

From: Gabriel Kahn

Sent: Wednesday, November 11, 2020 11:45 AM

To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>; Superintendent <Superintendent@cde.ca.gov>; lindadh@suse.stanford.edu

Cc: info@araborganizing.org

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment: Demanding the inclusion of Arab American Studies in ESMC

To Superintendent Tony Thurmond and Chairperson Darling-Hammond,

I am emailing you to urge your support for 1) the inclusion of Arab American Studies as a part of ESMC's Asian American Studies and 2) the inclusion of the Arab American lesson plan submitted by the ESMC advisory committee. This is a deeply important issue to me because my Judaism requires me to speak against racist cultural erasure at home and abroad.

Islamophobia and Xenophobia are undoubtedly part of our shared American history. In fact, one of the most essential things an ethnic studies curriculum could provide is a modern and informed understanding of how such forces affect our current social moment. That is true for all Americans, but it is especially true for Arab-American youth. For too long, Arab youth have learned little about their history besides offensive and racist images and stereotypes. Arab-American studies curriculum provides a critical intervention to these stereotypes in K-12 education.

Furthermore, a balanced study of the Israel-Palestinian conflict is non-negotiable to an ethnic studies curriculum. In too many Jewish communities, I am told that it is antisemitic to criticize Israel's pursuit of an ethno-state. This is not only false, but it is also THE most dangerous trope in modern Jewish culture. An Ethnic Studies course is exactly where the Jewish and Arab students of California can begin grappling with the geopolitical conflict perpetuated in their names, and begin to heal. In that critical moment, teachers must be provided a curriculum that soberly discusses Israel's human rights violations (and the US role in perpetuating them). Otherwise, I fear this project will be doomed before it begins.

I trust you all to do the right thing. Forego politics in favor of pedagogy. Create a critical ethnic studies curriculum that offers a history in which ALL Californian students can place themselves, and see their own truths reflected. That MUST include Arab Americans.

Best regards and hopefully,
Gabriel Kahn

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