

BY E-MAIL & REGULAR U.S. MAIL



January 22, 2021

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Richard Corcoran, Commissioner
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

Dear Commissioner Corcoran,

We write to express our objections to the Department of Education's consideration of proposed K-12 student Holocaust Education standards written by an organization called Proclaiming Justice to the Nations (PJTN).

Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of anti-Semitism and bigotry, ADL is a leading anti-hate organization with the timeless mission to protect the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all. Today, we continue to fight all forms of hate with the same vigor and passion. A global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education, and fighting hate online, ADL's ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination, or hate.

Our nation's public schools are for children from all backgrounds. The Department of Education (DOE) is tasked with providing students with the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through learning opportunities. Inherent in this promise is the creation of learning environments where all children are valued and respected regardless of their race, religion, ability, gender, and other immutable characteristics.

We must be extremely cautious and judicious about the experts that are invited to offer curriculum recommendations to DOE. The intent of Florida's Holocaust education mandate is to teach the subject "in a manner that leads to an investigation of human behavior, an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions."¹ Yet, PJTN has a well-documented track record of anti-Muslim bigotry. Therefore, consideration by DOE of PJTN's educational recommendations on Holocaust education is inexplicable.

While PJTN, and its founder Laurie Cardoza-Moore, portend to fight anti-Semitism and support Israel, it clearly holds anti-Muslim beliefs and makes no distinction between Islam and extremists purporting to represent the religion. Indeed, a cursory search of PJTN's website and social media accounts reflects its views.

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http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?mode=View%20Statutes&SubMenu=1&App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=Holocaust+education&URL=1000-1099/1003/Sections/1003.42.html (webpage last visited January 21, 2021)

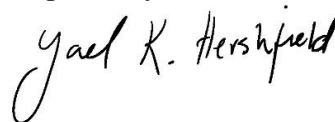
PJTN equates lessons about the basic tenets of Islam with unconstitutional religious indoctrination and has a petition on its website to protest the inclusion of the U.S. Department of Education's recommended curriculum on Islam, characterizing it as "being used to indoctrinate our children with unconstitutional pro Islamic (sic) content."² The organization asserts that America faces a stealthy pre-violent form of warfare aimed to destroy our constitutional form of democratic government and our free society. 'Sharia supremacists' are actively at work to make Islam's totalitarian ideology the law of the land."³

A PJTN presentation on YouTube entitled, "The Invasion of Islam into our Educational System," states that "our country, our constitutional republic, is holding on by a thread...we have to fight to take our nation back...the antisemitism, if we don't stop it, they will come after everybody. They start with the Jews, never ends with the Jews. And of course our enemy, the Islamists, make it very clear to us who their enemy is: the Saturday people and the Sunday people, the Pigs and the Apes, the Great Satan and the Little Satan. And what do we do? We invite them into our classrooms with propaganda and into our government."⁴

If PJTN's views were accepted, the well-documented history of Muslims who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust and who are recognized and honored by Yad Vashem's Righteous Among the Nations program would never be taught.

The lessons of the Holocaust teach us that when we demonize and instill odium against a group, we plant the seeds of the kind of hatred that leads to genocide. In light of PJTN's record of anti-Muslim bigotry, the organization's participation in molding the teaching of this important history must be unequivocally rejected.

Respectfully,



Yael Hershfield
Interim Regional Director
ADL Florida

² <https://www.pjtn.org/stopaccessislam> (webpage last visited January 21, 2021)

³ https://www.pjtn.org/pjtn_will_not_be_silenced (webpage last visited January 21, 2021)

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=4Yc4wrVuhek> (webpage last visited January 21, 2021)