

**From:** Jennifer Mogannam

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 11, 2020 12:05 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Cc:** Superintendent

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

Dear Instructional Quarterly Commission,

As an Arab American educator, I call on you to reinstate Arab American studies and Palestine in the statewide model ethnic studies curriculum. As an educator and mentor that works to empower and embolden new generations to take pride in their Palestinian and/or Arab heritages, I believe it is crucial to fight for educational programming that uplifts Arab American stories alongside other community narratives of the fight against historical and ongoing forms of oppression and racism. At a moment where the US is facing a very public reckoning with how deeply entrenched racism is at the level of various institutions, it is deeply hypocritical to enact racist silencing by cutting educational materials dedicated to highlighting the struggles and successes of the Arab American community in the US. It is especially egregious given our the longstanding status of Arab American studies as a subfield of Asian American studies. Our communities and thinkers are an essential part of Asian American studies curriculum and erasing us from this curriculum is an erasure of a part of the Asian American studies community and curriculum.

Arab American studies has become a necessary subfield in higher education, particularly in the post-9/11 era. Arabs have been both hypervisibilized and invisibilized, absent from the US census while proliferated as terrorists or gender oppressed people. These images serve to repress identity and expression for Arab American young people in K-12 and higher education while also suppressing the experiences of racialization, causing systemic exclusion. Including these communities and Ethnic Studies more widely is essential for the racial transformation that is becoming exceedingly necessary in this moment.

I further note that education in this country has frequently served as an arm of racist oppression and dispossession in this country. From boarding schools dedicated to furthering the cultural genocide against Indigenous peoples, to universities that directly profited from slavery, advanced medical knowledge via unethical experimentation upon the bodies of enslaved peoples, and realized their territorial integrity via ethnic cleansing of Native Americans, schools and universities have long been a site of power and discipline rather than a magical sphere safely removed from the political realities of this country. Ethnic Studies emerged as an important attempt to counteract this, to show that education itself *is* political, and thus to redirect the project of education to scrutinizing the workings of power and counteracting the erasures and exclusions of all that have been its victims.

For these reasons, to cut Arab American studies and Palestine would be to spit on the face of this legacy. It would be a searing betrayal of everything that activists and intellectuals of various backgrounds fought for for so long. Having our communities' histories and stories told will not right every wrong that has been done, but it would be a powerful first step towards challenging

the erasure of our voices and the state-sanctioned repression that we have long faced due to belligerent US foreign policy.

Sincerely,

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