

From: Janet M Winston

Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 5:07 PM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>; [emails redacted]

Cc: [email redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Arab American Studies Is Part of Ethnic Studies

Dear Members of the CA State Instructional Quality Commission, California Superintendent for Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, and Chair of the California Board of Education Linda Darling-Hammond,

I am writing to you to express my strongest support for the original model curriculum designed by the content experts in Ethnic Studies and public education teaching. Your attempt to relegate Arab American Studies to the appendix of this curriculum is not only unacceptable from a pedagogical standpoint but shameful from a human standpoint.

As a literature professor and a Jewish American, I am horrified that well organized and well funded right-wing political operatives, including pro-Zionist groups representing a range of political wings, are attempting to hijack our children's public education to further their political agendas by exerting pressure on you, the people's and CA public education's representatives.

Do not be scared by their attempts to bully you. Do not buckle under the weight of their smears. Do not be fooled by their specious cries of "socialism" and "antisemitism." As you must be fully aware, these campaigns are part of larger movements to silence the voices of marginalized peoples in California and around the country as well as to influence U.S. domestic and foreign policy. As a Jew I find it especially objectionable and dangerous that this movement attempts to insert a grossly distorted definition of antisemitism--one that includes criticism of the state of Israel and Zionism as a political project--into our public education, either explicitly or implicitly, by relegating Arab American studies to an appendix and rendering Palestinians invisible within this curriculum.

Do not deny our children the right to learn about their lives and histories from a critical Ethnic Studies lens. Ethnic Studies as a discipline and body of knowledge is not a multicultural grab bag or cultural tourism. Ethnic Studies centers the voices, histories, and perspectives of communities of color and provides anti racist and decolonial critical frameworks for understanding these narratives and realities. Jewish Studies is not part of Ethnic Studies but is its own separate discipline.

This is the moment for all of us to stand up for our children, for educational integrity in CA public education, and for sound curriculum development from the Ethnic Studies content experts.

Yours sincerely,

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