

From: Kaitlin Walker
Sent: Wednesday, July 22, 2020 10:46 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Superintendent; [emails redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Arab American Studies in the ESMC

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission,

When I was 7, I learned that civil rights brought justice to our country. When I was 11, I noticed that I lived in an all-white neighborhood, and across the American River at summer camp, my basketball team was all black. I realized somebody, somewhere, had taught me a half truth.

Ever since, I've pushed myself to learn about racism in the United States, eventually getting a PhD in English at UC Davis. Along the way, I have found myself challenged by stories that go beyond Black and white.

Arab American stories have been a unique challenge for me--as a white middle class, educated woman--to incorporate into my understanding of the American story. A long history of immigration, the shifting role of religion, as well as virulent contemporary prejudices and white supremacist attacks, make Arab American studies their own subject worthy of a spot in contemporary high school curriculum. I only learned as an adult that while the high school I played basketball with was mostly Black students, another high school just a few miles from my house was mostly Arab American immigrants.

Without a robust ethnic studies curriculum in high school, I was not well-educated. I didn't even understand the make up of my own community. But for some students, seeing themselves in the curriculum can be the difference between surviving and thriving. In the post-9/11 era, exacerbated by Trump's Muslim ban, Arab American students are desperately in need of a curriculum that reflects their histories and current realities.

Please include Arab American Studies in the California Ethnic Studies Curriculum.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin Walker, PhD