

From: Other Collective
Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 1:27 PM
To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Statement of Solidarity

To the California Department of Education

The editorial board and staff members of Other Collective are deeply disheartened by the announcement to appendicize modules on Arab Americans and Pacific Islanders as stated in the Nov. 6, 2020 recommendation of California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). Amidst the heightened racist, Islamophobic and xenophobic sentiments across the country today from the threat to Black lives to the Muslim Ban and beyond, excluding already marginalized students in educational curricula does a major disservice to our Arab American and Pacific Islander communities.

As a student-run media platform focused on decolonizing Southwest Asian, North African, and South Asian narratives, we pay homage to Black, Native American, Chicanx/Latinx, and Asian American campus activists who formed the Third World Liberation Front in the 1960s. Although Ethnic Studies was established as a field of study in 1969, consequent calls for self-determination for non-eurocentric perspective in academia and community-centric development of curricula have been met with unwarranted backlash.

Today, despite 1.5 million Americans claiming Arab ancestry (2013 census), while 1.4 million American adults and children self-identify as Pacific Islanders, community members and social justice organizations must endure the emotional labor to fight for mere inclusion of their communities in a curriculum that is meant to sensitize young children about racial and other differences. While the curriculum cannot undo years of historic and modern colonialism, and racism, being inclusive of these marginalized student identities is the first step toward building an anti-racist education system for ***all*** Americans.

We reference TURATH (Teaching Understanding and Representing Arabs Throughout History), a 2020 report by the Arab Resource and Organizing Center, which stated that only 2.3% of students surveyed learned about Arabs and/or Muslims at school. In acknowledging the need to undo institutionalized white supremacy that targets young Arab and/or Muslim youth, we stand in solidarity with other social justice platforms advocating for liberation of Palestine and Palestinian land. We are equally concerned about the inclusion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA's) definition of 'anti-semitism' that seeks to suppress and criminalize any support for human rights in Palestine.

As young people committed to anti-racist and anti-colonial work, we ask that you please reverse these changes made to the ESMC by working with Ethnic Studies experts and community organizers to bring Arab American and Pacific Islander modules back into the curriculum. This will ensure a sense of belonging and build collective consciousness in our youth, strengthening movements for justice.

Thank you,
Other Collective Media Platform