

**From:** PYM San Diego

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 11, 2020 10:19 AM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Cc:** Superintendent; [emails redacted]

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Include Arab American Studies in CA Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Dear Instructional Quarterly Commission,

We in the San Diego branch of the Palestinian Youth Movement call on you to reinstate Arab American studies and Palestine in the statewide model ethnic studies curriculum. As a youth organization that works to empower and embolden new generations to take pride in their Palestinian and/or Arab heritages, we believe it is crucial to fight for educational programming that uplifts Arab American stories alongside other community narratives of the fight against historical and ongoing forms of oppression and racism. At a moment where the US is facing a very public reckoning with how deeply entrenched racism is at the level of various institutions, it is deeply hypocritical to enact racist silencing by cutting educational materials dedicated to highlighting the struggles and successes of the Arab American community in the US.

We further note that education in this country has frequently served as an arm of racist oppression and dispossession in this country. From boarding schools dedicated to furthering the cultural genocide against Indigenous peoples, to universities that directly profited from slavery, advanced medical knowledge via unethical experimentation upon the bodies of enslaved peoples, and realized their territorial integrity via ethnic cleansing of Native Americans, schools and universities have long been a site of power and discipline rather than a magical sphere safely removed from the political realities of this country. Ethnic Studies emerged as an important attempt to counteract this, to show that education itself *is* political, and thus to redirect the project of education to scrutinizing the workings of power and counteracting the erasures and exclusions of all that have been its victims.

For these reasons, to cut Arab American studies and Palestine would be to spit on the face of this legacy. It would be a searing betrayal of everything that activists and intellectuals of various backgrounds fought for for so long. Having our communities' histories and stories told will not right every wrong that has been done, but it would be a powerful first step towards

challenging the erasure of our voices and the state-sanctioned repression that we have long faced due to belligerent US foreign policy.

Sincerely,

The Palestinian Youth Movement, San Diego