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To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Superintendent; [email redacted]; AROC

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Arab American Studies Are More Essential Now Than They Ever Have Been

In America's centuries long struggle to become a nation with true equality for all, the incessant and pervasive Islamophobia and anti-Arab rhetoric from our government, press and even academic institutions of the past 20 years is a giant step backwards. To achieve peace for America in the Middle East and globally, we need for our citizens to hear the voices of all people and to understand other cultures and points of view.

In particular, the silencing of Palestinian voices clamoring for an end to land theft, oppression and Apartheid negates all that America stands for in supporting the oppressed against oppressors. Ironically, the rampant Islamophobia has not only created an "open season" for White Supremacists to attack Muslims and Arabs, the feeling that attacks on minorities is now OK has been extended to Jews as well, with some attackers seemingly flipping a coin as to whether they will attack a mosque or a synagogue.

Arab culture is rich and ancient, extending back to the very earliest recorded history of humans in the Fertile Crescent. Over the centuries this culture has reached north into Europe, East across Asia and is today a global phenomenon. Understanding it is an essential part of an American education.

I have been blessed with opportunities to spend extended periods in Morocco, Turkey and, in the early 1980s, the Sudan. I have also lived in Asia and spent time in the Middle East influenced nations of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and in predominantly Muslim parts of China including Yunnan and Xinjiang. Understanding Middle East Culture opens ones eyes to vast stretches of humanity.

Please continue Arab, Muslim and Middle Eastern studies as stand alone courses, as integral parts of Middle Eastern studies and as an important series of chapters in the history of Asia.

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