

**From:** Israel Palestine Task Force  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 20, 2021 5:15 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies; Superintendent; [email redacted]  
**Cc:** [emails redacted]  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Re: ESMC

To:  
California Department of Education Instructional Quality Commission  
Mr. Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Education  
Ms Linda Darling-Hammond, President of the State Board of Education

Re: December 2020-released Third Field Review draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

We write as United Methodists of the Advocacy and Justice Committee of our California/Nevada Conference, composed of 300 congregations, to express our deep disappointment in the latest draft of the California Department of Education's (CDE) Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). While it bears the name "ethnic studies," its contents are something very different.

Central to real ethnic studies is agency: i.e., teaching/learning *about* marginalized communities of color *in the voices of these communities* – specifically Native American, African American, Asian American, Arab American and LatinX voices. Yet, this latest draft relies on resources that voice the opinions and judgments of the dominant (oppressing) culture, presuming to speak for the communities of color **WITHOUT** the permission of those communities, which have been historically excluded from the right to narrate.

As a denomination working to dismantle racism and face the legacy of racism within our own denomination as well as our nation, we recognize the state's behavior with regard to Arab American studies as particularly egregious, misleading, accusatory and blatantly discriminatory.

This is glaringly evident in the erasure of "Arab American Studies Course Outline." Included in the earlier 2019 draft, it now appears as a mention in the appendix as "Arab American Stereotypes in Literature, Film, and Media Pre- and Post-9/11". Obviously, stereotypes are from others' perspective, i.e., the dominant culture chooses stereotypes, not the stereotyped community.

We recognize that real ethnic studies are challenging because narratives will necessarily differ, even dramatically - and in some instances uncomfortably -- from the dominant narrative.

We ask that you reject the inaccurate and offensive revisions made to this curriculum, restore Arab American Studies to its rightful place, and re-empower the Ethnic Studies experts who have shaped this powerful and critical area of study for our students.

Additionally, we stand with Jewish Voice for Peace and others in objecting to the insertion of the seriously flawed International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism and ask that it be removed from further revisions. The state of Israel and/or Zionism are not synonymous with the Jewish people. Constructive criticism of either should not be labeled anti-Semitic in the effort to silence human rights advocacy work on behalf of Palestinians.

Our work strives to educate and advocate for the rights of the marginalized. We oppose acts of violence, including state violence against Black and other communities of color, including Asian, Arab and Muslim communities. This bigotry and violence stems from nationalism and white supremacy in the United States. The IHRA definition does not protect Jews from the disturbing rise in antisemitism linked to that same white supremacy, rather its motive is to silence. To include it does a disservice to all California students and to the purpose and importance of Ethnic Studies.

Thank you for your attention,

[Advocacy and Justice Committee](#) of the California Nevada Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church