

From: Eva Poon

Sent: Thursday, November 12, 2020 8:30 AM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>; [email redacted]; Superintendent

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Comment on Item 8 History–Social Science Subject Matter Committee

Dear Members of the IQC:

I am submitting comments in response to the current draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. I write to express grave concerns regarding the content that has been removed from the Pacific Islander lessons AND the lack of equitable Arab American Studies representation in the latest draft of the ESMC.

My name is Eva Poon and I am a graduate of the California K-12 and public university system. I work in public service today at a non-profit. As a Chinese American, the ability to learn about Asian American Studies in college was a seminal experience that inspired me to work for social justice. Throughout my time in K-12, I rarely learned about Asian American history and perspectives, and definitely lacked exposure to knowledge about the Pacific Islander and Arab American communities.

Instead, what I had was negative stereotypes presented in media, especially since I came of age during the start of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Young people today continue to face the consequences of Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism. Arab and Muslim youth are simultaneously invisibilized and targeted. For too long, Arab youth have learned little about their history besides offensive and racist images and stereotypes. Arab-American studies curriculum provides a critical intervention to these stereotypes in K-12 education.

Additionally as an Asian American, I see that too often Pacific Islanders' experiences and histories are left out of the conversations. We use the term "API" without truly being inclusive in having Pacific Islanders at the table in a substantive, decision-making way. An ethnic studies curriculum in CA that represents the full diversity of this state would go a long way in opening our eyes and also engaging students of color in education.

I am pleased to see that the CDE and Superintendent Thurmond moved forward to include Pacific Islander curriculum developed by Pacific Islander Studies Educators. However, I am aware that key content pieces were removed from the draft and thus I want to encourage the commission to:

- Ensure the Pacific Islander Studies content includes coverage of the complexity and diversity of the Pacific alongside critiques of power and systems of oppression seen in the work of Epeli Hau'ofa, Lisa Kahaleole Hall, and Kerri Ann Borja's UN Testimony on the Question of Guam by approving line edits 386, 387, and 388, which delineate the inclusion of important PI Studies resources into the ESMC.
- Use a transparent and inclusive process moving forward, honoring and including the expertise of the original committee of writers AND Pacific Island Studies experts
- Pass a model curriculum that aligns with Ethnic Studies Principles to eradicate racism - and includes Pacific Islander studies and Arab American studies content inclusive of Palestine. I also urge the CDE to:
- Include the Arab American lesson plan submitted to the California Department of Education by members of the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) advisory committee. Re-insert Arab American studies in its rightful place—within Asian American Studies. Align all lesson plans to the guiding principles of ethnic studies, which are anti-racist, decolonial

and liberatory.

Reject debunked definitions of antisemitism that equate criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

Sincerely,

Eva Poon

[email redacted]