

From: Julia Griffin Thomason

Sent: Thursday, July 16, 2020 7:42 AM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Superintendent; [emails redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment in support of the CA Model Ethnic Studies Curriculum

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Julia Thomason and I am a rising junior at a college in California. I am in full support of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, particularly including Arab American studies.

I believe, particularly, that it is crucial to include curriculum about Palestine, and want to reiterate why such curriculum would be in no way antisemitic. I think it is hugely important to educate students about antisemitism and about Jewish American history, which is content I believe is fully and adequately covered in the CA standard curriculum. In order to uplift the history of people of color who have been largely ignored by the current curriculum, which is the stated purpose of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, it is necessary and just to include curriculum about Arab-Americans. Teaching about the Arab-American experience, one that began prior to the forming of the United States, is not antisemitic but rather provides a more true telling of history than what students are being taught now.

The claim of antisemitism from Pro-Israel and Zionist organizations is being weaponized particularly to exclude discussions of Palestine that do not support Zionism or the state of Israel. A good curriculum should provide multiple perspectives of history, and a curriculum that neglects to teach diverse perspectives on how Israel treats Palestinians does a disservice to all students in California. Teaching about the history of Palestine, including the *Nakba* (catastrophe), which refers to the forced displacement of over 700,000 Palestinians that started before the establishment of Israel in 1948 and continues to the present day, is not antisemitic and is essential to understand the history of forced immigration of Palestinians to the United States and across the world. The occupation of Palestine is a human rights issue. Palestinians are cut off from adequate food, water, shelter, healthcare, education, and other basic human needs and are forcefully removed from their land by Israeli troops. This year alone, 11 Palestinians have been killed as a result of Israel's extrajudicial shoot-to-kill policy. It is not antisemitic to defend human rights, and therefore should not be considered antisemitic, but rather essential, to include Palestinian history and current movements in ethnic studies.

As racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, and xenophobia in the United States continue to rise, we must confront these showings of white supremacy. My public school education left me with huge blindspots and skewed understandings of history, particularly in regards to Palestine and the West Asian American experience. We must do better for the next generation. To achieve this goal, I believe it is crucial to include Arab American studies in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and I demand for any revisions that might affect Arab American studies to be made in collaboration with Arab American scholars and Ethnic Studies practitioners.

Sincerely,
Julia Thomason