

From: SacReg4 PalestinianRights

Sent: Friday, January 15, 2021 4:10 PM

To: Ethnic Studies; Superintendent; [email redacted]

Cc: [emails redacted]; Assemblymember Jim Cooper; Assemblymember Kevin McCarty; Assemblymember Ken Cooley

Subject: [EXTERNAL] December 2020-released Third Field Review Draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Since mid-2019, the *Sacramento Regional Coalition for Palestinian Rights* has been following the California Department of Education's (CDE) Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) efforts under the supervision of the CDE's Instructional Quality Commission's (IQC).

We strongly support introducing California's K-12 students to *real* ethnic studies.

Ethnic studies includes the study of institutional racism via discriminatory laws, policies and practices imposed on Native American, African American, Asian American and LatinX communities. Two of the primary examples are the attempted extermination of Native peoples (genocide), and commodification of human beings (slavery). More recently, the internment of Japanese Americans and the targeted surveillance and deportation of Arab and Muslim Americans.

Central to this 50+-year-old discipline is **agency**: i.e., **voices of these communities** writing and teaching about their realities. And it is also about these same voices writing and teaching about resistance to injustice and about resilience and accomplishment among their communities.

For students of color, to see themselves as an important part of the mosaic of American society is empowering. For white students to learn more about their co-students – and a more complete history of America –will make them better and more aware citizens.

Obviously, *real* ethnic studies is challenging. Its narratives do not conform to those preferred by the edu-political establishment and for this reason there is significant opposition to *real* ethnic studies. A very local example, is the California State University establishment's resistance to adding a graduation requirement: just one *actual* 3-unit ethnic studies undergraduate course.

Unfortunately, as has been evident since the failure of the CDE/IQC to seize an ethnic studies moment by editing the 2019 draft ESMC via a collaborative process between the professionals who drafted the ESMC and those with suggestions for changes, the CDE/IQC is evading the creation of a *real* ESMC:

The December 2020 Third Field Review is very much a California edu-political-establishment document. Some examples:

Many of the cited/linked resources are *not* centered on the questions, needs and aspirations of, nor authored by, Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans and LatinX Americans. They are opinions and assessments of the dominant (oppressing) culture, expressed by authors speaking *about* experiences of communities of color *without the permission of*, and *in place of*, the voices of those communities. Usurpation of agency has governed much of the ESMC project.

The ESMC deviates from the disciplinary center of ethnic studies through the addition of European experiences. As explained in Edward Said's 1978 book, *Orientalism*, there is a West-supremacist (Euro-American) attitude that validates empire, settler colonialism, and subjugation of non-white peoples, i.e., that undergirds exactly the kinds of laws, policies and practices which were inflicted on the ethnic studies groups.

In regard to Arab American studies, the CDE/IQC's behavior was, and continues to be, particularly egregious: clumsy, accusatory and, yes, blatantly discriminatory!

As ethnic studies professional associations have advised the CDE/IQC, Arab Americans are part of Asian Americans. However, the CDE/IQC refuses *real* inclusion of this marginalized group. It *disappeared*: "The Arab American Studies Course Outline" included in the 2019 draft ESMC.

Lesson #42, "Arab American Stereotypes in Literature, Film, and Media Pre- and Post-9/11" in the December 2020 version of Appendix A, *Sample Lessons*, embodies both the usurpation of the Arab American *right to narrate* and the CDE/IQC's failure to including a *real* Arab American studies lesson.

Per the footnote on page 548: "The CDE-edited version of this lesson reviewed by the Instructional Quality Commission at its November 17–18 meeting contained a link inadvertently left in. That link and its accompanying activity have been removed from this version." (Mo Amer's March 4, 2017 appearance on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* is easy to find on YouTube.)

Stereotypes are dominant culture caricatures and/or slurs. Are students aware of them? If not, this lesson introduces students to them. And through focus and repetition actually will tend to reinforce them rather than refute them.

Quite simply, the latest version of the ESMC is seriously deficient. The clients of the CDE/IQC – in this case the K-12 students of California -- deserve much better.

Sincerely,
Adeeb Alzanoon, Chair
The Sacramento Regional Coalition for Palestinian Rights