

From: Victoria Wong

Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 11:39 AM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support Arab American Studies, UCB Inclusion in ESMC

Dear IQC Members,

As a cofounder of the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) that originated the term and concept of Asian American, I can testify that Arab American Studies are an essential part of Asian American Studies (AAS), and needs to be included in the ESMC. Also, as a cofounder and of the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) whose strike in 1969 won the first Ethnic Studies entity along with the first Asian American Studies in the US, I can vouch that not only did Arab Americans play a vital part in our TWLF strike but have been an essential part of AAS/ES.

We must start from and continue searching for the truth, and it has been the perverse lies and whitewashing of the true effects of racism, reactionary nationalism and colonialism in America and around the world that has led to the precipice that civilization is in today. A blatant example of this that you can correct immediately is finally including the indispensable role the UC Berkeley's 1969 TWLF Strike played in the creation of ES statewide and nationwide. It is a slap in the face to all those TWLF strikers who sacrificed their bodies and careers to suppress the clear fact that UCB's ES was the first ES, AAS, Chicanx/Latinx, and Native American Studies (NAS) in the US. Period. While SF State's TWLF strike began earlier in 1968, they initially did not include AAS or NAS, and they won their ES program after UCB's.

Moreover, we are now in the throes of national and international social unrest--much of which stems from the consequences of centuries-long subjugation of peoples and nations of color. If the Ethnic Studies curriculum promoting the true history of struggle and contributions by Third World people, democratic self-determination and serving the needs of our communities--which we TWLF founders envisioned--had come to fruition, we would be in a far better place than we are today.

But it is not too late to correct the systemic unjust and unequal treatment of peoples of color...You each have the power to empower our children of all colors to learn to live, understand, work and thrive TOGETHER. The most powerful evidence of Ethnic Studies' value and effectiveness is from those ES students who've risen from self-loathing, poverty and hopelessness to become active, productive and knowledgeable citizens in society. You've heard their heart-breaking and heartening voices of ESMC support at the scores of local school board and CDE/IQC hearings on education. Why is a tiny percentage of our public school constituency, the well-funded pro-Israel lobby, dictating what our disenfranchised students--who are over 76% people of color--learn? Do you want to go backwards in history by bowing to the negative, self-serving and divisive forces further polarizing Americans and the world, or take the brave and righteous way forward for humanity's enlightenment, true free speech and equality?

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Victoria Wong

Cofounder, Asian American Political Alliance 1968, Third World Liberation Front UC Berkeley 1969
cc.