

From: Jody Sokolower

Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 1:39 PM

To: [emails redacted]

Cc: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Please vote yes on Ethnic Studies Curriculum, Including Arab American Studies

Dear Oakland Board Members,

I currently teach the Multicultural Education course to teacher credential candidates at San Jose State, and for many years taught Ethnic Studies at Berkeley High. As the former managing editor of *Rethinking School* magazine, I have a national perspective on essential curriculum. Given my experience, I strongly urge you to support the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum led by education scholars of color from across California.

I have seen first-hand how important Ethnic Studies is for all students, and how critical it is to include Arab American curriculum. At Berkeley High, for many years Ethnic Studies was a required 9th grade class. As students progressed through the high school social studies curriculum, I could see how their understanding of structural racism and their comfort discussing race, immigration, and other “hard to talk about” issues deepened their connections to each other and to the content areas.

When I introduce curriculum on Islamophobia and Arab American history and current realities to teacher credential candidates, they often tell me that this is the first time they have encountered this curriculum, and the first time they have thought about what Islamophobia and anti-Arab rhetoric must feel like for Arab American students who are targeted and made invisible at the same time.

As a white teacher of Jewish heritage, I urge you not to be intimidated by accusations of anti-semitism. Talking about Arab American history and current reality is not anti-semitic; supporting students in using critical thinking skills to examine the history of Palestine/Israel is not anti-semitic.

Please vote YES. Thank you.

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