

**From:** Priscilla Read

**Sent:** Friday, July 31, 2020 12:15 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Arab American students need to learn their histories

Dear Ethnic Studies Open Comment,

It has come to my attention that the CA Department of Education is under pressure to exclude Arab-American experiences from students' education in California. Our national experience has amply demonstrated that broad exposure of young people to enlightened education about diverse cultures promotes respectful social interaction, opens minds, and counteracts prejudice and hate. I am also acutely aware that well-financed and well-organized efforts to quash attention to Arabs and other Muslims and stifle their voices, frequently in ways that attack First Amendment rights, are frequently behind efforts to stifle discussion of Arab and Muslims affairs in educational settings. I urge you maintain material on the Arab-American experience as part of the California curriculum.

It's never been clearer how important Ethnic Studies is, and we urge you to support the inclusion of Arab American studies in the Asian American studies curriculum.

The racial disparities in the impact of Covid-19, the xenophobic targeting of Asian Americans as "vectors" of disease, and the national uprising in response to the murder of George Floyd point to the need for anti-racist education: All students need comprehensive Ethnic Studies in their K-12 curriculum to build empathy, unity and solidarity with each other, strengthening our movements for justice.

The ESMC is structured around the core pillars developed by the founders of Ethnic Studies in 1969: American Indian studies, Africana/Black studies, Chicanx/Latinx studies, and Asian American studies. Following a decades-long tradition in higher education, the ESMC includes Arab American studies within Asian American studies.

Leading Asian American scholars, including the National Association of Asian American studies, have issued statements defending the inclusion of Arab American studies in the CA ESMC.

Ethnic Studies has been linked to increases in positive personal, academic, and social outcomes for students.

In the post-9/11 era, exacerbated by Trump's Muslim ban, Arab American students are desperately in need of curriculum that reflects their histories and current realities. Furthermore, the ignorance and stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims that too often characterize thinking in the U.S. threaten our social cohesion and national peace.

TURATH (Teaching Understanding and Representing Arabs Throughout History) is a 2020 report

researched and written by the teenage members of Arab Youth Organizing (AYO). According to AYO's findings, more than 66% of the students surveyed said they received most of their information on Arabs and/or Muslims from the internet or television; only 2.3% learned about Arabs and/or Muslims at school.

I call on you urgently to see that Arab and Muslim voices are part of your CA curriculum.

Sincerely,  
Priscilla Read