

## **The Ethnic Studies Department of James Logan High School**

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To CA Department of Education, Superintendent Tony Thurmond, President of the State Board of Education Linda Darling-Hammond, and the Instructional Quality Commission,

The Ethnic Studies Department of James Logan High School stands alongside our Arab American brothers and sisters of our community, in the movement for a just and truly representative Ethnic Studies curriculum in California. We know that this is not a time to be silent about what has been happening to the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that had been previously drafted and has been supported widely. We call on you to listen to and represent the community and ensure that Arab American lessons are not simply pushed into the appendix of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

As a community of educators, we commit ourselves to the advancement of equity, social justice, and educational opportunity for our people. Amidst the recent events that have put this country in turmoil, we also commit to act and show up for Arab American communities across the nation. Our commitment is such because we know that as all forms of oppression are connected, the liberation of all our communities is also connected. We stand in support of a solid and representative Arab American component to the state's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum it will offer our schools.

As our state's only full high school Ethnic Studies department, we are disheartened to hear that elected officials decided to exclude Arab Americans from California's high school Ethnic Studies curriculum by relegating the Arab American lesson to the appendix of said curriculum, insisting on the inclusion of extremely problematic "perspectives" on racism, and by not consulting experts on the revisions to the overall curriculum.

If the biggest education system in the United States decides Arab American Studies and Ethnic Studies are a "problem," we will all face a dire precedent. We urge you to please reject adopting these offensive revisions.

We accept and fully support the TURATH (Teaching Understanding and Representing Arabs Throughout History), which is a report researched and written by the teenage members of the Arab Resource and Organizing Center. This vital report found that only 2.3% of students surveyed learned about Arabs and/or Muslims at school. If there was ever a time that we should be protecting anti-racist education, and ensuring students learn about struggles of indigenous and racialized communities at school, as part of their formal and peer-group education it is now.

We also support the leading Asian American scholars, including the National Association of Asian American studies, who have issued statements defending the inclusion of Arab American Studies in the CA ESMC. Ethnic Studies has been linked to increases in positive personal, academic, and social outcomes for students. And in the post-9/11 era, exacerbated by Trump's Muslim ban, Arab American students are desperately in need of a curriculum that reflects their histories and current realities.

In these times of change and possibility, we ask that you please reject adopting the unfortunate and offensive revisions) made to this curriculum, to restore Arab American Studies to its rightful place, and to work with Ethnic Studies experts who have shaped this powerful and critical area of study for our students.

As progressive educators, we are committed to:

- Upholding the legacy and history of the movement for Ethnic Studies and the leadership and contributions of our Arab American community members
- Continuing to fight for the creation of Ethnic Studies programs from kindergarten through 12th grade, with the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Draft, which includes Arab American Studies, at its core.
- Educating all of our students with the foundational theories and concepts of Ethnic Studies, especially those regarding race and class which will enable the youth to develop a critical analysis of the political and social systems that impact us all.

We hope you stand with us these commitments as we all know that they will only work toward creating a more equitable and anti-racist curriculum for our young scholars, now and in the future.

In closing, we urge you to reject the current revisions of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and move Arab American lessons from the appendix and into the central curriculum. We live in a moment in which the majority of this country has chosen to move forward with a focus on love and understanding. We urge you to make the right decision and further pave that path for education.

Sincerely,

**The Ethnic Studies Department of James Logan High School**

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