

From: Athia Choudhury
Sent: Wednesday, August 14, 2019 2:51 PM
To: Ethnic Studies Kenneth McDonald
Subject: In Favor of Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Dear California Instructional Quality Commission and State Board of Education,

My name is Athia Choudhury and I'm an educator and Ph.D. Candidate at USC in the American Studies and Ethnicity department. I've taught numerous classes at the university level for over six years now on race, ethnicity, and the Americas. I've engaged with passionate, bright, opinionated students from all walks of life and political backgrounds who encounter the material in these courses without issue. The material may be challenging to people's world views, but we build trust, show up for each other, and work through the tension as best we can. At the end of the class, students almost always say the same thing (regardless of their political affiliations or racial/ethnic identities): I didn't know this history before coming to your class. We should all be learning this stuff in high school.

The experience for me is jarring--I teach at an elite university with top tier students who've taken all manner of college prep courses, AP classes, etc. And yet, most of them don't have a clear understanding of the historical events and facts about our nation and its formation. This is a huge disservice to all students from all backgrounds that deeply impacts the state of our nation on a fundamental level.

Furthermore, for over 50 years, communities of color have struggled to institutionalize Ethnic Studies in California. Students and faculty have advocated for the inclusion of Ethnic Studies as a legitimate academic discipline through sit-ins, rallies and strikes. Research shows when Ethnic Studies is taught, it results in narrowing and closing of the opportunity gap for students from underserved communities. We urge you not to give in to right-wing racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, anti-progressivism, and anti-intellectualism that does not respect the languages, histories and cultural backgrounds of all California students. Our youth should all be given the opportunity to study about their ancestral roots to better understand the present, and be able to imagine a brighter, more just and equitable future for California, the US, and the world.

I wanted to write in support of the ethnic studies curriculum as it will help heal the wounds of our nation.

regards,

-Athia Choudhury

--

Athia Choudhury
Doctoral Candidate; American Studies & Ethnicity
University of Southern California