

**From:** Mary Stewart

**Sent:** Wednesday, July 29, 2020 5:17 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Support the inclusion of Arab American studies.

Dear Ethnic Studies Open Comment,

As a retired teacher (middle school, LAUSD), with a BA in Anthropology, I feel strongly about the need for ethnic studies for our students.

Many of our young people live in communities where they do not have opportunities to meet people who are different - one way or another - from their personal background. If they do not learn about other cultures in school, they may believe stereotypes that are peddled by special interests, especially hate groups. My K-12 background (also LA) was different. Most students in my schools were white - including Jews, Christian Arabs, Catholics & Protestants of all sort. There were also ethnic Japanese Buddhists who had been at Manzanar or similar and ethnic Mexicans, who people may have been here when the border was drawn in 1848. We learned that we had differences, but were basically the same. Modern kids need to get this education through our schools.

It's never been clearer how important Ethnic Studies is and we urge you to support the inclusion of Arab American studies in the Asian American studies curriculum.

The racial disparities in the impact of Covid-19, the xenophobic targeting of Asian Americans as "vectors" of disease, and the national uprising in response to the murder of George Floyd point to the need for anti-racist education: All students need comprehensive Ethnic Studies in their K-12 curriculum to build empathy, unity and solidarity with each other, strengthening our movements for justice.

The ESMC is structured around the core pillars developed by the founders of Ethnic Studies in 1969: American Indian studies, Africana/Black studies, Chicanx/Latinx studies, and Asian American studies. Following a decades-long tradition in higher education, the ESMC includes Arab American studies within Asian American studies.

Leading Asian American scholars, including the National Association of Asian American studies, have issued statements defending the inclusion of Arab American studies in the CA ESMC.

Ethnic Studies has been linked to increases in positive personal, academic, and social outcomes for students.

In the post-9/11 era, exacerbated by Trump's Muslim ban, Arab American students are desperately in need of curriculum that reflects their histories and current realities.

TURATH (Teaching Understanding and Representing Arabs Throughout History) is a 2020 report

researched and written by the teenage members of Arab Youth Organizing (AYO). According to AYO's findings, more than 66% of the students surveyed said they received most of their information on Arabs and/or Muslims from the internet or television; only 2.3% learned about Arabs and/or Muslims at school. California standards for 7th grade do include a unit on Arab culture in the Middle Ages, and the development and spread of Islam. But, learning about the Middle Ages doesn't necessarily provide an understanding of modern issues. Indigenous people whether in the US or the Middle East need to be respected. This means providing a basis for understanding the culture of the people.

Sincerely,  
Mary Stewart