

From: Amira Jarmakani

Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 11:57 AM

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Arab American studies is ethnic studies -- uphold the integrity of Ethnic Studies

Dear Superintendent for Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, Chair of the California Board of Education Linda Darling-Hammond, and members of the Instructional Quality Commission,

As President of the Arab American Studies Association, a Professor of WGSS in the Cal State University system, and a mother of 3 children who attend CA public schools I write to implore you to:

***uphold the integrity of Ethnic Studies as being about structural racism and oppression and challenging imperialist frameworks in the US**

***re-commit to your earlier affirmation that Arab American Studies fits in Ethnic Studies on both of these accounts.**

As scholars and practitioners of Arab American studies, we have faced a battle to be seen as part of Ethnic Studies because we have been broadly silenced in the US and excluded from academia based on our support for Palestine.

The marginalization of Arab American studies and the general watering down of Ethnic Studies curriculum is unacceptable and alarming. Moreover, marginalizing Arab American studies, excluding any mention of Palestine, and changing the definition of antisemitism to include any criticism of the state of Israel is antithetical not only to the goals of Ethnic Studies as a field, but to education more generally. Pro-Israel interest groups should not define antisemitism. Definitions that name criticism of Israel as antisemitic are opposed by many Jewish organizations, both within the United States and internationally. These definitions violate our constitutional right to free speech because their application censors virtually all criticism of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian human rights and equality. These definitions also downplay the main source of antisemitism in the United States, which is white nationalism.

The clear, best way forward is to uphold and reinstate the work of the original writers of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, who included Arab American studies within the rubric of Asian American studies, and developed a curriculum that is based in the actual tenets and goals of Ethnic Studies.

respectfully,

Amira Jarmakani, President of the Arab American Studies Association