

From: Voulette Hattar

Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 11:09 AM

To: Ethnic Studies; [emails redacted]; Superintendent

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Arab American Studies in CA Ethnic Studies Curriculum!!

I am an Ethnic Studies student at UC Berkeley, and I am very concerned about the state of Ethnic Studies in California High Schools, especially as an Palestinian, Arab American.

Growing up in California, I never learned about myself in school, or about my history. I was never given the tools to understand my place in this country, and the history of those before me. I was denied and cut off from this history and this knowledge. For the longest time, I didn't know myself, who I was, or where I had come from. I was bullied and called a terrorist in school, and everything I learned about myself came from television, and I didn't know how to reconcile myself with these portrayals. I didn't have the knowledge or space to do that. In college, I had to read my own books, do my own research, to get this knowledge, but once I did, I felt incredibly seen. I didn't know that other people felt so similar or had similar experiences to me. I felt empowered knowing my own history. I felt that I grew to know myself with it. This education and knowledge laid out my future path for me, made me more confident, and allowed me the language the tools to speak for myself and empower my people along with me. In high school, I was lost, and I had to find the resources and teach myself this history. This shouldn't be the case, and this is bigger than just me.

[TURATH](#) (Teaching Understanding and Representing Arabs Throughout History) is a 2020 report researched and written by the teenage members of Arab Youth Organizing (AYO). According to AYO's findings, more than 66% of the students surveyed said they received most of their information on Arabs and/or Muslims from the internet or television; only 2.3% learned about Arabs and/or Muslims at school. Ethnic Studies, however, has been proven to be linked to increases in positive personal, academic, and social outcomes for students. This was the case for me in college. Especially in the post-9/11 era, where Arab American students are bullied and fed inaccurate portrayals of ourselves, a reality that is exacerbated by Trump's Muslim ban, Arab American students are desperately [in need of curriculum](#) that reflects our histories and current realities.

The ESMC is structured around the core pillars developed by the founders of Ethnic Studies in 1969: American Indian studies, Africana/Black studies, Chicanx/Latinx studies, and Asian American studies. Following a decades-long tradition in higher education, the ESMC includes Arab American studies within Asian American studies. Leading Asian American scholars, including the National Association of Asian American studies, have issued statements defending the inclusion of Arab American studies in the CA ESMC. In San Francisco State University and at UC Berkeley, pillars of ethnic studies history and implementation, also make a point to include Arab and Muslim studies as a part of the curriculum.

Arab American studies is an essential part of Ethnic Studies curriculum. Make the right decision for California's students. Reconvene the original committee of writers and

experts to revise the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). Ethnic Studies scholars and teachers are the experts on Ethnic Studies curriculum and pedagogy. Arab American scholars and teachers are the experts on Arab American curriculum and pedagogy. Pass an ESMC that includes Pacific Islander and Arab American studies course outlines and includes Palestine in Arab American studies. Maintain the Ethnic Studies framework—with disciplinary knowledge, language, and pedagogy. Don't dilute it or convert it to a different field (i.e., multicultural studies, diversity studies, or area studies). It is clear, now more than ever, how important Ethnic Studies is, especially for developing children in high school. It is even more clear how essential Arab American studies is to Ethnic Studies.

Sincerely,
Voulette