

From: Raneem Mokatrin
Sent: Friday, July 3, 2020 9:55 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: [emails redacted]; Superintendent
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment on CA ESCM

Hello,

As a California resident and educator, I am writing to voice my strong support of the current CA ESCM with the inclusion of Arab American studies.

It is absolutely crucial that Arab American narratives be included in this curriculum, as Arabs comprise a highly racialized group in today's America. Islamophobia, xenophobia and anti-Arab racism have only continued to proliferate in the Trump era. Arab American narratives must be included in the ESMC in order to combat this.

Furthermore, within the Arab American curriculum there must be an inclusion of Palestine. Palestinian history and current events are of salience in our national landscape and thus warrant education. Moreover, for young Palestinian Americans in California's educational system, seeing their identities and histories represented will have profoundly empowering effects—particularly within the racial and colonial contexts of dehumanization and erasure.

Despite the claims of certain right-wing groups, teaching about Palestinian is NOT anti-semitic. Indeed, when the inclusion of a people's very existence is considered threatening (to the point where it elicits false claims of anti-semitism), one must ask oneself why. Let me be clear: teaching of a people's history, culture, and oppression is not anti-semitic. We cannot allow the strategic and utterly false conflation of anti-Zionism and anti-semitism to impede necessary conversations on human rights. Excluding these conversations enacts more violence on Palestinians who attempt to voice opposition to their oppression. It is worth noting that the prominent Jewish organization, Jewish Voice for Peace, has fully supported the inclusion of Palestine in the ESCM.

Lastly, it is crucial to center the voices of the marginalized when speaking/writing of their experiences and histories. Denying the marginalized the right to speak as an authority on their own experiences is a form of racial and imperialist violence as it selectively legitimizes white-produced knowledge. Deferring to the marginalized also prevents the violences of misrepresentation which can unintentionally ensue and empowers those who experience racialization first hand. Therefore, Arab American scholars should be centered in this effort.

I sincerely thank you for your time in reading this message, and I urge you to act on your conscience.

Sincerely,
Raneem M.