

**From:** Oussama Mokeddem

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 18, 2020 1:44 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment - IQC Meeting

My name is Oussama Mokeddem and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager for the Sacramento Valley and Central California chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations. Members of the Instructional Quality Commission, we are yet at another point on the path of this uphill struggle to achieve the BASIC inclusion of narratives that are experiencing a deep attempt at colonial erasure. The original Arab American lesson plan submitted to the IQC by members of the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum advisory committee sought to provide California students with a FACT-BASED narrative in relation to the diverse realities faced by Arab American communities across the United States and abroad. We are now looking at a version that erases large portions of those narratives and limits them to stereotypes that are extremely harmful to young people who have experienced anti-Arab and Islamophobic attacks. In a world where there is an increased rate of hate rhetoric and 'othering' of people in the United States, it would be a shame if California – the so-called most progressive state in the country – leads the way in the continued othering of its people under the façade of inclusion and the banner of ethnic studies, a subject in which the guiding principles are anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory.

The very fact that we are having this conversation and debate over something as INNOCENT as including Arab American Studies in its rightful place with Asian American Studies, rather than on the sidelines where its narrative can be co-opted, is a testament to the colonial forces we are up against. As a student and research scholar of ethnic studies, I cannot idly stand by and see the very field that allowed me to make sense of the realities and narratives of my fellow non-white Americans – after a struggle to find myself in America's narrative in my K-12 social studies and history education. I urge this committee to make the right choice and re-insert Arab American Studies in its rightful place within Asian American Studies and LISTEN to the advice of the countless Ethnic Studies experts that have spoken and echoed the same words that I utter today.

Thank you.

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