

From: Gemma Nelson

Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 8:14 PM

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

Subject: [EXTERNAL] IQC: Ethnic Studies Model Information/Action (Agenda Item 8 A.2 & A.3) for Meeting November 18-19 2020)

Name: Gemma Nelson

Organization: Individual

Agenda Item #: 8 A.2 and 8 A.3

To Whom It May Concern:

Talofa lava,

I am Gemma, a Samoan-American currently living and working in the US and I wish to submit comment on the latest draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. I am extremely concerned by the cavalier and casual dismissal of the requests by members of the Arab and Pacific Islander community to have specific resources included to ensure representation in the ESMC.

As a Pacific Islander who grew up and was educated with an extremely limited and white-washed history curriculum I feel that failing to include valuable Pacific resources that have been submitted by the Committee is an offense and a disservice to the Pacific youth who travel through your hallowed halls of learning. When you fail to incorporate indigenous voices into curriculum you fail to show Pacific youth the academic and economic heights that **they** can achieve. Let these youth hear their own voices, let them know and understand their own histories even if those histories expose the faults and wrongdoings of past governments. Failing to address these shortcomings at early stages in education can result in perspectives of self and society that are skewed towards valuing whiteness over our own BIPOC and will prevent students from being and achieving all that they are personally capable of.

To be clear, I request a recognition of the following:

- **Align all lesson plans to the guiding principles of Ethnic Studies**, which are anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory.
- **Re-insert Arab American studies in its rightful place within Asian American studies**
- **Include the Arab American lesson plan—inclusive of content on Palestine**—submitted to the California Department of Education by members of the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) advisory committee.
- **Reject debunked definitions of antisemitism that equate criticism of Israel with antisemitism.**
- **Ensure the Pacific Islander Studies content includes coverage of the complexity and diversity of the Pacific** alongside critiques of power and systems of oppression seen in the work of Epeli Hau'ofa, Lisa Kahaleole Hall, and Kerri Ann Borja's UN Testimony on the Question of Guam.
- **Approve line edits 384, 385, 386, 387, and 388, which delineate the inclusion of important PI Studies resources, discussion questions, and distinctions between regions in Oceania** into the ESMC.

The current racial reckoning sweeping across the land exposes the need for holistic and accurate teaching of the struggles of the minorities of America. If this education system does not recognise the progress that hammers at your door you are at risk of becoming irrelevant and obsolete. Imagine the fullness of learning and contribution the community that Pacific Youth could achieve if they are given the benefit of a ethnic history that recognises them! Do the right thing for your students, not for your pencil pushing administrators.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment. If you require clarification or further information please contact me on the details below.

Ma le ava tele (With utmost respect),

Gemma Nelson
Law & Language Consultant
(Samoa)
