



KENNETH P. ZEBROWSKI
Assemblyman 96th District
Rockland County

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIRMAN
Administrative Regulations
Review Commission

COMMITTEES
Codes
Environmental Conservation
Ethics and Guidance
Governmental Employees
Judiciary
Labor

February 10, 2016

Adrian Ridner, CEO
Study.com
100 View St #202
Mountain View, CA 94041

Dear Mr. Ridner:

I am writing you regarding concerns with several educational videos that are available on your company's website.

I serve as a State Assemblyman from New York representing the 96th District in Rockland County. Recently, teachers from two school districts in Rockland (Clarkstown and Nyack) utilized educational videos from your website to assist in religion history lessons. The videos that were used depicted Judaism inaccurately as a religion which requires its followers to hold themselves "aloof"¹ and in one particular video, described Jews in the Roman period as "violent and extremists" and that they "got what they deserved."² The latter video has since been removed from your website following conversations between your company and Clarkstown Central School District officials. It is shocking that these types of broad, inaccurate and insensitive generalizations would be anywhere near our classrooms.

Although the teachers in these incidents should have exercised caution and reviewed the content for appropriateness; the responsibility also lies with your company from which these videos originated. Your company, as a provider of educational resources, must ensure that the content is accurate and appropriate, especially when the materials are being used to introduce young, impressionable students to complex topics such as religion, race and ethnicity.

I am requesting that your company review its content for accuracy and appropriateness. With respect to history of religion, it may be beneficial for your instructors to collaborate with members of those religious communities to assure that the lesson is developed in an inclusive manner. Collaborative curriculum design would be helpful in crafting lessons, not only for your instructors but most importantly, the end users of your products; teachers and students.

As you know, the content of these videos neither accurately depict Judaism nor provide students with a deep understanding of its religious beliefs. I would be happy to connect you with community leaders within various religions who can assist in developing educational content that

¹ <http://study.com/academy/lesson/the-hebrews-and-their-beliefs.html>

² <http://www.lohud.com/story/news/local/2016/02/03/clarkstown-anti-jewish-video/79766146/>

best represents their beliefs. I understand the difficulty of ensuring the accuracy of history in education especially interpretations of the various religious faiths throughout it. Despite those challenges, your company must strive to provide students with the most accurate content available. I hope that you will take these suggestions and move towards a more inclusive curriculum development process. Until we can be assured of changes to your material, I have called on all New York school districts to cease utilizing your website. I appreciate your attention to this important matter and please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kenneth P. Zebrowski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Kenneth P. Zebrowski
Member of Assembly