

From: Erica Marcus

Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 5:34 PM

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Return Arab American Studies into the ESMC. Do not water it down

Dear IQC officials, Mr. Tony Thurmond, Ms Linda Darling-Hammond:

I am a proud Jewish woman whose life has been enriched, thanks to the time I have spent living outside the United States (in **Southwest Asia**, particularly the Levant.) The first hand learning I acquired was anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory. It was informed by Lebanese, Syrians, Palestinians, Armenians, and Israeli Jews, including relatives of mine who live in Tel-Aviv. Unfortunately, not everyone has the opportunity to live and work outside the US, **so strong ethnic studies programming is crucial for our youth.**

As someone who cares deeply about providing quality education to our children, I was originally pleased that the California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond made a commitment to include Arab American Studies in the Asian American section of the curriculum. This is where it belongs!!!

Unfortunately, I just learned that Superintendent Thurmond met behind closed doors with individuals who are not experts in ethnic studies but who want to determine what should and should not be included in this ESMC. And then he decides to take Arab American Studies out and relegate it to the appendix. Worse, he erases any mention of Palestine in the ESMC and decides that the definition of antisemitism should be equated with any criticism the state of Israel.

As a member of Jewish Voice for Peace, I believe that it is crucial that a module on Arab-Americans be included in the Ethnic Studies curriculum. This should include the Arab-American experience, including the impact of Islamophobia. The experience of peoples from Southwest Asia are rarely taught in schools, even in many schools with Ethnic Studies programs. That absence results in Arab-American students feeling both invisible and targeted.

It is crucial that the California Department of Education listen to the TRUE EXPERTS, the members of the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum advisory committee. Arab American Studies should be in its rightful place within Asian American studies. The lesson plans should align with established principles of ethnic studies which are anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory. Finally the CDE should reject the idea that anyone who criticizes the policies of the Israeli state is antisemitic. When I criticize current Israeli policies, I am using critical thinking skills as well as my constitutional right to free speech!

Best,

Erica Marcus