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October 4th, 2022

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To the attention of:

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Social Studies / History Teacher Tabitha Barry

VIA E-MAIL

We at the Simon Wiesenthal Center and our Museum of Tolerance were deeply disturbed by a recent incident in a Middle School in San Diego in which the photograph of Nazi tyrant Adolf Hitler was posted by the teacher next to FDR, John Kennedy, ML King, Gandhi, and Churchill. It took a brave 12-year-old 7th grade student to ask the history teacher to remove the photo of the infamous mass murderer of six million Jews, including 1.5 million Jewish children; of a leader who plunged the world into WWII, which led to the deaths of over 55 million people and the decimation of whole continents. Had Hitler not been stopped by America's Greatest Generation and Allies, his genocidal racist policies would have enslaved the world and impose a hierarchy based exclusively on race and color.

We are deeply troubled that the teacher's response was "*Hitler may have done some bad things, but he also had strong leadership qualities.*" How are twelve-year-old children, who do not possess the knowledge or experience to process such a statement, supposed to react?

If you want to compare Hitler's "leadership qualities" present him next to photographs of Stalin, Mao, and the Ayatollah Khamenei, not icons of liberty and human decency.

After the father of the student complained to the principal, the Jewish boy was removed from the class. The photograph only came down after multiple complaints from others. There is also the question whether this exercise actually came from the school's official curriculum.

In sum, everything about this incident raises alarm bells:

1. Was this indeed part of the district's formal curriculum?
2. Clearly, this teacher dismissive of the perpetrator of Genocide and instigator of a world war "some bad things Hitler" should trouble all parents. The implications of placing Hitler on the same line with giants of humanity at best, sends confusing messages to youngsters or worse.
3. Why did the principal remove the Jewish child? Hitler genocidal inhumanity targeted Germans with disabilities and millions of other innocents.

In sum, nothing was done right in this situation. The children and the community were impacted negatively, and I know you all want to address the issues directly.

We need to understand that Hitler was not just another "leader" and "Nazism" was not just another political movement.

Such hate almost destroyed civilization and bigotry is alive and well in today's America in many forms.

All this takes place during a time of surging anti-Semitism in social media, on major campuses, and on the streets of our cities.

Please let's make sure our teachers receive the proper training and our children receive an education the infuses them with basic ethical values

It is imperative that the School District address these issues ASAP. In that connection, The School District and the School should immediately review its curriculum as it relates to WWII, the Holocaust, racism, anti-Semitism, leadership qualities and introduction and /or refresher course to the Nazi Holocaust and its contemporary implications.

Please let us know how the Simon Wiesenthal Center and Museum of Tolerance can be of any further help.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Abraham Cooper
Associate Dean, Director Global Social Action
Simon Wiesenthal Center

Cc: Mayor Todd Gloria
Liebe Geft, Director, Museum of Tolerance