

From: y z

Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2020 2:45 PM

To: Ethnic Studies; Superintendent; [emails redacted]

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

My name is Yazan Zahzah and I am a lecturer at San Diego State University in gender and ethnic studies as well as a community organizer in El Cajon/ San Diego County, and finally a healing justice organizer in Los Angeles County.

I work with my communities, primarily Arab and Muslim (East African, African American, Arab, and South Asian) youth, and would like to **express my concern for the erasure of Arabs and specifically Palestinians from these ethnic studies curriculum revision.**

Many of those who oppose this framework use slippery slope argumentation and sweeping generalizations to consolidate the inclusion of Palestine into anti-Semitism, erasing the ever-important truth that Zionism and Judaism are not synonymous. Furthermore, they de-center the valuable impact honest and accountable incorporation of Palestine and Arab-American stories will have on all youth in schools today.

As someone who works with many youth still adjusting to the US, something I often hear is youth asking questions about why they are represented in their curriculum- that absence clearly impacts their self-esteem, increases isolation, and also contributes to cultural rifts within Arab communities. Furthermore, Anti-Muslim violence in schools in El Cajon is at an all-time high: we have had many students mocked and brutalized (including hospitalized) by their peers due to their hatred of Islam and Arabs at large.

Right now, in the absence of a curriculum to hold these racist youth and their communities accountable for their intolerance, the onus is placed on communities experiencing racism and violence to explain themselves.

All of this does not even get at the heart of what education *should* be about- richness in opportunity, intellectual stimulation, and the end to banking system teaching that upholds the US monoculture...

Thus, I am asking for the following:

- *Reconvene the original committee of writers and experts to revise the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). Ethnic Studies scholars and teachers are the experts on Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy. Arab American scholars and teachers are the experts on Arab American curriculum and pedagogy*
- *Pass an ESMC that includes Pacific Islander and Arab American studies course outlines and includes Palestine in Arab American studies.*
- *Maintain the Ethnic Studies framework—with disciplinary knowledge, language, and pedagogy. Don't dilute it or convert it to a different field (i.e., multicultural studies, diversity studies, or area studies).*
- *Work within clearcut structures for accountability, transparency, and consensus-building. Center those structures on Ethnic Studies practitioners of communities of color and Native peoples throughout the entire model curriculum process, up to ratification*

Thank you for your time,

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Yazan Za3za3, M.A.
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