

From: Eyewitness Palestine

Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 11:59 AM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Superintendent; [emails redacted]

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

Dear ISQ,

Eyewitness Palestine calls on you to reverse the unjust decision to cut Arab American Studies and Palestine from Ethnic Studies programs in the state of California.

As an organization dedicated to counteracting systems of domination through social-justice focused training, we understand firsthand the liberatory role that pedagogical praxis can play in dismantling structures of oppression and racism. We also know the decisive role it can play in giving a voice to the silenced and the marginalized. Including Arab American studies and Palestine in educational curricula throughout the state would be a powerful gesture, showing Arab Americans that their stories and struggles matter, that their oppression resonates and will not be tolerated, and that there is no “Palestine exception” when it comes to racial justice.

Our work has been to show how, despite what mainstream media has long suggested, what happens to Palestinians is not unique, or terribly complex. It is something that anyone who has ever fought against racial domination and oppression in any form will recognize all too well. It is, in fact, terribly *unexceptional*, one of the most straightforward manifestations of state-sanctioned discrimination, deprivation, and identity-based oppression that exists in our contemporary era. It is for this reason that Palestinians have fought alongside other oppressed communities for decades, and communities of color all over the world saw fit to reciprocate. Not transactional, but dialogic, solidarity is multidirectional, and illuminates the possibilities for a more just society and world that glimmers just on the horizon. It is, furthermore, due to this growing refusal to countenance the glaring optics of dispossession on display in the Palestinian context that new generations of lawmakers are calling for an end to Israeli impunity regarding treatment of the Palestinian people. Arab American communities have long known Palestine to be far from a mere “foreign policy” issue, given that their advocacy and activism was the flimsy pretext used for racially-motivated surveillance and repression on the part of the US government through mass-spying programs like Operation Boulder.

It is time for these stories to be heard, and for policymakers to refuse to allow the erasure of already-marginalized narratives and voices any longer. Ethnic studies is all about challenging oppressive power through education, and supporting Arab American studies and Palestine in CA ethnic studies educational programming is a perfect testament to that imperative.

Eyewitness Palestine