

Witchcraft? Parents Sue California Department of Education for Unthinkable Constitutional Violations

The California Department of Education passed a curriculum that has students praying to Aztec gods, according to a lawsuit filed Sept. 3, 2021, by the Thomas More Society. The prayers are being elicited under the guise of an ethnic studies curriculum. The complaint, filed in California Superior Court on behalf the Californians for Equal Rights Foundation and individual taxpayers and parents of school children, follows an unanswered demand letter sent to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The letter asked the state's top educational authority to withdraw the Aztec prayer from the curriculum.

"The Aztecs regularly performed gruesome and horrific acts for the sole purpose of pacifying and appeasing the very beings that the prayers from the curriculum invoke," explained Paul Jonna, partner at LiMandri & Jonna LLP and Thomas More Society Special Counsel. "The human sacrifice, cutting out of human hearts, flaying of victims and wearing their skin, are a matter of historical record, along with sacrifices of war prisoners, and other repulsive acts and ceremonies the Aztecs conducted to honor their deities. Any form of prayer and glorification of these bloodthirsty beings in whose name horrible atrocities were performed is repulsive to any reasonably informed observer."

"The curriculum's unequivocal promotion of five Aztec gods or deities through repetitive chanting and affirmation of their symbolic principles constitutes an unlawful government preference toward a particular religious practice," added

Frank Xu, President of Californians for Equal Rights Foundation. "This public endorsement of the Aztec religion fundamentally erodes equal education rights and irresponsibly glorifies anthropomorphic, male deities whose religious rituals involved gruesome human sacrifice and human dismemberment."

The complaint submitted to the court details the California State Board of Education's approved Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, which includes a section of "Affirmation, Chants and Energizers." Among these is the "In Lak Ech Affirmation," which invokes five Aztec deities. Although labeled as an "affirmation," it addresses the deities both by name and by their traditional titles, recognizes them as sources of power and knowledge, invokes their assistance and gives thanks to them. In short, states the complaint, it is a prayer.

"Our clients have both a religious and civic objection to the Aztec prayer, and they do not want their children chanting it, being asked or pressured to do so, or risking ostracism if they refuse," added Jonna. "Under both the California and United States Constitutions, they have the right to expect all branches of the state government, including the State Board of Education and the Department of Education, to respect this choice. Furthermore, all Californians have the right to expect that tax-supported public schools will not aid or promote this religion."

Additionally, the curriculum includes the Ashe Prayer from the Yoruba religion. Yoruba is an ancient philosophical concept that is the root of many pagan religions, including santeria and Haitian vodou or voodoo.

Attorneys sent a demand letter to Tony Thurmond, the California Department of Education's state superintendent and former California state assemblyman, on Aug. 26, 2021, asking for removal of the Aztec prayer from the curriculum. A response was requested by Sept. 2, 2021. When none was

received, the lawsuit was filed.

“Both the California and the United States Constitutions prohibit prayer in public schools—particularly prayers drafted by public officials,” continued Jonna. “Can you imagine if elements of the Christian faith were proposed to be included in the public school curriculum? What if a class incorporated praying to the Blessed Virgin Mary, or even reciting the Lord’s Prayer? How would that be received?” {eoa}

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