

From: Bethlehem Desta

Sent: Sunday, August 9, 2020 12:55 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Superintendent; [email redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Arab American Studies in CA Ethnic Studies Curriculum!

Good afternoon,

I am writing to express my strong support for including Arab American Studies in CA Ethnic Studies curriculum. I believe the inclusion of Arab American Studies in CA Ethnic Studies is essential. I grew up in California and in college majored in Ethnic Studies, so I am especially passionate about strong Ethnic Studies curriculum in my home state. The lack of strong Ethnic Studies curriculum in my own K-12 education was incredibly damaging to me, as a Black person, child of refugees, and member of the LGBT community. It was damaging to my classmates who were BIPOC and held other marginalized identities, and put my white peers in a position where their harmful beliefs were not challenged, and were oftentimes reinforced. This is why a strong Ethnic Studies curriculum is so important, and that curriculum needs to include Arab American Studies.

Arab American Studies must be included within the rubric of Asian American Studies, and that curriculum must include the history of current struggles of Palestine. It is not anti-Semitic to discuss Palestinian history and to support human rights for Palestinians, Jewish organizations such as [Jewish Voices for Peace](#) and [If Not Now](#) have made that abundantly clear. As the child of refugees, I am especially passionate about Palestinian history and the struggle for Palestinian liberation, as many Palestinians have become refugees as a result of the occupation.

Given long-standing and heightened Islamophobia and xenophobia in the US, including in California, it is essential that Arab American Studies are included in the CA Ethnic Studies curriculum. In the wake of 9/11, Trump's election, the devastating impacts of COVID-19, and xenophobic attacks on Asian Americans during this global pandemic, strong Ethnic Studies and Arab American Studies curriculum is vital, now more than ever. Exposure to this curriculum will be deeply beneficial for all students, and will assist in broader resistance to Islamophobia, xenophobia, racism, and other forms of violence.

It is also critical that Arab American scholars, Palestinian scholars, and Ethnic Studies practitioners are involved in the drafting and revision of this curriculum.

I urge you to do what is right: to protect the CA Ethnic Studies Model curriculum, and within that to specifically include and protect Arab American studies which includes the history of and struggle in Palestine.

Best,
Bethlehem Desta