

August 10, 2020

Comment for The Instructional Quality Commission meeting on Thursday, August 13th 2020
Agenda item 2A - Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC)

Talofa (Hello),

My name is Amanda Stowers and I am a small creative business owner in San Francisco. I am of Samoan descent, however I grew up in the state of California. I'd like to submit this formal comment regarding the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum draft for 2020, which currently does not include any courses about Pacific Islanders, their cultures or their history. While I am in full support of this initiative and of having an ethnic studies requirement, I do feel it is important that Pacific Islander curriculum be included. While I am aware there is a section titled "Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies", we are not present in courses, content, lessons, sources or in planning.

As a Pacific Islander who grew up in California, I did not experience any curriculum relating to my culture, and the lack of representation impacted me greatly in terms of my identity and my mental health. Not only do young Pasifika students need to be represented in their curriculums, but non-Pasifika students also need to learn accurate information regarding Pacific Islander history and culture. This includes the true history of Hawai'i and how it was a sovereign, independent nation that was forcibly taken, and how their indigenous population experienced, and has continued to experience, an erasure of their culture and nation. Growing up Pacific Islander in the United States, I experienced a gross misunderstanding of my culture by others, due to either lack of information or misinformation taught within our society. This kind of misinformation is what leads to the appropriation of our cultures, another damaging issue for members of our community. While these are complicated issues with many layers, I truly believe that by adding Pacific Islander courses to our curriculum requirements we can work to address these issues at their roots and bring systemic change.

Fa'afetai tele lava (Thank you very much),

Amanda Stowers
Afakasi Prints