



California to Remove Pagan Prayers From Public-school Curriculum

California has agreed to remove prayers to Aztec and other pagan gods from its public-school curriculum as part of a settlement in a lawsuit brought by parents and the Californians for Equal Rights Foundation with the assistance of the Thomas More Society.

In the [settlement](#), reached Thursday, the state consented to delete from its Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum two “affirmations” that students could be asked to recite, to notify local school districts not to use the deleted exercises, and not to encourage the use of the exercises in schools.



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As [The New American](#) reported in September, those exercises include the “In Lak Ech Affirmation,” an “adaptation” of an ancient Aztec prayer that not only indoctrinates students in far-left ideology but also encourages them to ask the Aztec gods to grant their requests.

“We filed the lawsuit after we discovered that California’s Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, a resource guide for local school districts, included prayer to Aztec gods — the same deities that were invoked when the Aztecs worshipped with human sacrifices,” Paul Jonna, partner at LiMandri & Jonna LLP and Thomas More Society Special Counsel, said in a [press release](#). “The Aztec prayers at issue — which seek blessings from and the intercession of these demonic forces — were not being taught as poetry or history. Rather, the curriculum instructed students to chant the prayers for emotional nourishment after a ‘lesson that may be emotionally taxing or even when student engagement may appear to be low.’ The idea was to use them as prayers.”

Lest one think Jonna’s reference to the Aztec gods, which are still worshipped by Aztec descendants and others, as “demonic forces” a bit extreme, consider this from the plaintiffs’ complaint:

The rituals performed by the Aztecs in relation to these beings were gruesome and horrific, involving human sacrifice, cutting out human hearts, flaying the sacrificed victims and wearing the skin, sacrificing war prisoners, and other inhuman acts and ceremony. Any form of prayer and glorification of these beings in whose name horrible atrocities were performed is repulsive to Plaintiffs and to any reasonably informed observer.

The curriculum also featured the “Ashe Affirmation,” which invokes the divine force of the traditional African religion of Yoruba, from which Santeria and voodoo sprang. According to the lawsuit, the affirmation “seeks intercession from this divine force with regard to the school day, it honors this spiritual force by chanting its name, and it includes speaking to Ashe in a religious way.”

The plaintiffs argued that the inclusion of the prayers in public-school curriculum violated a number of



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clauses concerning religion in the California constitution. Each prayer, they maintained,

is intended to involve all students in the classroom, forcing students to either participate in the prayer or elect not to participate and face the social implications of declining to participate, which represents a violation of such students' rights to the free exercise of religion under the California constitution. Printing and disseminating the prayer also constitutes an improper government aid of religion in violation of the California constitution.

"We are encouraged by this important, hard-fought victory," Frank Xu, president of the Californians for Equal Rights Foundation, said in response to the settlement. "Our state has simply gone too far in attempts to promote fringe ideologies and racial grievance policies, even those that disregard established constitutional principles. Endorsing religious chants in the state curriculum is one glaring example."

Curiously, while the state admitted no wrongdoing in the settlement, it did agree to fork over \$100,000 for the plaintiffs' attorneys' fees.

Despite the state's claim of innocence, Jonna said he was "pleased" with the settlement and promised to "aggressively pursue civil litigation against any school district" that continues to use the pagan prayers in classrooms.

"Today is a day of relief," declared Jose Velazquez, one of the parents who sued. "It took a multi-racial coalition of individuals with different backgrounds and beliefs ... to challenge the state education apparatus... Both the 'In Lak Ech' and the 'Ashe' affirmations repetitively invoke religious gods or deities, which should be deleted from any public education curricula because our education system is not above the law. It is up to courageous parents, citizens and organizations to stand up for what's right."



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