

Joint UC Muslim Student Association Statement  
on  
The Necessity of the Inclusion of Arab American Ethnic Studies

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To whom it may concern,

We, as a united body of the Muslim Student Associations at University of California's nine campuses, acknowledge and affirm the dire need for the inclusion of Arab American Studies in the proposed Ethnic Studies curriculum. The purpose of such a curriculum is to teach the future generations of our society about the history and contributions of marginalized and socially disenfranchised communities to the progress of our nation.

We, as representatives of marginalized and disenfranchised communities, affirm that the exclusion of Arab American Studies in an Ethnic Studies curriculum is nothing short of a historical erasure of the complex and diverse history of Arab Americans in the United States and would only act to further proliferate and propagate the white supremacist regime that still controls our society today. If we truly are to progress as a nation, we must start by educating our young and bright minds about the important roles that *all* of the different ethnicities in the United States played in the history of our nation.

We, as a united body representing the sentiments of marginalized and disenfranchised communities in our institutions for higher learning, further affirm that the inclusion of Arab Ethnic Studies by definition mandates the inclusion of Palestinian-American history, including the efforts of the BDS movement. Today, such histories are not excluded from discussion in our institutions of higher learning and they should not be excluded from primary education curricula.

Accredited institutions and schools on a global scale teach and discuss the history of Palestinian-Americans and Arab-Americans without bias, so we question the motivations that led to the decision to exclude such a diverse and rich history from the proposed curriculum for K-12 public schools. Calling the telling of these histories anti-Semitic is an espousal of dangerous and hateful rhetoric that is white supremacist in nature. The decision to remove Arab Ethnic Studies on the basis that it is anti-semitic only serves to further undermine the work of this committee and the effects of this curriculum whilst propagating and proliferating white supremacist ideologies. We, as a united body, affirm that any exclusion of an Arab American Studies portion from this curriculum would constitute a bigoted and racist attack on Arab Americans on the part of the Instructional Quality Commission and, by extension, the California Department of Education.

The Department of Education has previously stated that previous curricula “have not done enough to highlight and preserve the contributions of people of color and has actually minimized the importance of their role.” The removal of Arab Ethnic Studies from the proposed curriculum only serves to exacerbate the issues found within previous curricula in the current proposed curriculum. It is ironic to suggest that this proposed curriculum is any different from previous curricula that did not “highlight or preserve the contributions of people” and “minimized the importance of their role” whilst deciding on doing the same to Arab American contributions. It is clear that the inclusion of Arab Ethnic Studies is necessary to rectify the mistakes of previous curricula.

Furthermore, this very commission has delineated core concepts for the proposed Ethnic Studies programs which include, “equality, justice, race, ethnicity, and indigeneity”, all of which can and must be discussed within the context of the Arab American community and its contributions to American justice. To say that “equality” and “justice” are core concepts to be discussed in the curriculum but then to unequally and unjustly omit an entire ethnic group from the proposed curriculum is hypocritical and unjustifiable, according to the standards set by the Instructional Quality Commission and the California Department of Education.

The current standards set by our school system are failing Arab-American students. According to a survey done by the Arab American Resources and Organizing Center (AROC), only 2.8% of students attending Bay Area schools felt that their Arab-American histories were taught well in classes, if at all. This number is far too low to warrant the exclusion of Arab-American Ethnic Studies—in fact, this number should do the opposite. It should encourage curricula planners to include this overtly marginalized community in future iterations of Arab American Ethnic Studies.

We as a united body, representing tens of thousands of students affected by this decision, call for the inclusion of Arab-American Ethnic Studies under the Asian-American subsection of the planned curriculum. To exclude Arab-American Ethnic Studies from the planned curriculum would be to erase the contributions of Arab Americans in diverse fields such as History, Women’s Studies, Post-Colonial Studies, and Middle East Studies as well as the contributions of Arab American in activism including but not limited to the Black Power movement, BLM, and anti-war activism. The exclusion of Arab American Ethnic Studies from the planned curriculum would also erase the history of Arab-American contribution to academia, science, politics, sports, entertainment, creative arts, and military involvement. Arab-American children deserve to learn about the contributions and history of their cultures to American civilization.

Here is a list of action items you can take

1. Sign the petition found here: <https://savearabamericanstudies.org>
2. Submit a Public Comment: <https://savearabamericanstudies.org>
3. Follow @aroc\_bayarea on Instagram and share their posts that have links to information and action items.
4. Join the Live Public Comment during the IQC meeting on Thursday August 13th.
5. Share this initiative with friends and family.

Signed by:

Muslim Student Association - UC Berkeley

Muslim Student Association- UC Davis

Muslim Student Association - UC Irvine

Muslim Student Association- UC Los Angeles

Muslim Student Association- UC Merced

Muslim Student Association- UC Riverside

Muslim Student Association- UC San Diego

Muslim Student Association- UC Santa Barbara

Muslim Student Association- UC Santa Cruz