

From: Meesh Cabal
Sent: Wednesday, May 27, 2020 12:36 AM
To: [emails redacted]
Cc: [emails redacted]; Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Oakland Save CA Ethnic Studies

Dear Oakland Board Members,

I urge you to put "Students First" by supporting the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum led by scholars of color from across California. Oakland is exactly the kind of city that should stand up for our underrepresented communities.

Ethnic Studies has always been about empowering students of color who are marginalized and minimized by our curriculum. We need to bring this conversation back to the focus of Students First, one of our Core OUSD Values. Our white students greatly benefit from having these critical conversations about race, so that all Oaklanders can build skills to navigate our society and build stronger communities and neighborhoods.

Ethnic Studies is important to me, because it is through Berkeley's Ethnic Studies program where I got to learn about the value of my identity as a Pilipinx person, and the necessity of learning our shared histories. Growing up in a conservative, desert town in Southern California, I was disconnected from my Pilipinx roots, because of the ways my immigrant parents rejected their own cultural identity to "put on" White mask. This split sense of self resulted in an internalized racist conditioning, where I believed that who I was, was inherently "wrong" because my cultural identity wasn't held as valuable in my own home or in my education.

We need Ethnic Studies, so our young people of color are affirmed in who they are and their experiences. Not having Ethnic Studies curriculum growing up meant I was forming my identity based on what the media, my textbooks, and family say I am and others are. Ethnic Studies is crucial in not only developing young students' color self-esteem, sense of community, and critical lens on how we move through the world that is rooted in history and deeper understanding of power. Without Ethnic Studies, we only tell one side of the story - which doesn't leave room for the richness of stories, experiences, and histories our Oaklanders embody.

This controversy is a perfect example of why we need Ethnic Studies and why we must have these conversations to address racial tensions in our community, so that we can move toward healing, understanding, and solidarity across all of our cultures.

Please vote YES, thank you!
Meesh Cabal; Youth Together