

**From:** Vicky Dinov

**Sent:** Friday, November 13, 2020 3:09 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>; [emails redacted]

**Cc:** [emails redacted]

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] [Important Message] Arab American Studies MUST be included in ethnic studies

Dearest board members,

It has come to my attention that Arab American Studies have not been included in the ethnic studies curriculum but rather cast away as a footnote. I find this completely unacceptable and here is why:

Primarily, we know from the demands for racial justice that are sweeping the country that it is offensive and dangerous to shunt the histories and perspectives of people of color to the sidelines. For too long, the stigma surrounding Arab Americans has forced them into boxes, making it hard for them to escape from the oppressive generalizations of their white oppressors. Second, in this radicalized day and age, we must ensure that ALL children feel school to be a sanctuary rather than a place of hate and neglect in their lives. Thirdly, young people in particular face the consequences of Islamophobia in our society and Arab and Muslim youth have been particularly targetted by racist images, actions, and stereotypes. The last point I would like to make is that there is a dangerous rhetoric that is allowing pro-Israel interest groups to define what is and is not antisemitism. These definitions are critical of Arabic customs and heritage and are violating the constitutional right to free speech of many Arab Americans as the applications of these definitions are censored virtually for all criticisms of Israel.

As we consider these troubling facts, I will list out the demands I wish the board to seek out:

1. Include the Arabic American lesson plan submitted to the California Department of Education by members of the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum advisory committee.
2. Re-insert Arab American studies in its rightful place- within Asian American studies.
3. Align all lesson plans to the guiding principles of ethnic studies, which are anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory.
4. Reject debunked definitions of antisemitism that equate criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

With these demands in mind, I hope you seriously consider our wishes and needs. It is crucial these demands are met before fear and outcry break out. As racial and ethnic disparities continue to proliferate in our society, we hope you can right a few of the digressions that are harming Arab American youth in our modern schools.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to receiving a timely response.

Best,

Victoria Dinov

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