

## Statement in Support of:

written by  
California  
Department of  
Education's  
**Ethnic Studies  
Expert Panelists**

**1**

The original Ethnic Studies  
Model Curriculum Draft;

**2**

the Guiding Values, Principles,  
Outcomes, and Language of  
Ethnic Studies Teaching;

**3**

and the continued inclusion of  
Pacific Islander Studies,  
Arab American Studies,  
West Asian American Studies,  
and Central American Studies.

**July 28th/September 30th, 2020**

Dear California Governor Newsom, Department of Education,  
State Board of Education, and Instructional Quality Commission:

As your October 15th, 2019 California Department of Education appointed panel of Ethnic Studies experts, we write to reaffirm that we unequivocally support the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) Draft, and urge you not to make changes that cater to pressures of white supremacist culture, privileged advocacy groups and institutional racism. We, as the State of California, must be better than that at this moment in 2020 for our students of color and all students, and under your educational leadership, we can be.

The National Education Association defines white supremacy culture as “characteristics of white supremacy that manifest in organizational culture, and are used as norms and standards without being proactively named or chosen by the full group. The characteristics are damaging to both people of color and white people in that they elevate the values, preferences, and experiences of one racial group above all others. Organizations that are led by people of color or have a majority of people of color can also demonstrate characteristics of white supremacy culture”.

There must not be any dilution, censorship, or exclusion of the current defining language, concepts, [guiding values, principles, and framing](#) present in the draft. The importance of this is magnified as right wing Trumpian federal censoring and banning of people of color led education is now underway, also under claims of “bias” and “indoctrination”. No curriculum is free of bias, and this includes the current K-12 History-Social Science Standards (1998) which continue to do harm to students of color daily. This is why Ethnic Studies is needed, as the California History-Social Science framework (2016) explicitly states, “for students to construct counter-narratives and develop a more complex understanding of the human experience”. Support of this is exactly what the current ESMC draft stands as—to help fill a void, glaring in our K-12 curriculum standards, and that is one reason why Ethnic Studies has proven so effective in districts that both directly inform, and are grounded in the original ESMC draft.

The State Board of Education Ethnic Studies guidelines cannot be sacrificed by pressures towards dilution widely perceived as racist by communities of color. The original draft addresses the State Board of Education guidelines excellently in integral regards including:

- a) Promotes self and collective empowerment;
- b) Includes accurate information based on current and confirmed (Ethnic Studies) research;
- c) Promotes critical thinking and rigorous analysis of history, systems of oppression, and the status quo in an effort to generate discussions on futurity, and imagine new possibilities.

Ethnic Studies language can be complex because people of color are complex, and we must respect California’s teachers as intellectuals, our students as young scholars, and not dilute the concepts that have been demonstrated to be transformative in leading Ethnic Studies K-12 programs, nationally. There may be further scaffolding, signposting, formatting, supplementing, to be supportive of multiple users as both the advisory committee requested in April 2019, and that IQC commissioners requested in both May and September 2019. However, any dilution, censorship, or exclusion of language and concepts would be an undermining of the legacy and field; this would not be done to any other discipline and it should not be done to Ethnic Studies. The founders of Ethnic Studies, the Black Student Union and Third World Liberation Front from both San Francisco State University and University of California Berkeley, attest to this.

Further, Pacific Islander Studies, Arab American Studies and West Asian American Studies, and Central American Studies must not be cut from the curriculum. These groups are directly tied to the four racialized groups; deleting them from the curriculum under the false pretense that any of them do not belong, would be a tragic injustice. Asian American Studies leaders and faculty in California agree with where Pacific Islander Studies and Arab American Studies are in the current draft. This was emphasized by our Asian American Studies representatives of the expert panel in October. This insistence among expert Asian American Studies practitioners must be respected under the disciplinary deference it merits. The Association of Asian American Studies, and Asian American Studies departments throughout the state have strongly voiced this. This consensus is clear, evident, and must not be denied under the false pretense of it not belonging—we affirm that Arab American Studies and West Asian American Studies, and Pacific Islander Studies belong in the ESMC, along with Central American Studies and all must remain.

Our white colleague, expert Ethnic Studies educational researcher, Christine Sleeter (the only scholar whose work is specifically cited in AB2016 legislation), urged you back in August 2019, “I am concerned that responses to the curriculum, particularly by white people, will lead to a dilution of the curriculum in a way that moves it away from the powerful and positive impact it can have on students... I firmly hope that you will support the work of the ethnic studies curriculum writers and advisory committee. They have done an outstanding job of showing us what a model ethnic studies curriculum looks like. Units can certainly be added to it, but not in a way that undermines it, or delays its passage and implementation.”

We are the five CDE appointed expert Ethnic Studies panelists; who do not also directly serve on the Instructional Quality Commission. With all due respect and appreciation to our sixth expert panelist, an Ethnic Studies champion in the legislature, Assemblymember Dr. Weber—whose primary role in this project is as an IQC member herself—it felt appropriate to not ask Dr. Weber to be both a signatory and a recipient of this letter. Asm. Dr. Weber’s comments at both the IQC meeting on September 20th, 2019, and during our October 15th expert panel, her support for Ethnic Studies and the original draft was clear as well. Thus, we write in unanimous support of the original draft as 5/5 expert Ethnic Studies panelists who are not on the IQC, and connecting with the spirit of our 6th expert panelist, who does sit on the IQC, Assemblymember Dr. Weber.

As the experts the CDE appointed, following the 20 educators of color who already came to consensus on the overall draft, we thank you for involving us in this process and we urge you to do the right thing in this regard, and not dilute, or switch out, the draft by any means. Ethnic Studies advocates and communities of color have labored for fifty-plus years for this moment, as we continue to be marginalized in mainstream curriculum.

*This moment and Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum project must be one of deep educational and racial justice, we thank you for your support at this critical juncture, and insist that the pressures of white supremacist culture not dictate what happens throughout this process, regardless of how many explicitly and implicitly racist public comments they send in. It is imperative you follow the lead of the Ethnic Studies educators of color who developed the draft under the stringent timeframe they were given, and listen to the 25,000+ community members of all races and a multiplicity of ethnicities who are signed on to the petition in support of the original ESMC draft. In addition, over 150 community based organizations, governing bodies, university and high school Ethnic Studies and Education departments, professional associations, and institutions—with combined memberships of over 500,000 people—are in support of the original ESMC draft at this point, which includes its disciplinary framing, knowledge, concepts, academic language, and pedagogy. We understand that reasonable and very measured revisions that do not sacrifice what the guiding Ethnic Studies educators of color insist be in the curriculum, are part of the process, and distinct from any exclusions and edits which cater to racist societal and institutional pressures.*

*Can there be a more salient moment in time for the California Department of Education, to find the courage to properly and finally punctuate the end of miseducation for students of color, and all students in the state of California—by supporting the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Draft rather than diluting and silencing it?*

Respectfully,  
**California Department of Education,  
Ethnic Studies Expert Panelists**



Dr. Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales, Ph.D.  
Professor of Ethnic Studies at San  
Francisco State University



Matt Espinoza Watson, J.D.  
Instructor and Program Coordinator  
of Chicano-Latino Studies, Fresno  
City College



Dr. Ramona Tascoe, M.D.  
Black Student Union/Third World  
Liberation Front, 1968,  
San Francisco State University;  
University of San Francisco Alumni  
Association President



Maribel Rosendo-Servin, Ethnic  
Studies/Social Science Teacher  
East Union High School, Manteca  
Unified School District



Dr. Bao Lo, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Ethnic Studies  
at California State University,  
Sacramento

WITH

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christine Sleeter". The script is fluid and cursive.

Christine Sleeter  
Professor Emerita, Cal State University  
Monterey Bay; Author of the NEA Report  
on the Academic and Social Value of  
Ethnic Studies (the sole research literature  
specifically cited in AB2016 legislation)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized "R" followed by "Tolteka Cuauhtin". The script is bold and cursive.

R. Tolteka Cuauhtin  
Co-Chair, CDE Ethnic Studies Model  
Curriculum Advisory Committee,  
Jan-Apr, 2019; California Teachers  
Association/Stanford Instructional  
Leadership Corps

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julia S. Jordan-Zachery". The script is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Julia S. Jordan-Zachery  
President, Association of Ethnic Studies;  
Chair and Professor of Africana Studies at  
University of North Carolina, Charlotte

## Guiding Values, Principles, and Outcomes of Ethnic Studies Teaching

HOLISTIC  
HUMANIZATION

CRITICAL  
CONSCIOUSNESS

Given the range and complexity of the field, it is important to identify key values and principles of Ethnic Studies to aid in guiding and developing Ethnic Studies courses, teaching, and learning.

The foundational values of Ethnic Studies are housed in the conceptual model of the “double helix” which signifies the interdependence between holistic humanization and critical consciousness.

Humanization includes the values of love, respect, hope, solidarity, and is based on the celebration of community cultural wealth.

The values rooted in humanization and critical consciousness shape the following guiding principles for Ethnic Studies teaching and learning. Together, these are the two interwoven guiding values and seven principles Ethnic Studies lessons should include. Ethnic Studies courses, teaching, and learning will:



### 1. CULTIVATE

empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and People of Color;



### 2. CELEBRATE

and honor Native People/s of the land and Communities of Color by providing a space to share their stories of struggle and resistance, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth;



### 3. CENTER

and place high value on pre-colonial, ancestral, indigenous, diasporic, familial, and marginalized knowledge;



### 4. CRITIQUE

empire, white supremacy, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, racism, xenophobia, patriarchy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, anthropocentrism, and other forms of power and oppression at the intersections of our society;



### 5. CHALLENGE

imperialist/colonial hegemonic beliefs and practices on ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized levels;



### 6. CONNECT

ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on global and local levels to ensure a truer democracy;



### 7. CONCEPTUALIZE,

imagine, and build new possibilities for post-imperial life that promote collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

## SOURCES

Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales and Edward Currameng, “Pedagogies of Resistance: Filipina/o Gestures of Rebellion Against the Inheritance of American Schooling,” in Tracy Buenavista and Arshad Ali, eds., *Education At War: The Fight for aStudents of Color in America* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2018), 233–238.

R. Tolteka Cuauhtin, “The Ethnic Studies Framework, A Holistic Overview” in R. Tolteka Cuauhtin, Miguel Zavala, Christine Sleeter, and Wayne Au, eds. *Rethinking Ethnic Studies* (Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2019), 65–75.

Tara Yosso, 2005. “Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth”, in *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.