

**From:** SacReg4 PalestinianRights  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 11, 2020 11:42 AM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies; Superintendent; [email redacted]  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Comments on 2020 revised draft EthnicStudies Model Curriculum

August 11, 2020

Instructional Quality Commission  
California Department of Education  
1430 N Street, Suite 5111  
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Mr. Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Education [superintendent@cde.ca.gov](mailto:superintendent@cde.ca.gov)  
Ms. Linda Darling-Hammond, President of the State Board of Education [ldh@stanford.edu](mailto:ldh@stanford.edu)

Re: 2020 revised draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

The Sacramento Regional Coalition for Palestinian Rights Steering Committee thanks the Ethnic Studies professionals who dedicated many months of serious, thorough, and caring work to create the 2019 draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) that was circulated for comment in May-August 2019.

As AB 1460 succinctly states: "Ethnic studies are an interdisciplinary and comparative study of race and ethnicity with special focus on four historically defined racialized core groups: Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina and Latino Americans."

The public school curriculum is one of the key tools in fashioning a national narrative. and for the last five decades ethnic studies educators and practitioners, like the group that wrote the 2019 draft, have endeavored to ensure that the narrative taught to students is appreciative of the experiences, sacrifices and contributions of people of color who created the mosaic that is the United States of America.

We were particularly impressed that the 2019 draft addressed each of the four ethnic studies populations individually, with sample activities included that encouraged students to engage. These attributes would help them learn to disagree constructively and respectfully, to do the necessary research to distinguish facts from "alternative facts."

The section on Arab Americans included important names like Naji Daifullah, a Yemeni involved in the National Farm Workers Movement, Edward Wadie Said, one of the most important public intellectuals of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and Representative Rashida Tlaib, an Arab American and one of the first two Muslim American women elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Unfortunately, the 2020 draft of the ESMC is severely lacking. It no longer constitutes an accepted version of ethnic studies and has unjustifiably deleted Arab American Studies.

From the very beginning, Arab American Studies has been part of ethnic studies and for at least the last two decades these were included specifically under Asian American Studies. Attachment 6, Lines 688-690 of the 2020 draft, assert that Arab Americans "have been historically marginalized and under

studied within the field.” Disturbingly, the 2020 draft ESMC continues that marginalization by eliminating the entire Arab Americans studies section.

Some references to Arab Americans remain sprinkled here and there. In *Populations Displaced by War and Genocide* (Attachment 6, Line 835 et seq.), mention is made about “Syrian, Afghani and other refugees from the Middle East to the United States as a result of the recent wars in that region.” No mention of Palestinians among those Syrian refugees. No mention of Iraqis.

Arabs and Muslims are lumped together but they are not synonymous. Some Arabs are Muslims, and some are of other religions. Likewise, Muslims are of various ethnicities, some are Arabs, some are not.

Attachment 8, Lines 8336-8354 falsely implies that Arabs/Muslims relate differently to religion from individuals of other religions. The suggested activity could actually serve to reinforce negative stereotypes about Arab and Muslims that students may already have. Students are asked to make a “digital ‘mythbusters’ handbook with the ‘Top Five’ ... most prevalent stereotypes ... related to Islam.”

In the United States, one of the most consequential discrimination faced by Palestinian-Americans is silencing. When their story is discussed at all, it is generally presented by non-Palestinians. As a member of the House of Representatives recently acknowledged, Palestinian voices are excluded from the conversation and he urged that such silencing cease and Palestinian voices be listened to. Unfortunately, not only Palestinian American voices, but Arab American voices are mostly excluded from the 2020 draft ESMC.

The Sacramento Regional Coalition for Palestinian Rights comprises over two dozen [diverse organizations](#), which advocate for human rights, civil rights, political rights, legal rights and equality for Palestinian people, be they in occupied Palestine, Israel, the United States, or elsewhere in the diaspora.

Sincerely,

Steering Committee  
Sacramento Regional Coalition for Palestinian Rights