

From: jmlounibos
Sent: Thursday, July 9, 2020 5:57 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Superintendent; [email redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Arab Americans in the ESMC

To whom it may concern:

I am a teacher at Petaluma High School. I teach World History and AP US History. I am also a parent of elementary and high school students. Moreover, we are Arab American. I support the ESMC, including Arab American studies. My entire life I've struggled with my Arab identity because Arab Americans are often treated terribly or not included, but at the same time we are just lumped with "Caucasian" in demographic questions. We are treated differently, often negatively, and then overlooked. Many of my family members have experienced discrimination and hate. Arab American studies should be included within the rubric of Asian American studies to educate people on this significant demographic in California and the United States.

In this era of Islamophobia and xenophobia, it is important to include West Asian American experiences in the ESMC. After 9/11, hate against Arab Americans ramped up. I remember a period of time when I could look out of my classroom window and see a group of high school boys pretending to be Arabs by wrapping sweatshirts around their heads, calling each other "towelhead," and running around saying "I'm a terrorist." I reported this to the principal and he didn't know what to do. He attempted to talk to them but ended up doing nothing. Arab Americans must be included in the curriculum. People, young and old, need to be educated. As an often harassed group, education will help people understand that targeting Arab Americans is not ok.

Furthermore, it is not antisemitic to defend human rights and include Palestinian history in ethnic studies. The ESMC should not be practicing the worst kind of historical revisionism: erasure of history. Palestinians lost out to competing European claims to their land after WWI. Why should we ignore their existence and their plight? That is not antisemitism, it is historical accuracy. To report on the actions of a governments (England and France post-WWI, and later Israel) is not to hate Jews, they are two different things. And remember, Arabs are Semites too.

You should include Arab Americans in the ESMC and you should consult with Arab American scholars on this inclusion. During research for my master's degree thesis, which was on Lebanese immigration to the United States, I was able to see what a niche Arab American history is. There are some excellent scholars on this subject, but it really is a specialization and you should consult the experts.

I firmly believe that you should include Arab Americans in the ESMC. To exclude a significant population in this project of inclusion would be ironic, to say the least.

Best,
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