

From: Pamela G
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 8:59 PM
To: Ethnic Studies; Superintendent; [emails redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Arab American Studies

Good evening,

I am writing in support of efforts to include Arab American Studies in CA ethnic studies. My grandparents came to the US from Lebanon. When I was growing up in the 80s, US policy toward the Middle East contributed to misunderstandings and mistreatment of people of Arab heritage. In the post-9/11 era exacerbated by Trump's Muslim Ban, Arab American students are even more desperately in need of curriculum that reflects their histories and current realities.

It's never been clearer how important Ethnic Studies is. The racial disparities in the impact of Covid-19, the xenophobic targeting of Asian Americans as "vectors" of disease, and the national uprising in response to the murder of George Floyd point to the need for anti-racist education: All students need Ethnic Studies in their K-12 curriculum to build empathy, unity and solidarity with each other, strengthening our movements for justice.

I urge you to pass an ESMC that includes Pacific Islander and Arab American studies course outlines and includes Palestine in Arab American studies. Not only does this benefit students who can identify with the history presented in this curriculum, but also other students who would otherwise not learn this important history.

My daughter recently graduated from high school in San Jose, which has a significant percentage of students who identify as Pacific Islander and as Arab American. She tells me that in her entire education she did not learn about any modern Arab culture or politics. I had the privilege of attending a private high school where I could choose to take a course on Arab and Middle East history. This should be an option for all California public high school students.

Throughout this process there should be clear structures for accountability, transparency and consensus building. Center those structures on Ethnic Studies practitioners of communities of color and Native peoples throughout the entire model curriculum process, up to ratification. Our communities and our nation are threatened by white supremacy and our best hope lies in solidarity amongst those who recognize its danger.

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Pamela Gudiño