

From: Sara Tiras
Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2020 11:23 PM
To: [emails redacted]
Cc: [emails redacted]; Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Vote Yes Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Oakland Board Members,

As a Jewish resident of Oakland for 15 years, and high school history teacher for 10 years, I urge you to put "Students First" by supporting the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum led by scholars of color from across California. Oakland is exactly the kind of city that should stand up for our underrepresented communities.

Ethnic Studies has always been about empowering students of color who are marginalized and minimized by our curriculum. We need to bring this conversation back to the focus of Students First, one of our Core OUSD Values. Likewise, our white students greatly benefit from having these critical conversations about race, so that all Oaklanders can build skills to navigate our society and build stronger communities and neighborhoods.

I discovered Ethnic Studies for the first time in college, and realized my liberation as a Jewish woman was bound together with all marginalized and oppressed communities. My view and scope of myself, my history, and the history of all peoples in the world was greatly expanded and depended through Ethnic Studies. I am deeply saddened to see that some members of the conservative Jewish community feel threatened that the inclusion of Palestinian history and voices is an assault on the Jewish people. In fact, I believe the opposite to be true. It is imperative that we amplify Arab and Palestinian perspectives in our school curriculum to combat the flood of misinformation and anti-Arab racism that permeates the mainstream media and discourses on our ongoing wars and military presence in the Middle East. If there is any hope for a peaceful future between Jews and Arabs/Palestinians, we need to learn about each other's history, culture, and experiences. Far too often, these opportunities are sabotaged and derailed by politically motivated claims of anti-semitism to keep us divided.

This controversy is a perfect example of why we need Ethnic Studies and why we must have these conversations to address racial tensions in our community, so that we can move toward healing, understanding, and solidarity across all of our cultures.

Please vote YES, thank you!

Sara Tiras
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