While much condemnation has rightly been expressed toward Arizona's anti-immigrant law, SB 1070, a less-reported and potentially more sinister measure is set to take effect on January 1, 2011.

This new law, which was passed by the conservative state legislature at the behest of then-School Superintendent (and now Attorney General-elect) Tom Horne, is designated HB 2281 and is colloquially referred to as a measure to ban ethnic studies programs in the state. As with SB 1070, the implications of this law are problematic, wide-ranging and decidedly hate filled.

Whereas SB 1070 focused primarily on the ostensible control of bodies, HB 2281 is predominantly about controlling minds. In this sense, it is the software counterpart of Arizona's race-based politicking, paired with the hardware embodied in SB 1070's "show us your papers" logic of "attrition through enforcement," which has already resulted in tens of thousands of people leaving the state.

With HB 2281, the intention is not so much to expel or harass as it is to inculcate a deep-seated, second-class status by denying people the right to explore their own histories and cultures. It is, in effect, about the eradication of ethnic identity among young people in the state's already-floundering school system, which now ranks near the bottom in the nation.

There's a word for what Arizona is attempting to do here: ethnocide. It is similar to genocide in its scope, but it reflects the notion that it is an ethnic and/or cultural identity under assault more so than physical bodies themselves. By imposing a curriculum that forbids the exploration of divergent cultures while propping up the dominant one, there's another process at work here, what we might call ethnonormativity.

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