Rights Complaint Over Anti-Palestinian Discrimination.’](#)” Al-Bustan News Service.

⁹⁴ Abunassar, L. “[Baldi Middle School Teachers File Potentially ‘Precedent-Setting Civil Rights Complaint Over Anti-Palestinian Discrimination.’](#)” Al-Bustan News Service.

⁹⁵ Adam Sanchez’s articles in *Rethinking Schools’ Teaching for Black Lives* emphasize what he views as the shortcomings of using traditional textbooks for instruction. In one example, co-authored with Jesse Hagopian—also an editor for *Rethinking Schools* and an organizer for Black Lives Matter at School—they critique a textbook for failing to highlight the “socialist character of the Black Panther Party.” They write, “More clearly than any other national civil rights organization, the Panthers linked the fight against racism with the fight against capitalism.” While Sanchez and Hagopian are correct in noting the limited textbook coverage of the Black Panther Party, their broader goal

not only uses his platform at Rethinking Schools to promote “Palestine,” but also to come to the defense of SDP teachers accused of antisemitism. In an op-ed that brings together issues of clean drinking water, wealth disparity, anti-racism, and “Palestine,” Sanchez defends SDP teacher Hannah Gann, who was the subject of an Accuracy in the Media digital truck outside her classroom with the message: “Hannah Gann: 10th Grade Teacher & Philadelphia’s Leading Antisemite.”⁹⁶

As Sanchez explains, many of the SDP teachers accused of antisemitism are part of an organization called the Racial Justice Organizing Committee (RJOC).⁹⁷ RJOC began as a subcommittee within the Caucus of Working Educators, which is a caucus within the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.⁹⁸

RJOC convinced SDP to officially make Black Lives Matter Week of Action a district event. RJOC also compelled the district to create its DEI office. Several SDP teachers who are part of RJOC are also contributors to Rethinking Schools including Keziah Ridgeway, Hannah Gann, Norman Shaw MacQueen, and Nicholas Bernadini. SDP Director of Social

Studies Curriculum Ismael Jimenez is cited in Rethinking Schools articles.⁹⁹

Across the country, there is a network of activists and organizations influencing K-12 education introducing students to antiracism, decolonization, Marxism, and ultimately creating the next generation of activists.

In February 2025, Rethinking Schools published *Teaching Palestine: Lessons, Stories, Voices*. The collection of essays and lesson plans demonize and delegitimize the State of Israel.¹⁰⁰ The writers are a veritable who’s who of major antisemites in the national and international network of those seeking to destroy the Jewish state and dismantle the West:

1. Muhammad El-Kurd, who has praised the Second Intifada and Hamas’s October 7 massacre, claimed Israelis eat Palestinian organs, and declared “Zionism is a racist and colonial political ideology—opposing it is a moral duty.”¹⁰¹

appears to be promoting Black Panther ideology. They describe a “mixer” activity in which students assume the roles of various Black Panther members and discuss with classmates why individuals joined the movement. Although the lesson includes some critical perspectives, its underlying purpose is to foster empathy for and identification with Black Panther ideology. Sanchez, A. (2016, October 19). *What We Don’t Learn About the Black Panther Party — but Should*.

⁹⁶ Sanchez, A. *Defenders of Israel Attempt to Silence Anti-Racist Educators in Philadelphia*

⁹⁷ Multiple media articles and social media posts have shared examples of alleged incidents of antisemitism by SDP teachers. Justice, R. (2025). *Racial Justice Organizing*. See *Demands for the Educators and Students March for Black Lives*.

⁹⁸ Sanchez, A. *Defenders of Israel Attempt to Silence Anti-Racist Educators in Philadelphia*.

⁹⁹ For detailed information about the antisemitic incidents and the SDP teachers promoting antisemitism in school and/or on

their social media, see: *Philly’s K-12 Schools Harassment of Jewish Kids & Parents - Canary Mission*. (2024). Canary Mission.

¹⁰⁰ *Teaching Palestine* was reviewed by Susan Abulhawa, a writer/activist who praised the book because “For decades, a manipulative Zionist narrative with no historic or forensic basis has been pushed into schools and imposed on popular imagination.” *Teaching Palestine*. (2025, September 9). Rethinking Schools. On June 22, 2025 during the Iran-Israel conflict, Abulhawa posted on social media “y’all know the old chant: khaibar, khaibar, yayahood” referencing the 7th century Battle of Khaybar where Muhammad’s forces conquered the Jewish community of Khaybar forcing the survivors to live as dhimmis (second-class citizens). The chant was used by Hamas during the First Intifada and is often used during anti-Israel protests.

¹⁰¹ Mohammed El-Kurd. *Canary Mission*. (2025) *Mohammed El-Kurd: What You Need to Know*. ADL.

2. Noura Erakat, a Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions supporting professor, who has written an article mourning the death of a Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist and justified the October 7 massacre.¹⁰²
3. Abdel Razzaq Takriti, a professor who has spoken at a Students for Justice in Palestine conference and has a website glorifying Palestinian “resistance.”¹⁰³
4. Nina Mehta and Donna Nevel of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), an organization that has advanced antisemitic tropes and promoted terrorism,¹⁰⁴ and who run the social justice organization PARCEO which has a curriculum called “challenging antisemitism” that redefines antisemitism excluding Zionism, an integral part of Jewish identity, from the definition.
5. Nora Lester Murad, an activist who writes children's books demonizing Israel and recorded herself tearing down hostage posters in October 2023.¹⁰⁵
6. Lara Kiswani, executive director of the Arab Resource Organizing Center (AROC) who has expressed support for terrorists.¹⁰⁶
7. Jesse Hagopian, a teacher, Liberated Ethnic Studies advocate, and leader in the BLM At School movement.¹⁰⁷

And the list goes on. Several SDP teachers play a prominent role in the publication. Hannah Gann, Nick Palazzolo, Keziah Ridgeway, and Adam Sanchez have an article in Chapter 6: Solidarity with Palestine titled

“Teaching Solidarity: The Black Freedom Struggle and Palestine-Israel.” The article provides the background to their lesson published on the Zinn Education Project website.

While the teachers give the appearance of objectivity, the lesson’s goal is teaching solidarity across social justice movements.

The article and lesson exemplify the most troubling aspects of SDP’s curriculum, bringing together its ideological biases, distortions, and inaccuracies. It opens with a portrait of Malcolm X draped in a keffiyeh and a quote from the Palestinian-American writer Mariam Barghouti in 2014 advising Ferguson, Missouri protesters not to touch their eyes due to the police using tear gas. Gann et al. claim that Barghouti’s expression of solidarity with the first wave of Black Lives Matter protestors was natural because of Israel’s use of tear gas on Palestinians, which is manufactured in the United States.¹⁰⁸

The authors provide a brief history of Black-Jewish relations going back to the 1960s-1970s, explaining Black identification with the story of Exodus and how the Jewish experience of antisemitism, and specifically the experience with white supremacy during the Holocaust, made Jews sympathetic to the plight of Black people. But according to Gann et al., some Jews expected reciprocal support when the civil rights movement “took a decisive anti-imperialist turn in the late 1960s.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰² [Noura Erakat](#). *Canary Mission*. (2025).

¹⁰³ [Abdel Razzaq Takriti](#). *Canary Mission*. (2025).

¹⁰⁴ [Jewish Voice for Peace](#). CAMERA. (2025).

¹⁰⁵ [Nora Murad](#). *Canary Mission*. (2025).

¹⁰⁶ [Lara Kiswani](#). *Canary Mission*. (2025).

¹⁰⁷ [Anti-Israel Curricular Materials and Providers](#). Camera.

¹⁰⁸ Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A.

“Teaching Solidarity: The Black Freedom Struggle and Palestine-Israel.” Ed. Bigelow, B., Hagopian, J., & Kassouf, S. (2025). *Teaching Palestine*. Rethinking Schools. p. 177.

¹⁰⁹ Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A.

“Teaching Solidarity: The Black Freedom Struggle and Palestine-Israel.” Ed. Bigelow, B., Hagopian, J., & Kassouf, S.



The lesson is another role-play intended to emphasize an emotional connection to the limited historical context. While the lesson includes the perspectives of Malcom X, Martin Luther King Jr., Bayard Rustin, the NAACP, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the Black Panther Party on Israel, it quickly moves to the year 1975. Why 1975? That is when the United Nations passed Resolution 3379 declaring Zionism as racism.

While the teachers give the appearance of objectivity,

the lesson's goal is teaching solidarity across social justice movements. Students are directed to craft arguments as to whether the United States should support U.N. Resolution 3379. Students are given a timeline and the following line to read out loud: "The UN General Assembly adopts Resolution 3379, which determines that Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination."¹¹⁰

After providing multiple pages of criticism of Zionism, the lesson provides three bullet points from the American Jewish Committee (AJC) to refute the UN charge. However, this is the last claim students read: "Anti-Zionists argue that the belief in creating and supporting a Jewish ethnostate, which is the fundamental goal of Zionism, inherently implies Jewish differentiation and superiority in a region that has historically been home to a mix of Muslims, Christians, and Jews."¹¹¹ The SDP teachers/author intentionally mislead students on the goal of Zionism and deliberately do not inform students that Muslims, Christians, and many other religious and ethnic groups live in Israel all with the same rights as Jews, while this is not the case in Muslim controlled areas.

The teachers admit: "Although this is a history lesson, some students will see parallels to current debates. There have been powerful expressions of solidarity with Palestinians from Black intellectual and political leaders."¹¹² The history teachers proudly assert that Philadelphia's required African American history

(2025). *Teaching Palestine*. Rethinking Schools. p. 177. The Black freedom struggle in the United States took inspiration from anti-colonialist movements in Africa.

¹¹⁰ Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A. 2024, *Teaching Palestine-Israel from the Perspective of Civil Rights and Black Power Activists*. Zinn Education Project. p 23.

¹¹¹ Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A. 2024, *Teaching Palestine-Israel from the Perspective of Civil Rights and Black Power Activists*. Zinn Education Project. p. 23.

¹¹² The lesson praises the "expressions of solidarity" with the Palestinians offered by prominent black figures like Angela Davis, Ilhan Omar, Alice Walker, and Cornel West – all who have made multiple troubling statements about Jews. Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A. "Teaching Solidarity: The Black Freedom Struggle and Palestine-Israel." Ed. Bigelow, B., Hagopian, J., & Kassouf, S. (2025). *Teaching Palestine*. Rethinking Schools, p. 178.

course's goal is to develop understanding of "Black internationalist perspectives" for the purpose of "shaping the struggle for collective liberation."¹¹³

The lesson is full of falsehoods about the founding of Israel and the conflict. The lesson provides "background" on the conflict, stating: "Palestine exists at a strategic juncture of Africa, Asia, and Europe. Throughout its history, different empires ruled over the land and it was home to a mix of Muslims, Christians, and Jews."¹¹⁴ The wording intentionally gives the impression that Palestine existed as a country, not a region, and that there was some kind of peaceful coexistence among the various religions. The lesson then refers to the Arabs at the time of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire living in the region as Palestinians, but this too is false. The Arabs living there were known as Arabs, while the Jews living there were known as Palestinians. The lesson further falsely claims that Arabs rejected the U.N. partition plan because the division was not "proportionate to their relative populations and granted the most fertile land to the Jewish state."¹¹⁵ The historical record shows that the Arabs rejected the proposal because they did not want a Jewish state anywhere on the land.¹¹⁶

The lesson also claims that when Israel declared its

independence, it forced over 750,000 Arabs to flee. In fact, the cause of Arab flight was more complicated as some fled when they saw the elite leaving; others followed Arab military demands to evacuate; and others fled the fighting for safety. The background also fails to mention the thousands of Jews ethnically cleansed from their homes in the Arab countries at this time.¹¹⁷

The teacher instructs the students: "Our goal today is to learn about a bunch of different Black perspectives on Palestine-Israel, because tomorrow you will be crafting your own perspective, based on the information you learn today."¹¹⁸ Yet, students are intentionally given limited perspectives in order to push them toward a certain preconceived narrative about Zionism and Israel's founding.¹¹⁹

The authors draw a straight line from Black slavery in the U.S. to U.S. foreign policy and support for Israel.

The authors draw a straight line from Black slavery in the U.S. to U.S. foreign policy and support for Israel. Through this "anti-imperial" lens, not only is Israel the enemy, but also the United States which is described as

¹¹³ Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A. "Teaching Solidarity: The Black Freedom Struggle and Palestine-Israel." Ed. Bigelow, B., Hagopian, J., & Kassouf, S. (2025). *Teaching Palestine*. Rethinking Schools, p. 178.

¹¹⁴ Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A. 2024, *Teaching Palestine-Israel from the Perspective of Civil Rights and Black Power Activists*. Zinn Education Project. p 3.

¹¹⁵ Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A. 2024, *Teaching Palestine-Israel from the Perspective of Civil Rights and Black Power Activists*. Zinn Education Project. p 4.

¹¹⁶ Litman, D. (2021, August 20). *CNN mangles Jerusalem's history*. CAMERA. Efraim Karsh. (2011). *Palestine betrayed*. Yale University Press.

¹¹⁷ Ini, G. (2009, May 12). *Backgrounder: Palestinian Arab and Jewish Refugees*. CAMERA.

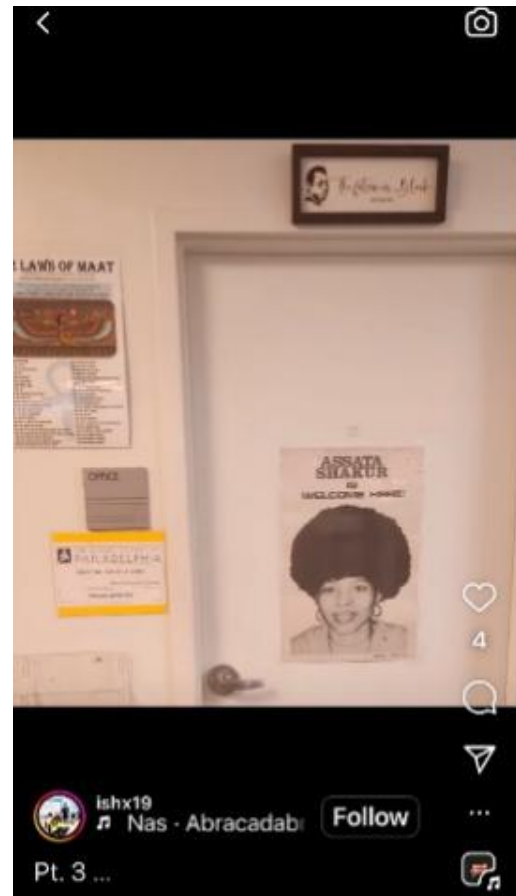
¹¹⁸ Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A. 2024, *Teaching Palestine-Israel from the Perspective of Civil Rights and Black Power Activists*. Zinn Education Project. p. 5.

¹¹⁹ Michael Fischbach's 2019 book *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color* forms the cornerstone of the lesson and strongly influences the perspective of many SDP teachers. Fischbach examines how the Arab-Israeli conflict intersected with the Civil Rights Movement, arguing that two distinct currents emerged within the movement—one supporting Israel and the other aligning with the Palestinian cause. His book is referenced or summarized in six of the lesson's seven handouts, with the remaining handout focused on the U.N. "Zionism is racism" resolution.

a “global... empire driven by and for racial capitalism.”¹²⁰ According to the authors, the crux of the issue is this: “many Jewish Americans donated time and money to the cause, and some expected Black Americans to reciprocate with support for Israel.”¹²¹ While they acknowledge the role of Jews in the civil rights movement, the authors lead students to conclude that black civil rights as part of the anti-imperialist movement is in direct opposition to Zionism, which they define as the ultimate expression of white supremacist colonialism. Other organizations also influence the Philadelphia school district. On August 25, 2025, CAIR-PA announced on its Instagram page that it was “partnering with schools” sharing An Educator’s Guide to Islamic Practices. Just three days prior, CAIR Philadelphia’s Advocacy Projects Director Asiyah Jones emailed SDP the Educator’s Guide and encouraged the creation of student-led Muslim Student Associations. Dr. Sabriya Jubilee, Chief of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, responded by sharing that “Through the work of our Community Advocate Committee we have created a space for organizations to share ways to help us develop and enhance support for the various members of our school communities within a network of advocate organizations.”¹²² Jubilee shares that CAIR is already on their listserv and is invited to their first meeting.

While CAIR presents itself as a civil rights organization, its founders were members of the Hamas-linked Islamic Association of Palestine (IAP) and the Muslim Brotherhood’s Palestine Committee. At a secret 1993 meeting of the Palestine Committee

in Philadelphia, IAP members Omar Ahmad and Nihad Awad proposed creating a new organization to influence U.S. policy. CAIR was established the following year, initially led by Ahmad and now headed by Awad.¹²³



After the October 7 massacre, Awad stated, “I was happy to see people breaking the siege and throwing down the shackles of their own land, and walk free into their land, which they were not allowed to walk in. And yes, the people of Gaza have the right to self-defense,

¹²⁰ Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A. 2024, *Teaching Palestine-Israel from the Perspective of Civil Rights and Black Power Activists*. Zinn Education Project. p. 2.

¹²¹ Gann, H., Palazzolo, N., Ridgeway, K., Sanchez, A. 2024, *Teaching Palestine-Israel from the Perspective of Civil Rights and Black Power Activists*. Zinn Education Project. p. 2.

¹²² Sabriya Jubilee, personal communication, August 25, 2025.

¹²³ *Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR)*. (2017). Influencewatch.org. <https://www.influencewatch.org/non-profit/council-on-american-islamic-relations-cair/>

have the right to defend themselves, and yes, Israel, as an occupying power, does not have that right to self-defense.”¹²⁴

SDP has included CAIR-PA in its Community Advocate Circle, a year-long program to include community organizations’ programming and identify “systemic challenges.”¹²⁵ The U.S. is seeking a terrorist designation for the Muslim Brotherhood and CAIR and there have been calls to investigate CAIR’s non-profit status.¹²⁶

SDP Staff Grooming Students into Radical Activists

Given SDP’s years-long foray into so-called antiracism and decolonization, it is not surprising how emboldened many SDP teachers are in advancing their anti-Israel and anti-American agenda.

For example, at the May 30, 2024, School Board meeting, several members of the teacher organization Philly Educators for Palestine wore keffiyehs and provided testimony on the conflict. Some of their comments are provided below.¹²⁷

1. Brian Gallagher, SDP middle school teachers, called himself a “proud educator for Palestine,” accused Israel of being a “foreign state engaged in genocide,” and warned of a “a fascist future.”
2. Khalid Bilal, a Baldi Middle School teacher, drew a comparison between the Hamas-Israel conflict and civil rights: “When we talk about Nelson Mandela, MLK, Malcolm X, Palestinians are George

Floyd and Trayvon Martin and Sandra Bland.” He stated, “It’s so painfully clear to anyone with a little bit of sense.” Bilal added, “When I teach about the Holocaust I teach that it wasn’t just a small minority that did this, but a silent majority that did not speak up and facilitate the actions of injustice. It’s the same white supremacy that drives Zionism... It’s the same white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism that has harrowed your careers and our society.”

3. Dana Carter, a former SDP teacher, stated, “Those racist white teachers who remain in the district are now attempting to rebrand their racism as support for Zionism. The hatred they had for their Black and Latino students and colleagues in 2020 is now labeled as hatred for Hamas and Hamas supporters because that has become acceptable instead. Instead of calling us the N-word to our faces they call us antisemitic. These white racists attach themselves to whatever current campaign is the most oppressive.”
4. Katherine Riley, a former SDP teacher, commented on purported parallels between Koreans and Palestinians: “Our role as social studies educators is to guide students to recognize truths and injustice in contemporary life.”
5. Norma Shaw MacQueen, a current SDP teacher, questioned, “How can we say that we prepare students for college if we refuse to discuss the one issue that colleges across the country are erupting in protest?”
6. Nick Palazzolo, a current SDP teacher,

¹²⁴ Breen-Portnoy, B. (2023, December 7). [CAIR Leader Nihad Awad Praises October 7th Hamas Attack as an “Inspiration for People.”](#) Combat Antisemitism Movement.

¹²⁵ Sabriya Jubilee, personal communication, September 2, 2025.

¹²⁶ [US terror designation of Muslim Brotherhood and Cair “in the works,” Rubio says.](#) Middle East Eye. (August 24, 2025).

¹²⁷ See [Philadelphia Educators for Palestine Demands.](#)

shared that he believed in “open discourse and critical engagement with history,” sharing that he taught the three-day Zinn Education lesson “Teaching the Seeds of Violence.”¹²⁸

This emboldened radical behavior extends beyond the classroom, with several SDP teachers including Keziah Ridgeway, Hannah Gann, Norman Shaw McQueen, and Ismael Jimenez,¹²⁹ among others, blurring the lines between their professional and personal lives on social media. SDP students are followers and even sometimes featured in their teachers’ postings. Not surprisingly, students appear in tears at school board meetings pleading for their teachers to be reinstated after removal for antisemitic threats and refer to their teachers as “icons.”¹³⁰

This emboldened radical behavior extends beyond the classroom with several SDP teachers...blurring the lines between their professional and personal lives on social media.

These SDP teachers frequently write posts or repost content about racial capitalism, white supremacy, fascism, and undermining colonialism. They blame aid to Israel for underfunding in the black community and falsely accuse Israel of all kinds of crimes

including organ-stealing, rape, etc.¹³¹ Several teachers’ social media accounts show them directly addressing their often-under-age students about class assignments, encouraging them to speak about Gaza at school board meetings, sharing photographs of them together engaging in activism, and providing information about anti-Israel protest events they themselves are attending — a clear breach of professional boundaries.¹³²

SDP teachers respond on social media to charges of antisemitism against them, reframing the allegations of antisemitism as critiques of state violence and dismissing those allegations as silencing tactics. Keziah Ridgeway violently threatened by name Jewish families who would not tolerate her antisemitism. In another post Ridgeway stated, “Zionism is racism. Zionism is settler colonialism. Zionism is Islamophobia. Zionism is genocidal violence. Zionism is antisemitic.”¹³³

Several of the SDP teachers appear frequently on websites and podcasts where they espouse these views for public consumption. Perhaps the most shocking was Ismael Jimenez’s appearance on the podcast “The Truth about Curriculum in Our Schools,” with Brightbeam CEO Chris “Citizen” Stewart and Sheriff el-Mekki,¹³⁴ where he justified October 7: “When we look at October 7th, this didn’t happen out of the blue, right? This is generations, right, of folks who feel like their voice has been denied.”¹³⁵

¹²⁸ Bigelow, Bill. *Teaching the Seeds of Violence in Palestine-Israel*. (2024). Zinn Education.

¹²⁹ Social Studies Director Ismael Jimenez includes a video tour of his office that shows a poster stating: “Assata Shakur is welcome here.” Shakur is a former member of the Black Liberation Army who was convicted of murder, escaped from prison in 1979, and was wanted by the FBI when she lived in Cuba. See Appendix A1.

¹³⁰ See Appendix A31, A32, and A33.

¹³¹ See Appendix A for examples of SDP teachers’ social media postings.

¹³² For examples of teachers using their social media to communicate with students see Appendix A8, A21, A33, A43, and A46.

¹³³ Appendix 59. See Appendix A for more examples of SDP teachers spreading false information and propaganda about Israel and Jews.

¹³⁴ For more on el-Mekki see the [School District of Philadelphia Briefing](#).

¹³⁵ [Canary Mission on Instagram](#): “Ismael Jimenez is the director in charge of the Social Studies curriculum of public schools in Philadelphia. Here, Jimenez explains how the October 7 massacre was justified and how that should be conveyed to

Jimenez also stated: “You know, if you actually look at what Gazans have been doing or Palestinians in Gaza have been doing they’ve been trying to have a right to return march, right? They’ve had ‘freedom rights’ almost. There’s been non-violent protests.” The March of Return, which was instigated by Hamas, is one of the examples in the world history curriculum “Memorial Resistance” Project, which Jimenez would have overseen in his role.¹³⁶

In response to the deadly attacks on Jews in Washington D.C. and Boulder, Jimenez posted: “The groups who align themselves with American savageness should not be surprised when the savageness is turned on you.”¹³⁷



young, impressionable students. Jimenez also referred to the country that employs him as ‘#Amerikkka.’ He is EMBLEMATIC of the DEEP ROTTING HATRED emanating from Philadelphia schools out into the larger community and he

Conclusion

SDP’s shift toward radical extremism did not occur overnight, nor can it be attributed merely to a few rogue educators advancing their personal agendas. Rather, SDP has institutionalized an ideological framework that legitimizes radical narratives aimed at undermining and delegitimizing not only Israel—and fostering hostility toward Jewish students and teachers—but also the United States itself. In doing so, SDP has reframed the study of history as an exercise in grievance, cultivating a generation of students trained to view the past through the lens of activism rather than scholarship.

The ideological agenda, along with the processes, resources, and organizations detailed in this report, should serve as a warning to communities nationwide. Traditional antisemitism training and Holocaust education alone are insufficient to confront the deep-seated ideological corrosion taking hold in too many school districts across the country.

The ideological agenda, along with the processes, resources, and organizations detailed in this report, should serve as a warning to communities nationwide.

Communities must remain vigilant regarding state-level efforts to alter social studies standards or eliminate state testing where it still exists. They should advocate for the preservation of detailed, historically accurate content standards that hold schools and educators accountable and limit the excessive discretion that has allowed ideologues, as in SDP, to

needs to be removed from his position of leadership.” Ed Post. (2024, May 31). [The Truth About Curriculum in Our Schools](#).

¹³⁶ [Ismael Jimenez](#). *Canary Mission*. (2025).

¹³⁷ Appendix A44.

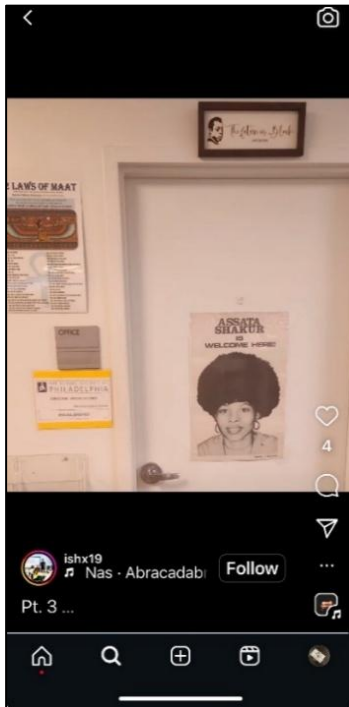
rewrite curricula and create their own graduation requirements. States must ensure the adoption of content-rich standards, reinforced by state assessments, to guarantee that students receive a rigorous and comprehensive history education.

Communities should actively oppose efforts to alter graduation requirements in ways that introduce ideologically driven coursework. Proposals to include Ethnic Studies, African American History, or other identity-based courses warrant careful scrutiny—not to exclude these important historical subjects, but to ensure that they are taught with academic integrity and do not serve as vehicles for ideological agendas.

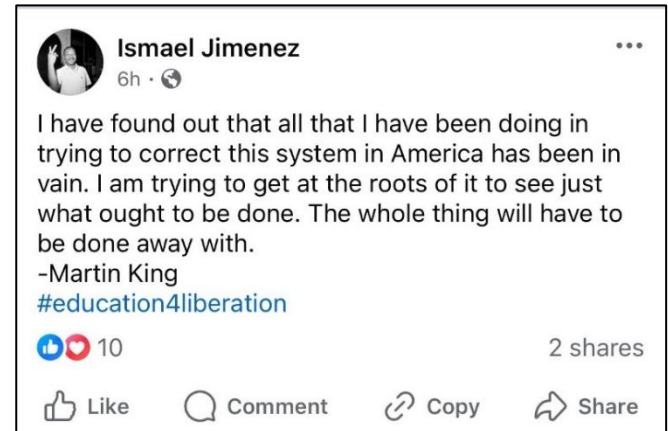
While SDP may represent one of the most extreme cases, it illustrates how ideological shifts take root gradually, gain momentum, and ultimately go unchecked when left unchallenged. To confront rising antisemitism and anti-American sentiment, communities must closely examine the initiatives their schools have implemented in recent years—often under the banner of antiracism, decolonization, and other similar ideological frameworks. Equipped with this understanding, citizens should actively reengage in local education governance by running for school boards, serving on curriculum committees, and persistently advocating for academic integrity in their children's education.

APPENDIX A - SOCIAL MEDIA SCREENSHOTS

A1. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, video screenshot of his office door depicting Assata Shakur



A2. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



A3. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A4. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



A5. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A6. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



A7. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post

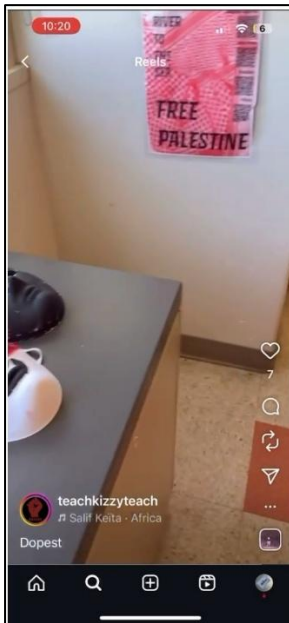


A8. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post

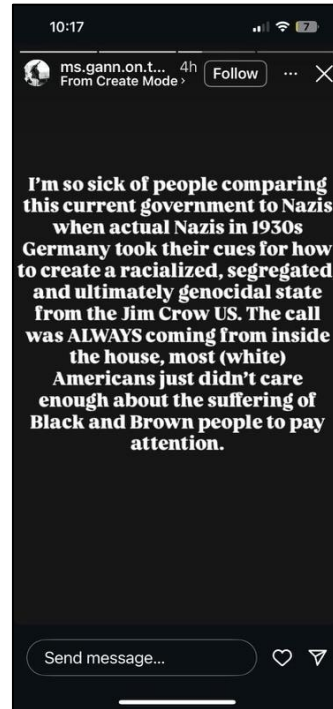


A9. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post, video of her classroom

- QR codes on the flyer link to the Palestinian Youth Movement, which openly supports terrorism



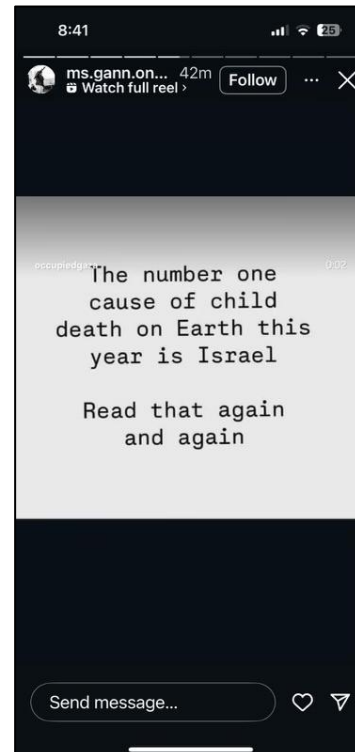
A10. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A11. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A12. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A13. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A14. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A15. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



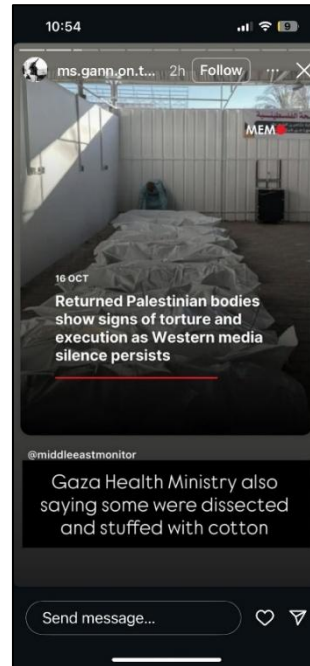
A16. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, [social media post](#)



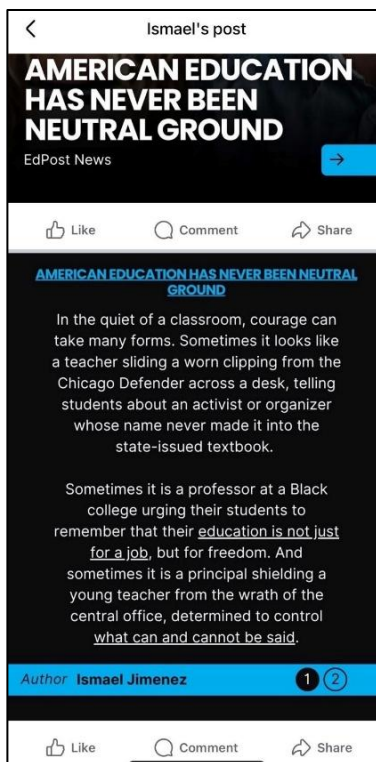
A17. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



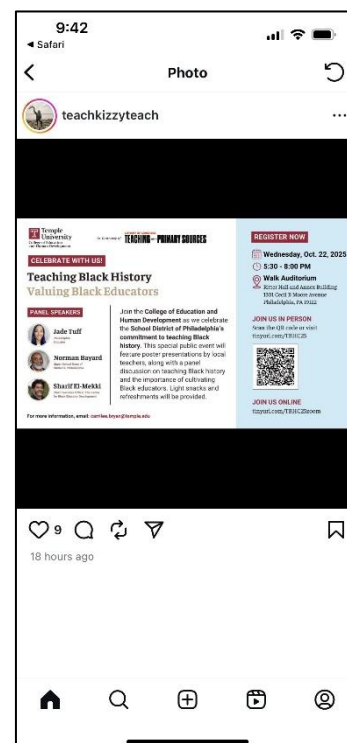
A18. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A19. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



A20. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A21. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A22. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



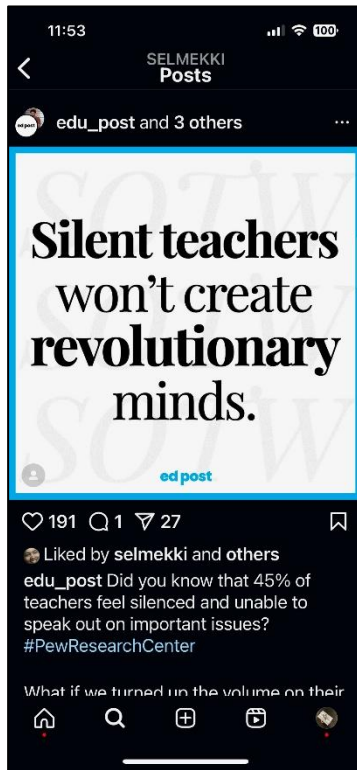
A23. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



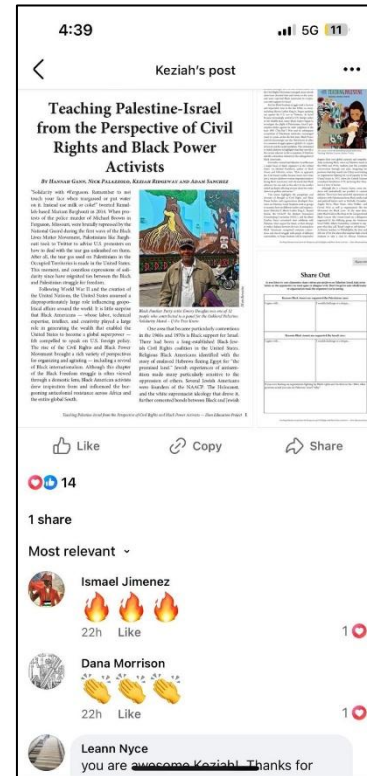
A24. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



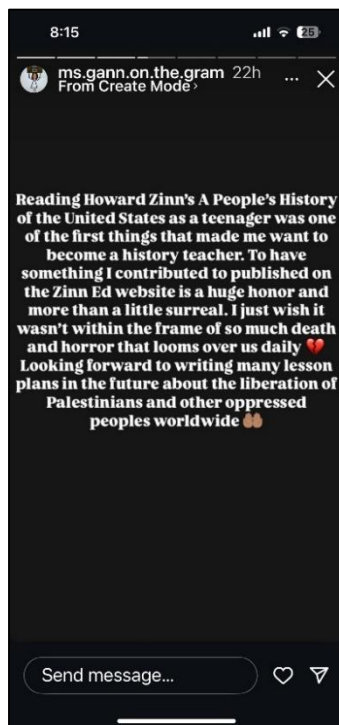
A25. Sharif El-Mekki, Founder of the Center for Black Educator Development (CBED), has received contracts from SDP



A26. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A27. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A28. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A29. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A30. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A31. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



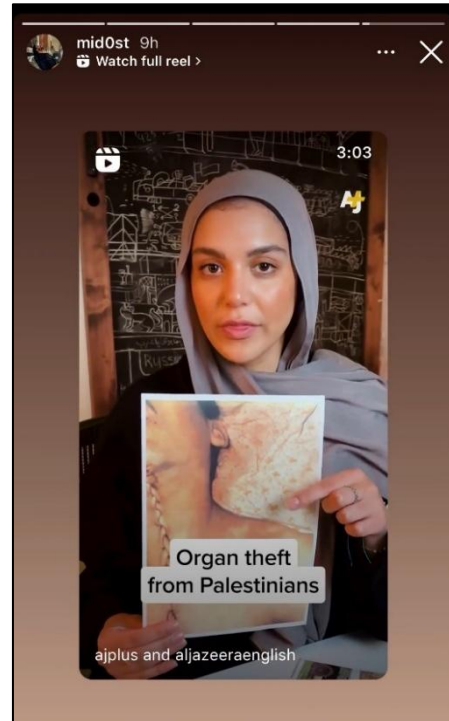
A32. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A33. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A34. Norman Shaw Macqueen, SDP teacher, social media post



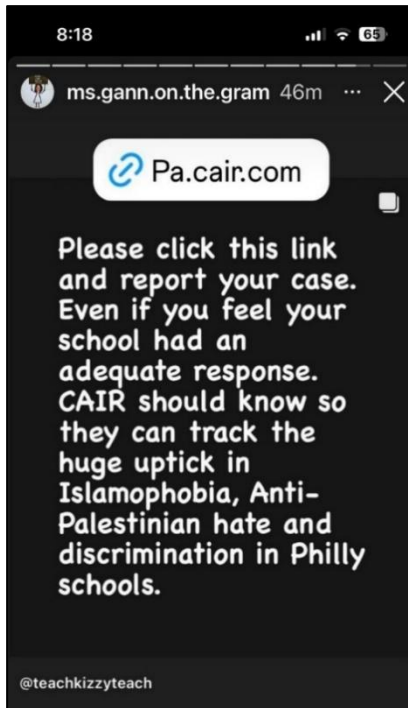
A35. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A36. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



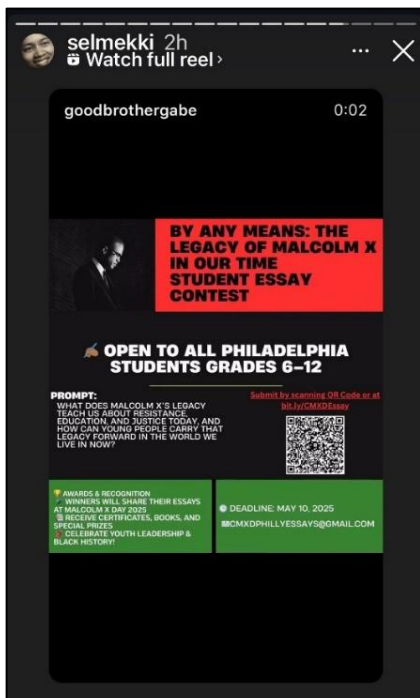
A37. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A38. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A39. Sharif El-Mekki, Founder of the Center for Black Educator Development (CBED), has received contracts from SDP, social media post



A40. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



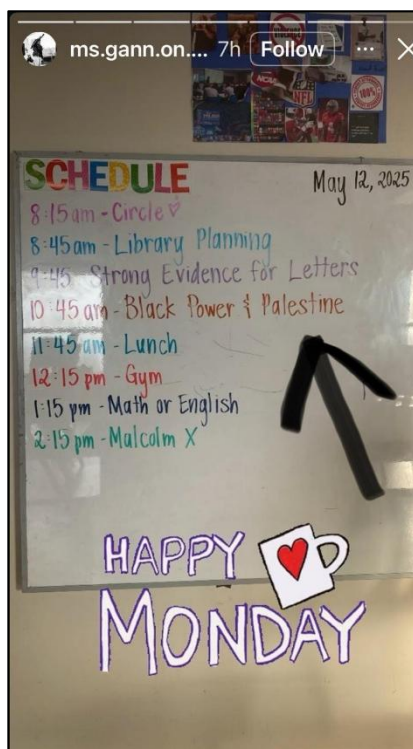
A41. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



A42. Katie Gallagher, SDP staff, social media post



A43. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A44. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



A45. Adam Sanchez, former SDP teacher, Managing Editor at Rethinking Schools, social media post



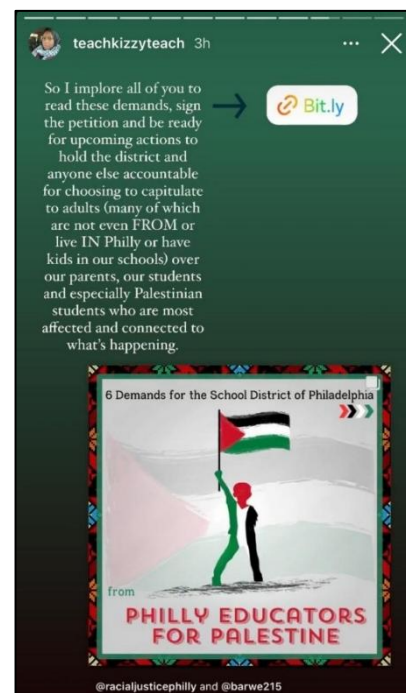
A46. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



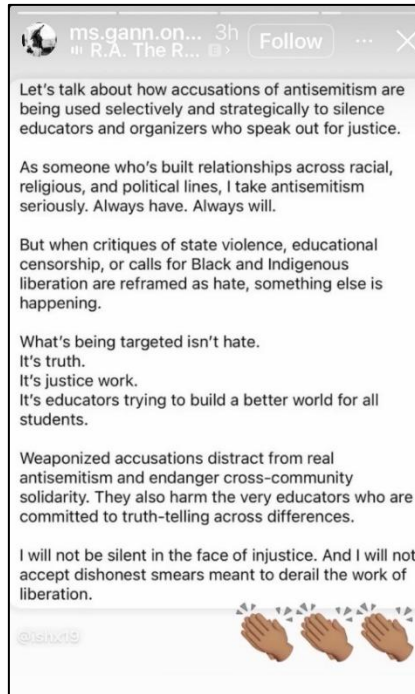
A47. Adam Sanchez, former SDP teacher, Managing Editor at Rethinking Schools, social media post



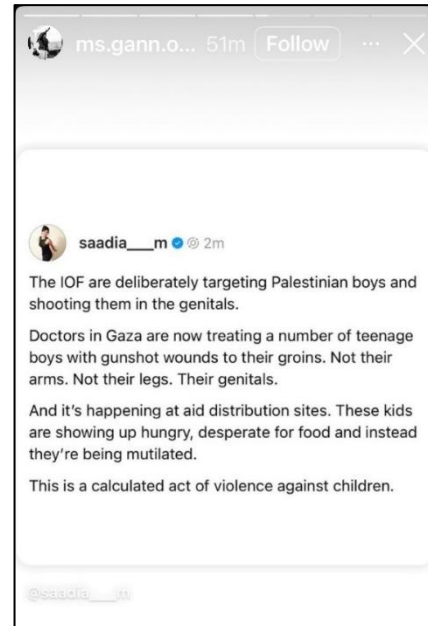
A48. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A49. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A50. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A51. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A52. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



A53. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A54. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A55. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



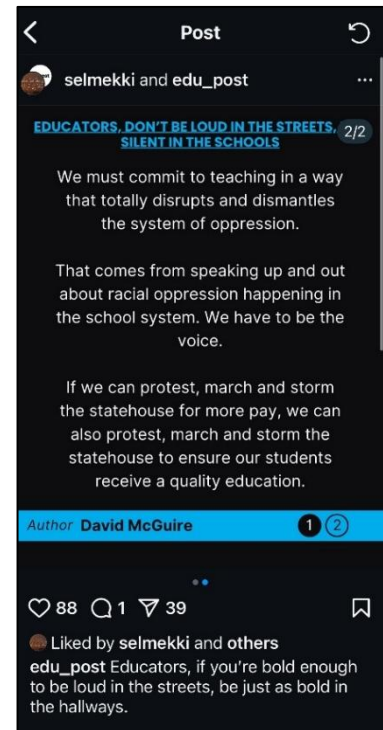
A56. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A57. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



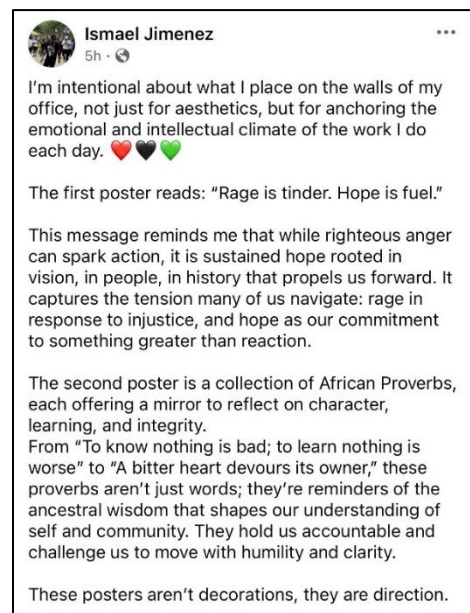
A58. Sharif El-Mekki, Founder of the Center for Black Educator Development (CBED), has received contracts from SDP, social media post



A59. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A60. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



A61. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



A62. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



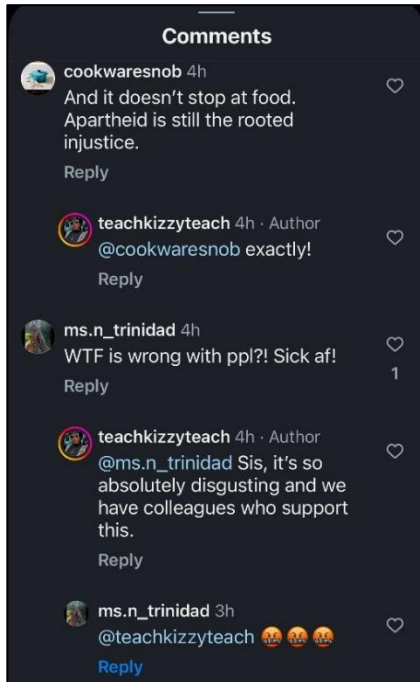
A63. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A64. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A65. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A66. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A67. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



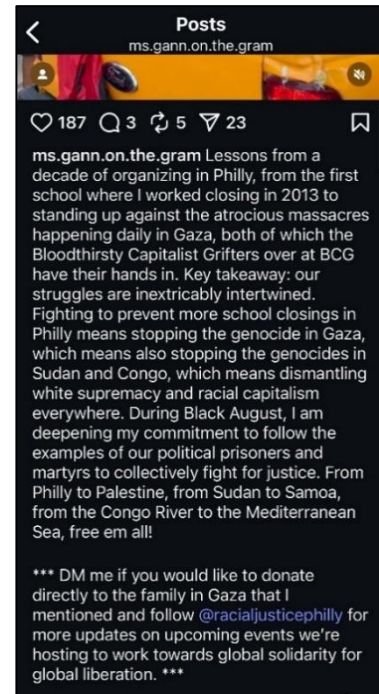
A68. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A69. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A70. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



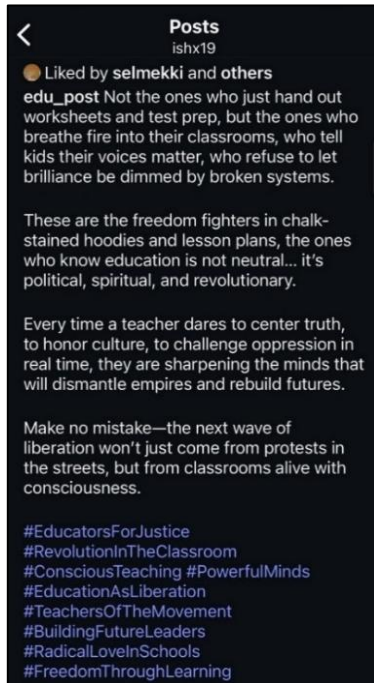
A71. Sharif El-Mekki, Founder of the Center for Black Educator Development (CBED), has received contracts from SDP, social media post



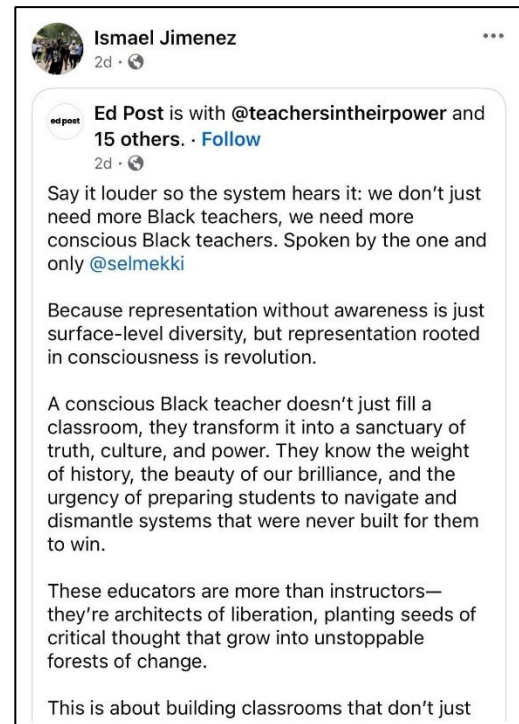
A72. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



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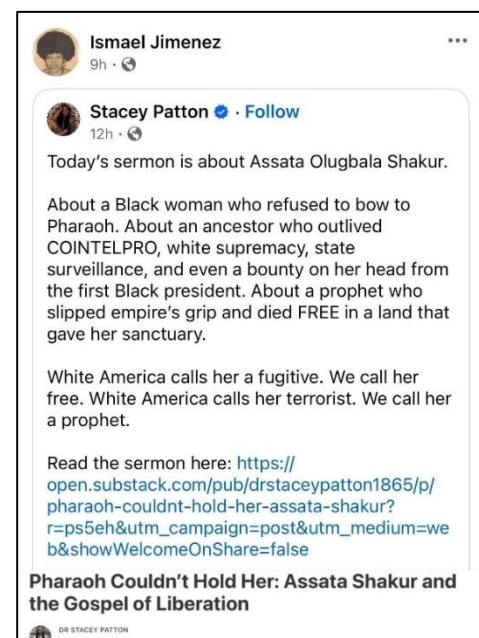
A74. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



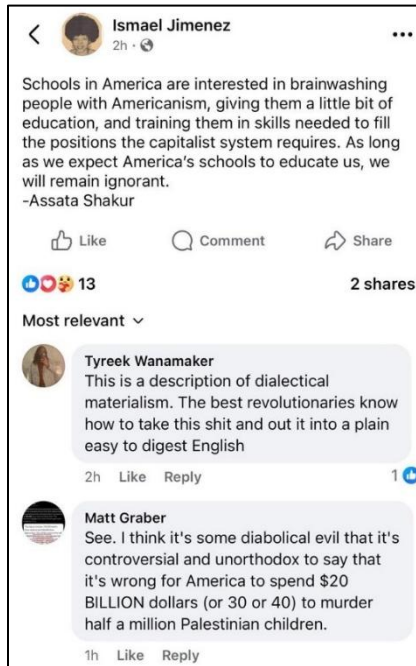
A75. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



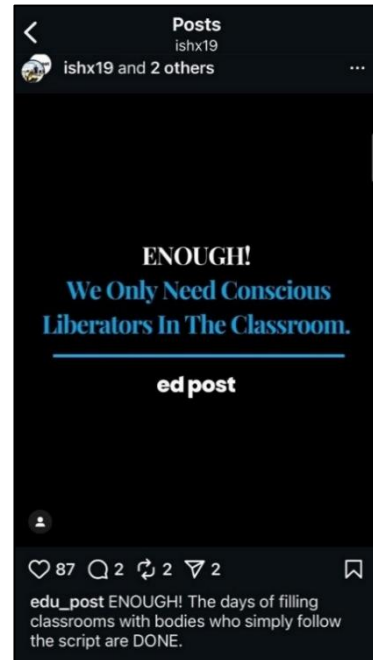
A76. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



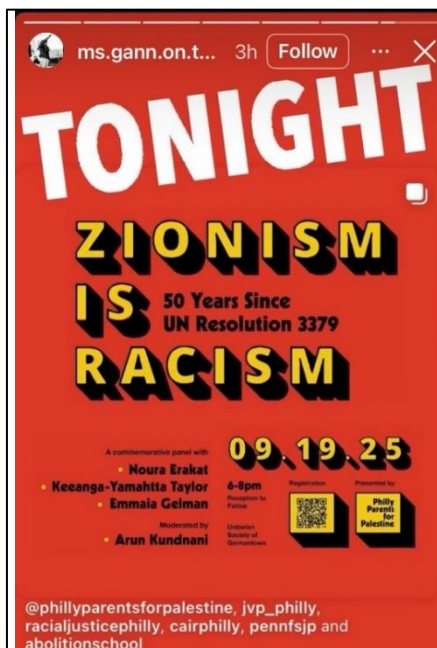
A77. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



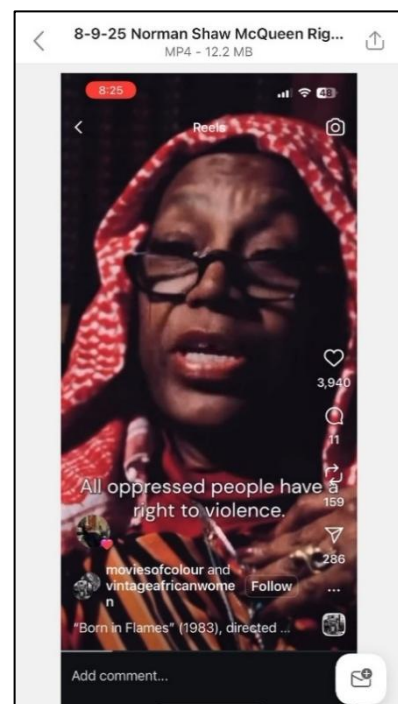
A78. Ismael Jimenez, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum, social media post



A79. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



A80. Norman Shaw MacQueen, SDP teacher, social media post



A81. Keziah Ridgeway, SDP Teacher, social media post



A82. Hannah Gann, SDP teacher, social media post



APPENDIX B - PHILADELPHIA CURRICULUM IMAGES

B1. Social Studies Instructional Guide, 2024-2025, Grade K-12, [Linked here](#)

Decolonizing Sociology	
<p>Decolonizing sociology requires a number of perspective shifts. First and foremost is understanding that traditional sociology is not neutral. It has been rooted in a particular time and built on particular assumptions. A decolonized sociology would consider the roots of traditional sociology evolving from academic research and perspectives steeped in racism, colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and classism. A decolonized sociology seeks to root itself in historical understanding as well as a shift in cultural assumptions that can decenter mainstream Eurocentric notions. For example, if we look at European modernity and the belief that it is unavoidable from an indigenous perspective, we would focus on settler colonialism, displacement, genocide, how indigenous people view concepts like land and time, and the fight to preserve their language and culture.</p>	
Teacher Reflection Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do I address the historical roots of sociology, particularly its ties to colonialism, racism, and classism, in my teaching? 2. In what ways have I challenged students to rethink Eurocentric assumptions about modernity, progress, and development? 3. How am I incorporating Indigenous, Black, and other marginalized perspectives into discussions about social structures, identity, and power? 4. How do I create opportunities for students to understand how colonization has shaped their everyday social realities, including issues of land, time, and identity? 5. How do I use sociology to empower students to question the status quo and explore alternative ways of organizing societies?

B2. SDP Resources for Lesson Planning

Resources for lesson planning / [Sample Lessons for SDP](#)

Bookmark
d History

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Like an Historian (US & World History) (Digital Inquiry Group) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyewitness to History (US & World), “eyewitness accounts” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Newspapers (global) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Maps Online (global) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World History Sources
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U.S. History / Philadelphia History

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore PA History / Teach PA History (lesson plans with primary sources; bottom right of the page by historical periods) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gilder Lehrman (teacher page) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Society of Pennsylvania Unit Plans (mostly Philly / PA history)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library of Congress: Teaching with Primary Sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Archives Educator Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Constitution Center: Constitution 101

[Zinn Education Project:](#)
[Teaching Materials](#)
[Rethinking Schools - Explore Resources](#) (bottom on page)

B3. World History: Q1 Unit 1: “Belief Systems and Understanding History,” [Linked here](#)



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- a. How does the narrator explain her intersectionality?
- b. What advice does she give?
3. [Video #3: “Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw Defines Intersectionality”](#)
 - a. What experience “gave rise to intersectionality”?
 - b. Why did the court “refuse to allow Emma to put two causes of action together”? How did Crenshaw respond?


Provide the history of intersectionality to highlight the importance of Black women to thinking on intersectionality: The term intersectionality was first popularized in 1989 by critical legal and race scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. Crenshaw reviewed legal proceedings to illustrate how it is the intersection of race and gender that shapes how Black men and women experience the legal system. She found, for example, that when cases brought by Black women failed to match the circumstances of those brought by white women or by Black men, that their claims were not taken seriously because they didn't fit perceived normative experiences of race or gender.

Provide examples of intersectional identities:

- Race
- Class: Upper, middle, lower
- Gender and gender identity
- Sex (*assigned at birth*)
- Gender: Social construct of norms, behaviors and roles that varies between societies and over time. Gender is usually seen as male, female, nonbinary.
- Gender identity: internal understanding of identity
- Gender expression: how a person presents gender outwardly, through behavior, clothing, voice or other perceived characteristics
- Cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, agender, intersex
- Sexual orientation: Lesbian, gay, queer, straight, bisexual, pansexual, asexual
- Disability/ability
- Geographic location
- National origin
- Age

Have students go back to their River of Life and label where different aspects of their intersectional identity (*e.g. race, gender*) may have impacted the experiences they depicted on their rivers. **Ask students to consider:** To what extent would the drawing of your river be different if you emphasized a particular aspect of your intersectional identity over another (*e.g. gender over class*)?

B4. Intersectionality: World History: Q1 Unit 1: “Belief Systems and Understanding History,” [Linked here](#)

 THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA				
5. What sacred laws would promote peace and stability and allow you and others to achieve your goals (<i>e.g. not just school rules, but norms [unwritten rules of behavior connected to culture]</i>)?				
Teachers can feel free to utilize the Q1U1 Performance Task Example Rubric .				
Back to Top				
Pacing				
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Topic 1: Norm Setting/ River of Life			Topic 2: Intersectionality	Topic 3: The Direction of History
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Topic 4: Progress and the Scale of History	Topic 5: Progress Paradigm		Topic 6: Belief Systems and Culture	
Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
Topic 7: Conceptions of Time and History		Performance Task - Perceptions of Time		

B5. Kimberle Crenshaw and Intersectionality, World History: Q1 Unit 1: “Belief Systems and Understanding History,” [Linked here](#)



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Provide students with the definition of **intersectionality**: Intersectionality refers to the simultaneous experience of categorical and hierarchical classifications including but not limited to race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality. It also refers to the fact that what is often perceived as disparate forms of oppression, like racism, classism, sexism, and xenophobia, are actually mutually dependent and intersecting in nature, and together they compose a unified system of oppression. Thus, the privileges we enjoy and the discrimination we face are a product of our unique positioning in society as determined by these social classifiers. Display [this intersectional chart](#) to students and have students discuss their responses to the following questions:


- Explain how at least three overlapping identities from the chart might interact to influence an individual's experiences in society. Use specific examples.
- Reflect on your own identity. Choose two aspects from the chart and describe how they shape your perspective or experiences in educational, social, or personal settings. How might these intersections influence your interactions with others?
- Analyze how an institution can create policies and practices to better support individuals who experience intersecting forms of discrimination and privilege. Include examples of how specific elements from the chart could inform these policies.

Show students one or more of the following videos depending upon time:

1. [Video #1: “Intersectionality 101”](#)
 - a. How is intersectionality defined?
 - b. What is an example?
2. [Video #2: “Queer 101”](#) – **Note:** As an Asian immigrant, and as part of her persona, the video creator makes a joke that could be considered offensive from another narrator.
 - a. How does the narrator explain her intersectionality?
 - b. What advice does she give?
3. [Video #3: “Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw Defines Intersectionality”](#)
 - a. What experience “gave rise to intersectionality”?
 - b. Why did the court “refuse to allow Emma to put two causes of action together”? How did Crenshaw respond?

Provide the history of intersectionality to highlight the importance of Black women to thinking on intersectionality: The term intersectionality was first popularized in 1989 by critical legal and race scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. Crenshaw reviewed legal proceedings to illustrate how it is the intersection of race and gender that shapes how Black men and women experience the legal system. She found, for example, that when cases brought by Black women failed to match the circumstances of those brought by white women or by Black men, that their claims were not taken seriously because they didn't fit perceived normative experiences of race or gender.


B6. Sharia Law: Q1 Unit 2: “Development of Belief Systems,” [Linked here](#)



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- Islamic finance principles, guided by Sharia law**, prioritize ethical and equitable financial transactions, prohibiting practices such as interest-based lending and speculative trading. These principles have informed economic systems in Muslim-majority countries and Islamic financial institutions worldwide, shaping approaches to economic development and wealth distribution.

B7. Settler Colonialism, Q1 Unit 3: “Migration and Belief Systems,” [Linked here](#)



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culture of a society.

- Define **cultural hegemony**: the imposition of cultural "norms" on others.

Now that we've explored the significance of personal culture and human rights, let's journey into Australia's history to see how government actions impacted Indigenous Australians. To better understand, we'll project a map of Australia using resources from the [Australian Defining Moment's Digital Classroom](#). But first, let's grasp key terms that frame this historical narrative.

- Define **Settler Colonialism**: a type of colonialism in which the indigenous peoples of a colonized region are displaced by settlers who permanently form a society there. Settler colonialism can be defined as a system of oppression based on genocide as it displaces a population of a nation (*oftentimes indigenous people*) and replaces them with a new settler population.
 - Explain that this is a defining feature of Australian history.
 - For more information: [settler colonialism | Wex | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute](#).
- Ask students**: Can you think of similar examples in US history?
- Optionally, students can engage in readings for more background on Settler Colonialism:
 - [Settler Colonialism Primer | Unsettling America](#)
 - What resonates with you in this foundational exploration?
 - [Settler Colonialism](#)
 - How does this concept manifest in various parts of the world, and what common threads connect these experiences?
 - [What Is Settler-Colonialism? | Learning for Justice](#)
 - Reflect on the implications and consider the ways in which understanding settler colonialism contributes to fostering justice and equity.

Now that we've laid the groundwork on settler colonialism, let's journey into the specific historical landscape of Australia. Our exploration will traverse the events before and after European colonialism, shedding light on key moments that have left an indelible mark on the nation.

B8. Settler Colonialism Primer, [Linked here](#)

Settler Colonialism Primer

unsettlingamerica.wordpress.com/2014/06/06/settler-colonialism-primer/

Unsettling Ourselves: Reflections and Resources for Deconstructing Colonial Mentality



*a
sourcebook
compiled by
Unsettling Minnesota*

foreword by
Derrick Jensen
texts and guides from:
Andrea Smith • Waziyatawin
Dee Brown • Ward Churchill
Elizabeth Martinez • Denise Breton
UM collective members • and others

DEC  L  NIZE

B9. Settler Colonialism Primer, p. 4, [Linked here](#)

White Supremacism and White Privilege

The most common mistake people make when they talk about racism is to think it is a collection of prejudices and individual acts of discrimination. They do not see that it is a system, a web of interlocking, reinforcing institutions: economic, military, legal, educational, religious, and cultural. As a system, racism affects every aspect of life in a country.

—Elizabeth Martinez

Another aspect of racial formation is the ideas of “whiteness,” and that white people are superior to other racialized groups. This system of white supremacy justifies the denial of basic human rights, and many times life itself, upon people of color, while entitling white people to unearned privilege. White supremacy is also a way of thinking and “knowing” that assumes an inherent superiority upon white people. Despite that the history of invasion and genocide wrought by settlers and colonization is well known, images of white purity and superiority are engrained in settler consciousness. These beliefs have permeated and distorted reality so deeply that white people who benefit from these structures are permitted to elude their existence. White supremacy is not just a manifestation of the Klu Klux Klan or racist skinheads but is a pillar of the U.S. settler colonial system and is inherent in everyday thinking. Andrea Smith relates white supremacy to the foundations of settler colonialism in the United States, “the three primary logics of white supremacy in the US context include: (1) slaveability/anti-black racism, which anchors capitalism; (2) genocide, which anchors colonialism; and (3) orientalism, which anchors war.”

White people live with an unearned privilege. Peggy McIntosh explains:

4/12

B10. World History Q3 Unit 3: “Struggles for Liberation and Social Justice,” [Linked here](#)

[Back to Top](#)

Suggested Pacing			
Day 1	Days 2	Day 3	Days 4
Topic 1: Fanon and the Violence of Decolonization		Topic 2: Bandung Conference	
Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8
Topic 2: Bandung Conference continued			Topic 3: Soweto Uprising (Memorial Project Exemplar)
Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12
Topic 4: Resistance Memorial Project	Authentic Performance Task: Resistance Memorial Project		

B11. Resistance Memorial Project, [Linked here](#)

Part 1: Read through these imagining instructions.

- Pretend that you are a sculptor.
- Pretend that you are being hired to create a memorial to remember your chosen Resistance Movement.
- You are going to sketch an idea for what that memorial will look like.
- As you think about your design, you will be exploring this question:
 - **Who/what in my resistance movement should be remembered most?**
 - This question will be relevant as you make decisions about who and what to represent in your memorial, what should be included, and what should be given more or less prominence.

Part 2: Use this table to keep track of the roles different people and ideas played in your chosen resistance movement.

Person/Group/Idea:	Their contribution to the Resistance Movement:	Source of information? Does it seem like a reliable source? Why?	How much should this be remembered?

B12. World History, Q2 Unit 2: “The Historical Development of Conflict,” [Linked here](#)



will have a set amount of time to browse through the slides individually and choose a few conflicts to explore further. Encourage them to select conflicts that pique their interest or that they find particularly relevant. Encourage students to take notes or jot down questions as they browse:

- Christian-Muslim Conflicts
 - Crusades in Spain (Reconquista) (711-1492)
 - Ottoman Wars in Europe (14th-20th centuries)
- Buddhist-Hindu Conflicts
 - Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict (1956-2009)
 - Violent clashes in Myanmar (e.g., against the Rohingya)
- Jewish-Muslim Conflicts
 - Al-Aqsa Intifada (Second Intifada) (2000-2005)
 - Conflict over the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif
 - Jewish-Muslim Conflicts in Iraq, Arab Countries, and France
 - Farhud in Iraq (1941)
 - Jewish Exodus from Arab and Muslim Countries (1948-1970s)
 - Tension in France (2000s-present)
- Hindu-Muslim Conflicts in India
 - Partition of India (1947)
 - Babri Masjid Demolition and Riots (1992-1993)
 - Gujarat Riots (2002)
- Buddhist-Muslim Conflicts
 - Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar (2017-present)
 - Anti-Muslim Violence in Sri Lanka (2018)
 - Conflict in Southern Thailand (2004-present)
- Shia-Sunni Sectarian Conflicts
 - Iraq War (2003-2011)
 - Syrian Civil War (2011-present)
 - Sectarian Violence in Pakistan (ongoing)
- Tamil-Sinhalese Conflict in Sri Lanka
 - Sri Lankan Civil War (1983-2009)
 - Black July Riots (1983)



- Massacre of Mullivaikkal (2009)
- Sikh-Muslim Conflicts:
 - Operation Blue Star and Anti-Sikh Riots in India (1984)
 - Sikh Separatist Movement in Punjab (1980s-1990s)
- Ethnic Conflicts with Religious Elements:
 - Bosnian War (1992-1995)
 - Rwandan Genocide (1994)
 - Northern Ireland Conflict (The Troubles) (late 20th century)
- Inter-Religious Conflicts in Africa:
 - Christian-Muslim Clashes in Nigeria (e.g., Jos conflict)
 - Interfaith Violence in the Central African Republic (2012-present)

B13. Whose Terrorism? Bill Bigelow, Zinn Education, [Linked here](#)

TEACHING ABOUT THE WARS

Chapter 2 • Whose Terrorism?

Whose Terrorism?

A classroom activity asks students to define terrorism and then apply their definitions to world events

BILL BIGELOW

Shortly after the horrific September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, then-President Bush denounced these as acts of war and proclaimed a “war on terrorism.” But what exactly was the target of this war? And what did the president mean by terrorism? Despite uttering the words terror, terrorist, or terrorism 32 times in a September 20 speech to the nation, he never once defined terrorism.

As teachers, we need to engage our students in a deep, critical reading of terms such as terrorism, freedom, patriotism, and “our way of life”—terms that evoke vivid images but can be used for ambiguous ends.

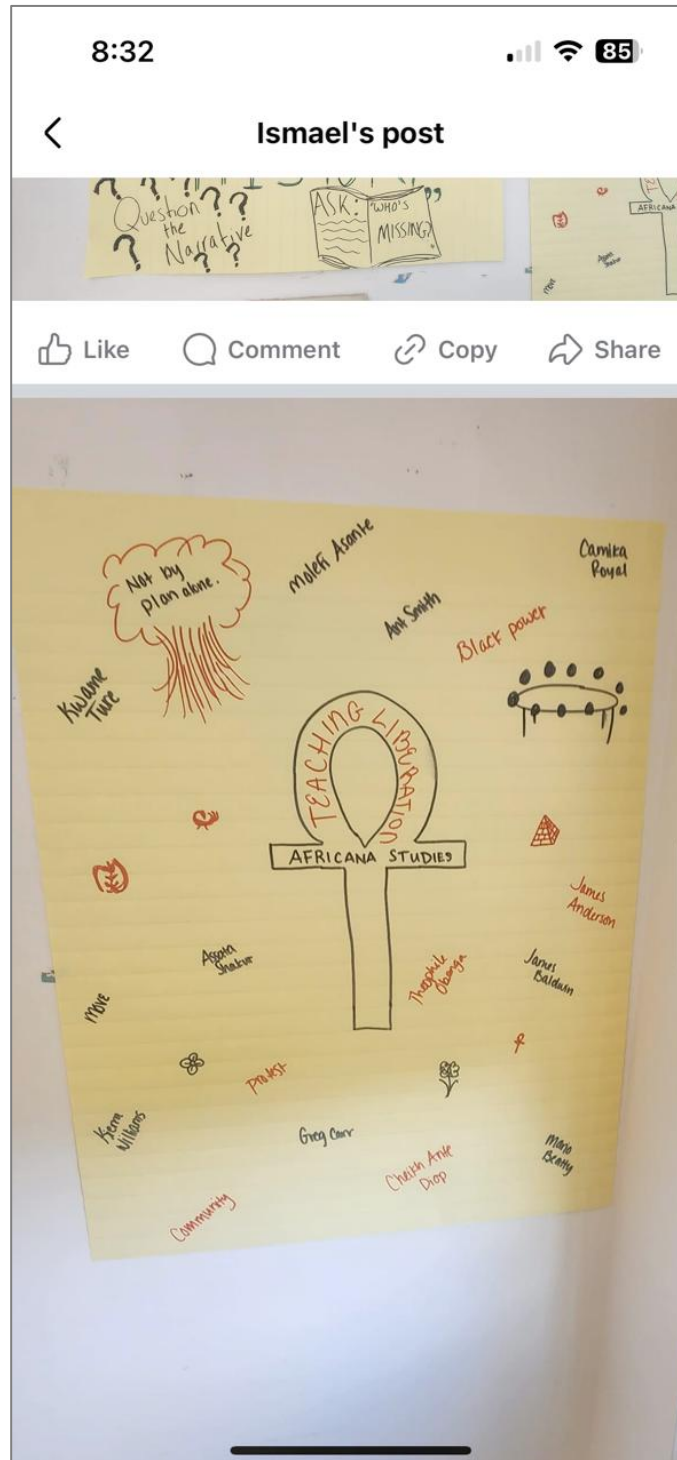
A LESSON ON TERRORISM

I wanted to design a lesson that would get students to surface the definitions of terrorism that they carry around—albeit most likely unconsciously. And I wanted them to apply their definitions to a number of episodes, historical and contemporary, that involved some kind of violence or destruction. I didn’t know for certain, but my hunch was that as students applied definitions consistently they would call into question the We’re Good/They’re Bad dichotomies that have become even more pronounced on the political landscape.

I wrote up several “What Is Terrorism?” scenarios, but instead of using the actual names of countries involved, I created fictitious names. Given the widespread conflation of patriotism with support for U.S. government policies, I had no confidence that students would be able to label an action taken by their own government as “terrorism” unless I attached pseudonyms to each country.

“WHEN OUR GOVERNMENT DOESN’T DEFINE TERRORISM, IT MAKES ME THINK THAT THEY JUST WANT A FREE SHOT TO KILL ANYONE THEY WANT.”

B14. New teacher training run by SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum Ismael Jimenez and SDP Teacher Nicholas Bernadini



B15. Melanated Educators Collective, featuring Sharif el-Mekki, SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum Ismael Jimenez, and SDP teacher Keziah Ridgeway, [Linked here](#)

Melanated Educators Collective's Post

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Melanated Educators Collective

February 29, 2020 · 🌐

...

Revolutionary Black Educators of the past and present! Featuring Sharif El-Mekki, Ismael Jimenez, and Keziah Ridgeway

<https://youtu.be/N-iKs4VtZ-4>



YOUTUBE.COM

Black Educators: A History of Shaping the Future - Trailer



Sharif El-Mekki, Founder and CEO of the Center for Black Educator Development, talks about ...

i


www.camera.org | schools@camera.org | @CAMERA4Truth


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B16. Susan Abulhawa, June 22, 2025, in response to the Iran/Israel conflict, [Linked here](#)

 **susan abulhawa** | سوزان ابو الهوى 
@susanabulhawa

y'all know the old chant: khaibar, khaibar, yayahood...

 **RT** @RT_com · Jun 22
Iran posts 'first firing of Kheibar missile at Israel'



10:10 AM · Jun 22, 2025 · **55K** Views

B17. Email from Donna Sharer, SDP Curriculum Development Specialist, K-12

Good evening. I'm sharing materials that may be beneficial to include in a World History unit on colonization / decolonization.

- Zinn Education Project - Lesson plan by Bill Bigelow.
- Teaching the Seeds of Violence in Palestine-Israel
- <https://www.zinnedproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Seeds-of-Violence.pdf> (<https://www.zinnedproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Seeds-of-Violence.pdf>)
- Rethinking Schools - Lesson plan by Samia Shoman
- Independence or Catastrophe? Teaching Palestine through Multiple Perspectives
- <https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/independence-or-catastrophe/> (<https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/independence-or-catastrophe/>)
- SNCC 1967 Statement on Palestine
- <https://snccdigital.org/inside-sncc/policy-statements/palestine/> (<https://snccdigital.org/inside-sncc/policy-statements/palestine/>)
- Letter to the Editor, NY Times
- New Palestine Party. Visit of Menachen Begin and Aims of Political Movement Discussed. A letter to The New York Times. Saturday December 4, 1948 by Albert Einstein, Hannah Arendt, Sidney Hook, et.al.
(<https://archive.org/details/AlbertEinsteinLetterToTheNewYorkTimes.December41948/mode/2up>)

Much more here - <https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/teaching-palestine-israel> (<https://www.zinnedproject.org/news/teaching-palestine-israel>)

Best
Donna

--

Dr. Donna L. Sharer (she/her)
Curriculum Development Specialist (9-12), Multilingual Curriculum & Programs
The School District of Philadelphia | Office of Multilingual Curriculum and Programs (<https://www.philasd.org/multilingual/>)
440 N. Broad Street | Portal C, Suite 251 | Philadelphia, PA 19130
Phone: 215-400-
@philasd.org (mailto: @philasd.org)

B18. Donna Sharer, SDP Curriculum Development Specialist, K-12, to Ismael Jimenez SDP Director of Social Studies Curriculum

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Donna** <[REDACTED]@philasd.org (mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>

Date: Thu, Nov 30, 2023, 12:09 PM

Subject: Re:

To: Ismael Jimenez <[REDACTED]@philasd.org (mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>

Good talking to you.

Here's the article about Northeast HS in the early 2000s. I am the teacher in the article - "Anne Larson."

There is much more detail in the book - *Unsettled Belonging: Educating Palestinian American Youth after 9/11* (<https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/U/bo21164048.html>)

Anyway, my experience 20+ years ago makes the current situation feel like déjà. The students suffered - short and long term - at the hands of adults.

Best

Donna

B19. Nureen Ignacio, Curriculum Specialist

From (Envelope) Nureen Ignacio <[REDACTED]@philasd.org>

From (Header) Nureen Ignacio <[REDACTED]@philasd.org>

CC [REDACTED]@philasd.org

Subject Palestinian Conversation

Sent 22 Nov 2023 - 10:48:16 EST

Message Body

Good morning,

Dr. Jubilee, the Chief of Equity for our school district, is holding space for us on Monday at 12:30pm to discuss ways to support Palestinian students and conversations about Palestine. I know some of you have report card conferences at that time but I wanted to extend the invitation to you since you have a direct connection to our students and hear their needs directly from them. The calendar invitation is titled "Palestinian Affinity Group" but I know the need reaches beyond just Palestinian students. I have heard many instances of students who aren't Palestinian who want to talk more deeply about the topic but aren't given the opportunity for a multitude of reasons, maybe that is something we can discuss.

You will get a calendar invitation from me shortly. I would like to have you join the conversation if you are able. I have already gotten permission from your principals to invite you.

Have a wonderful break!
Nureen

--

Nureen H Ignacio, M.Ed
Professional Learning Specialist
The School District of Philadelphia | Learning Network 1
440 North Broad Street | Philadelphia, PA 19130
Be Part of the Progress

B20. Deborah Wei, Curriculum Specialist, Social Studies, October 17, 2023

Summary

Summary

From (Envelope)

Deborah Wei <[REDACTED]@philasd.org>

From (Header)

Deborah Wei <[REDACTED]@philasd.org>

To

[REDACTED]@philasd.org, [REDACTED]@philasd.org, [REDACTED]@philasd.org

Subject

Resources

Sent

17 Oct 2023 - 14:31:42 EDT

Attachments (2)

Name	Size
truthdig.com-Have We Learned Nothing.pdf	184 KB
jewishcurrents.org-We Cannot Cross Until We Carry Each Other.pdf	349.2 KB

Message Body


In case anyone asks, I have been trying to look up resources that shouldn't be questioned. One is an independent journalism newsite made up of Palestinian and Israeli reporters:
<https://www.972mag.com/> (<https://www.972mag.com/>)

And the two articles attached. Haven't reviewed them but were recommended...

--

Deborah Wei
Curriculum Specialist - Social Studies
The School District of Philadelphia | Office of Curriculum and Instruction
440 North Broad Street | Suite 206 | Philadelphia, PA 19130

B21. Statement about October 7th to staff by Superintendent Tony Watlington

<p>Dear colleagues,</p> <p>The violence in the Middle East region is heartbreaking. We at the School District of Philadelphia vehemently oppose and mourn the loss of life resulting from violence perpetrated on innocent people. Our hearts and minds are with every individual – at home and abroad – who is grieving the loss of loved ones and the uncertainty of what the future holds for families and friends.</p> <p>The School District of Philadelphia is a diverse community of students and families, and our foremost concern is the mental and physical well-being of everyone. We will continue to maintain a District-wide community where staff and students can process, exercise empathy, learn about the historical context and access resources. We will make counselors and other mental health support staff available in schools for students and staff as needed.</p> <p>The following resources are also available to schools and educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Resources for Learning About Israel and Palestine</u> (https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/resources-for-learning-about-israel-and-palestine) • <u>Discussing War And Conflict: Resources For Educators, Parents And Caregivers</u> (https://www.learningforjustice.org/discussing-war-and-conflict-resources-for-educators-parents-and-caregivers?utm_source=Learning+for+Justice&utm_campaign=a51b79197c-Newsletter-10-11-2023&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a8cea027c3-a51b79197c-101582689) • <u>Six tips for explaining war to children Penn GSE</u> (https://www.gse.upenn.edu/news/educators-playbook/6-tips-explaining-war-children) • <u>Supporting Youth Affected by the Violence in Israel and Gaza NASP</u> (https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/supporting-youth-affected-by-the-violence-in-israel-and-gaza-tips-for-families-and-educators_!!IBzWLUslS8BpnPa8EMsJI2YYQ4PaZaSF9YappkSuvfvzHMDGm9-khpk06FFsr-7mmn8lffKh4kcyx-cxAYGF1qX7Pkf8\$) • <u>Social Emotional Learning Toolbox</u> (https://www.philasd.org/schoolclimate/#socialemo) <p>Starting next week for teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <u>Community Meeting app</u> (http://communitymeeting.me/) will have resources designed to help teachers navigate conversations. Find these resources by selecting "Current Events" as a filter in the app. <p>This is an extremely difficult time for many. We urge everyone to channel their anger, sadness and heartbreak into caring action. And together, let's hope for a swift end to this crisis so that peace and healing can begin.</p> <p>In partnership,</p> <div data-bbox="461 1570 553 1633">  </div>		
<p>Mimecast Case Review</p> <p>Tony B. Watlington Sr., Ed.D. Superintendent The School District of Philadelphia</p>		

B22. Letter by Nicholas Bernardini regarding teaching about Palestine and Keziah Ridgeway, April 2024
(Part 1)

Summary
Summary

From (Envelope) Nicholas Bernardini <[REDACTED]@philasd.org>

From (Header) Nicholas Bernardini <[REDACTED]@philasd.org>

To [REDACTED]@philasd.org

Subject Fwd: In Defense of Critical Thinking Pedagogy

Sent 24 Apr 2024 - 16:37:45 EDT

Message Body

I just sent this to leadership.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Nicholas Bernardini<[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>
Date: Wed, Apr 24, 2024 at 4:38PM
Subject: In Defense of Critical Thinking Pedagogy
To: Tony Watlington <superintendent@philasd.org(mailto:superintendent@philasd.org)>, schoolboard <schoolboard@philasd.org(mailto:schoolboard@philasd.org)>, Richard Gordon <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, Sabriya Jubilee <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, Rauch, Lynn <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, jdawson <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, Edwin Santana <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, dpwilliams <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, mfixlopez <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, Sarah-Ashley Andrews <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, Julia Danzy <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, lsalley <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, cethompson <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, Joyce Wilkerson <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, Rosenkrantz, Girel <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, Jeremy Grant-Skinner <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>, Streater <[REDACTED]@philasd.org(mailto:[REDACTED]@philasd.org)>

SDP Leadership,

In Defense of Critical Thinking Pedagogy

When students are able to willfully wrestle with complex issues and come to their own conclusions because of skills we have worked to build with them, we have succeeded as educators. It is not our role to subvert their conclusions; it is our role to challenge them, to ask them to look at their work with a critical eye, just as we ask them to look at others' work, and to self-critique their research so that their conclusions, whatever they may be, are built on a foundation of reliable historical and modern sources and perspectives. It is in this spirit that I respectfully push back against individuals or groups who wish to censor student academics and voice support for the work Ms. Keziah

B23. Letter by Nicholas Bernadini regarding teaching about Palestine and Keziah Ridgeway, April 2024
(Part 2)

Ridgeway is doing at Northeast High School and other dedicated educators are implementing in their schools. They are able to garner engagement that most teachers dream of. This is not the result of the school population and placement but of their hard work, dedication, and a propensity to design creative lessons that allow for student choice and ownership.

It is problematic and dangerous for political groups to be able to physically or virtually intimidate those students and staff members they believe do not align with their social views or political objectives. Educational spaces are designed to be a place of discourse. These are the places where discussions related to race and racism, class struggle, empire and colonialism, the cost of war both economically and socially should and need to happen. Palestine and Israel cannot be off-limits; just ask our students (<https://whyy.org/articles/philadelphia-student-walk-out-high-schoolers-support-palestinians/>). We are in dangerous territory when we allow special interests to dictate student voice, freedom of thought, expression, and well-developed independent conclusions. Students have the right to ask why and search for answers; teachers have the responsibility to demand students question and challenge, not simply believe and accept.

The role of a good Social Studies educator is to help students develop critical thinking and evaluation skills through the analysis of historical sources. These skills, when successfully developed, allow growing children the ability to master critiquing the world around them, make sense of their society, and ascertain the reliability of informational sources that come in all forms. The purpose of this kind of teaching, the kind that leans into analysis and critique, questioning and synthesis, is to lead students down the pathway of independent thought and not into the traps of textbook historical narratives that tend to regurgitate nationalistic myth and grandeur by supplying mostly single-sided U.S. perspectives at best, and overly simplified Eurocentric perspectives at worst.

By exposing students to various historical perspectives, including the experiences of non-European peoples, women, children, indigenous, poor, and non-white populations around the world, we are challenging students to examine modes of power. Why do the perspectives of these groups sometimes differ from one another, and why do the perspectives of these groups more often than not differ so completely from that of the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant male)? Why does the perspective of those in charge of governing and expanding empire differ so much from those on the other side of that expanding empire? Colonists versus the colonized? Who defines developed versus underdeveloped, first world versus third world, etc.? When students are asked to examine, research, and evaluate these questions and not accept singular explanations, but construct a multi-sourced, multi-perspective analysis, forms of historical and modern oppression reveal themselves. This type of approach is a learned process that not just historians, but all thoughtful humans, practice as they work to suss out the muck and mire associated with the ever-growing pool of (mis)information that lives on social media, cable news, magazines, and websites.

Engaging students to look at history and apply those lessons learned to the world they live in today can be a big challenge. As educators, we are always looking for a hook. Some years ago at the summer institute I led a professional development for the district's summer institute entitled "Global Resistance through Art and Music." The purpose of this PD was to illustrate how non-literary

B24. Letter by Nicholas Bernadini regarding teaching about Palestine and Keziah Ridgeway, April 2024
(Part 3)

sources such as songs and visual art can be analyzed, critiqued, and questioned in similar ways that a written text can and at the same time reflect the perspectives and agency of peoples across the world whose stories are often overlooked, whether it be willfully or by ignorance. Music and visual art are often a welcomed break from primary and secondary source reading activities that can tend to drive our instruction. An extension of activities such as these and the goal of all teaching, in general, is for the student to be able to synthesize their learning and in doing so make connections to the world around them. A natural strategy for a teacher in this respect is to ask students to look at their present lives and find situations that exist today that are comparable to those of the past and evaluate how people are grappling with them. The exchange of power, who has it, where it flows, and how it affects people and society in general is real and necessary for all of us to grapple with.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective. I appreciate all of your work.

--

Nicholaus Bernadini
M.A. History
B.S. Ed
Fels STC

Samuel Fels High School
5500 Langdon Street
Philadelphia, PA 19124
215-537-████

B25. Asiyah Jones, CAIR-PA Chief, Office of Diversity, to Equity, Inclusion, Sabriya K. Jubilee, August 22, 2025 about “Partnering for Inclusive Schools This Year” (Part 1)

From: Asiyah Jones [REDACTED]@cair.com>
Date: Fri, Aug 22, 2025 at 2:29 PM
Subject: Partnering for Inclusive Schools This Year - CAIR PA
To:
Cc: Ahmet Tekelioglu [REDACTED]@cair.com>

Good afternoon,

As the new school year begins, we want to commend you for the work you and your staff do to create learning environments where every student feels seen, safe, and supported. At CAIR-Pennsylvania we share this commitment and would like to offer ourselves as a resource and partner in helping schools continue building inclusive spaces.

Muslim students and staff are part of nearly every district in our region, and small steps can make a big difference in ensuring they feel fully welcomed. We'd like to highlight a few practical ways schools can support inclusivity this year:

- **Professional Development & Resources:** Our [Educator's Guide to Islamic Practices](#) offers simple, clear information about prayer accommodations, dietary needs, modest dress, and major holidays like

B26. Asiyah Jones, CAIR-PA Chief, Office of Diversity, to Equity, Inclusion, Sabriya K. Jubilee, August 22, 2025 about “Partnering for Inclusive Schools This Year” (Part 2)

Eid. We also provide training for educators and staff on cultural competency, anti-bullying, and inclusive practices.

- **Anti-Bullying Student Workshops:** We can visit classrooms as guest facilitators to lead student-centered discussions that build empathy and belonging.
- **Customizable Trainings:** If your classroom or school has specific needs, we can adapt workshops to fit your students/staff.
- **Inclusive School Calendars and Holidays:** Recognizing Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha in [school calendars](#) and classrooms helps prevent scheduling conflicts and communicates respect for all communities.
- **Safe and Supportive Environments:** Ensuring students and staff know how to report bias or bullying, and that reports are taken seriously to strengthen trust and belonging across the school community.
- **Student Empowerment:** Encouraging student-led cultural or faith-based clubs, such as a Muslim Student Association, fosters leadership, peer support, and stronger school connections.

We know administrators and educators juggle many priorities. Our role is to make inclusion easier, not harder by providing ready-to-use templates (for holiday accommodations, prayer requests, or classroom opt-outs), training opportunities, and ongoing support.

If you'd like to schedule a workshop or learn more about our resources, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [\[REDACTED\]@cair.com](mailto:[REDACTED]@cair.com). Together, we can continue building schools where every student, including Muslim students and staff, can thrive!

With appreciation,

Asiyah



Asiyah Jones, MPH
Advocacy Projects Director

CAIR Philadelphia | [Pa.cair.com](https://pa.cair.com)

(e) [\[REDACTED\]@cair.com](mailto:[REDACTED]@cair.com) | (c) [REDACTED]



B27. Email from Chief, Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Sabriya K. Jubilee to CAIR-PA, Asiyah Jones, August 25, 2025

[REDACTED]@philasd.org

From: Dr. Sabriya K. Jubilee <[REDACTED]@philasd.org>
Sent: Monday, August 25, 2025 8:18 AM
To: Jones, Asiyah
Cc: atekelioglu; Golobish, Michelle
Subject: Re: Partnering for Inclusive Schools This Year - CAIR PA

Greetings Asiyah,

Thank you for your email. I am happy to connect with you. Through the work of our Community Advocate Committee, we have created a space for organizations to share ways to help us develop and enhance support for the various members of our school communities within a network of advocate organizations.

Cair is already included on our listserv. Our Interim Director of Culture and Community Engagement, Michelle Gainer, is now overseeing that work.

In the near future, you will receive an email inviting you to the first meeting to be held in September.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am looking forward to a year of intentional partnership.

In Service,
Dr. Jubilee

B28. SDP teachers Hannah Gann, Keziah Ridgeway, and students posing with copies of Rethinking Schools' *Teach Palestine* edition, part of a Philly Teach Palestine study group

