

From: Jennifer McCartin
Sent: Sunday, August 9, 2020 11:23 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Superintendent; [email redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support for Arab American Studies

To the Board of Education IQC:

My name is Jennifer McCartin and I am a public school educator in SFUSD. I support the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. It is of utmost importance that Arab American studies (or SWANA - South West Asian North African studies) are included within the ethnic studies curriculum. Arab students need to see themselves and their story within the curriculum, but even more ALL students need inclusion of Arab inclusion. In this current push for anti-racism in education we have a duty to include perspective of those most adversely affected by racism in this country, and that includes SWANA people. As a Lebanese American Christian growing up in the Philadelphia area in the 1980s & 90s, a positive ethnic identity could only have been formed at home - my classmates saw Arab and SWANA people as a whole as terrorists and expendable bodies. It breaks my heart to think that 30 years later the same narratives are still being taught to Arab youth.

We need to do better by the kids, but more importantly by our American society. NO ONE is served by false narrative around history, geography and religion. To that point, Islam is a peaceful religion. Any narrative to the contrary vilifies Arab identities. To those who would conflate inclusion of Palestine as anti-Semitic, I would ask them to reconsider based on geographical context; before Israel's borders were determined by European allied leaders, it was Palestinian land. These are truths, just as it is true that we in the US are on Indigenous land. We can paint another picture & tell a different story, but it is what it is - colonialism. Calling it anything else merely perpetuates false narratives. It does a disservice to Palestine American & Israeli American relations - these are two groups of Americans who benefit in having a shared understanding; they benefit from hearing each other's stories. The Palestinian American story IS the American story; the Israeli American story IS the American story. Let's get this right for both groups.

Anti-racism means acknowledging then taking it from there - doing the work to repair harms. As a teacher, as a SWANA identified person, as a citizen of the most diverse country on the planet, I am calling for the inclusion of Arab American studies in ethnic studies curriculums.

Thank you & best,

Jennifer McCartin