

From: Michael Yoshii Yoshii

Sent: Monday, July 27, 2020 7:44 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Arab American students need to learn their histories

Dear Ethnic Studies Open Comment,

I write to support the inclusion of Arab American studies as part of the Asian American studies curriculum currently under your evaluation. As an Asian American who benefited from the first Asian American studies classes in 1970 at the University of California, I can testify to how important ethnic studies is for one's sense of identity, self worth, and empowerment. In the current climate we are experiencing, anti-Asian sentiment surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic makes our community vulnerable, but thanks to ethnic studies and social empowerment for the Asian American community there are tools to educate and advocate against this social discrimination and others forms of racism when they raise their ugly head.

I am equally concerned for the Arab American community that has continually been subjected to demonization and exclusion in mainstream public education and media. As a Japanese American I became acutely aware of how responses to 9/11 included intentional smearing, demonization, and infiltration of Arab American communities much like what led to the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans in World War II. As a Christian pastor I have also become educated on the depth to which our faith is often weaponized as a tool against Arab Americans, particularly those of the Muslim tradition.

Inclusion of Arab American studies is a critical step towards providing a framework and resources for the public education of all of our students, as well as the building of positive self-esteem for Arab American youth. For these reasons, I urge you to include Arab American studies as part of the framework for the proposed Ethnic Studies program.

Sincerely,
Michael Yoshii Yoshii