



ALLIANCE FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE

A LITTLE BIT PEOPLE'S THINK TANK, A WHOLE LOT OF ORGANIZING

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Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent, CA Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Alliance for Global Justice **OPPOSITION** to Current Revisions of CA ESMC

Dear Superintendent Thurmond,

On behalf of **Alliance for Global Justice (AfGJ)** I am writing in **opposition** to the **current version of the CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC)**, which does not live up to the values, principles, and pedagogy of Ethnic Studies. Essential Ethnic Studies terminology, including the definition of race, has been eliminated, incorrectly defined, or moved to the footnotes. The decolonial, anti-racist, and liberatory focus of Ethnic Studies has been buried in an avalanche of vague and contradictory language. And Arab American Studies has been moved from its rightful place in Asian American/Pacific Islander Studies to an "interethnic bridge-building appendix." We share the anger of our Arab siblings that their history and community has been relegated to an appendix.

As an organization that prioritizes the needs of our community, Ethnic Studies is foundational to the education of our youth.

AfGJ envisions societies that explore and implement alternatives to the unjust domination of governments, global capitalist institutions and multinational corporations which denigrate the world's peoples and devastate ecosystems. We envision the development of a unified grassroots domestic and international movement that promotes a socially, ecologically, and economically just world. At AfGJ we are convinced that an Ethnic Studies curriculum that uplifts the stories of all communities of color -and in particular of the communities most marginalized and excluded by capitalist, patriarchal and colonizing models- is a step towards social justice. The implementation of an Ethnic Studies program that honors the experiences of Arab-American communities is a step towards ending the human rights violations that hundreds of Arab people, including Palestinians, experience every day. Excluding the Arab-American experiences from Ethnic Studies would be a mistake that validates violence towards Palestinians and other Arab communities. We believe that the diversity of our world is what will help build a unified and transformational movement for change. The approval of an Ethnic Studies curriculum that is anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory will contribute to the effort for a better and fairer world.

We are also concerned that the Ethnic Studies educators who wrote the original ESMC have been sidelined, while politicians and lobbyists have wielded the most influence in what revisions get made. The sidelining of the original committee echoes an all-too-familiar experience amongst people of color of having our expertise denied.


We are echoing and uplifting the demands of the Save Arab American Studies Coalition, and taking the lead from Ethnic Studies educators:

- Re-empower experts in the field of Ethnic Studies to decide on revisions to the ESMC that align with the principles, values, and pedagogy of Ethnic Studies.
- Put Arab American Studies—including Palestine—back where it belongs, within the Asian American Studies section of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.
- Approve an ESMC that is anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory—that centers the voices and experiences of communities of color and their struggles for liberation.

We call on the CA Department of Education to take immediate action to protect the integrity of Ethnic Studies. We want a curriculum that meets the needs of our youth and carries on the spirit of the original 1968 Third World Liberation Front and Black Student Union strikes that led to Ethnic Studies as a discipline. It is not too late to stand with us on the right side of history and support an ESMC that will educate, protect, and inspire all our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eunice Mina Escobar", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Eunice Mina Escobar, National Co-coordinator
Alliance for Global Justice