

From: Zoha Khalili

Sent: Friday, November 13, 2020 9:20 AM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Superintendent;

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment

Dear Instructional Quality Commission,

I am submitting this public comment in response to proposed edit #10 in Attachment C under Item 8.A of the November 18–19, 2020 Instructional Quality Commission meeting.

This proposed edit epitomizes what is so harmful about the entire campaign against the ethnic studies model curriculum. The ESMC was intended to further the development of inclusive, culturally meaningful and relevant curricula to empower and improve the educational experiences of all students, including marginalized students of color. The educators who developed the original draft dared to include Palestinians, their activism and their culture as topics worthy of study. As a result, there has been a crackdown on the entire ethnic studies curriculum, and this would-be educational tool has been hijacked to further a narrative in support of the Israeli government.

Proposed edit #10 falsely equates antisemitism with criticism of the State of Israel. It is part of a widespread effort to shield the State of Israel from criticism by portraying political statements and historical analysis as antisemitic crimethink. These efforts stand in stark contrast with the inclusive and liberatory nature of ethnic studies and the critical analysis this field seeks to encourage. You can find out more about efforts to censor criticism of Israel by falsely equating it with antisemitism here <https://palestinelegal.org/redefinition-efforts>.

Similarly, the campaign to eliminate Palestine from the ESMC and to relegate Arabs to second-class status is part of a wider push to silence the movement for Palestinian freedom and equality. Find out more here <https://palestinelegal.org/the-palestine-exception>.

Capitulating to the campaign to censor criticism of Israel and demote Arab American studies, as is apparent in this latest draft, is antithetical to the core purpose of ethnic studies and the very language of AB 2016 (2016), which recognizes Arabic as one of the primary non-English languages in California. It is a heckler's veto that sends a terrible message to the young people of California, leaving some students out in the cold and encouraging others to resort to censorship when they encounter uncomfortable or different ideas.

Sincerely,

Zoha Khalili

Staff Attorney

Palestine Legal