

Dear California Department of Education and IQC,

We, the undersigned scholars, practitioners of Ethnic Studies, and educators of West Asian descent, firmly stand in support of the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) Draft, its intention to center communities long marginalized by California curricula, a practice rooted in anti-racist and anti-colonial theory and praxis.

We affirm the need for West Asian American studies including but not limited to: Arab, Iranian, Armenian, Kurdish, Afghan, Turkish, and Assyrian Americans, among others to be included. As scholars and practitioners of this field, we know how to write our histories that speak to both the inclusion of groups and the larger systems they face. We stand firm in defending the inclusion of Arab-American Studies and Palestine, and West Asian American Studies within Asian American Studies. West Asian American experiences are Ethnic Studies. Our scholars do this work, and our communities are calling for their voices to be heard.

The released edits of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum draft do not speak to the spirit of Ethnic Studies. The draft centers whiteness, dilutes the movement-driven origins of Ethnic Studies, and erases the racialization of West Asian communities or presents them inaccurately. As Ethnic Studies scholars and educators, we call on the IQC and the CDE to bring in scholars of West Asian American descent who are Ethnic Studies practitioners and to heed the calls of the Ethnic Studies educator community to uphold the original goals of Ethnic Studies. The original writers and impacted communities must be consulted.

There is precedence for this work. We affirm the Association of Asian American Studies (AAAS) inclusion of West Asian Americans as an integral part of their field, the work of West Asian American scholars currently defining and envisioning the field, and the necessity of community-centered approaches to theory and praxis.

Studies of Orientalism, anti-Muslim racism, critical refugee studies, solidarity with family members and social movements in our homelands, and diasporic experience of racialization in the United States help young students make sense of their realities. Our communities have experienced historical and ongoing attacks, whether through the Muslim Ban, histories of invisibility and refugeehood, surveillance and/or criminalization. Our students are subjected to subtractive acculturation and language acquisition in schools, as well as deficit oriented educational practices and curricula that marginalize our lived experiences. Their experiences are not limited to post-9/11 racialization, nor violence in our homelands. And our scholars have the ability to speak to our histories and must be consulted. Our histories are long and powerful. We are the experts of our own experiences.

We reiterate our support for the inclusion of West Asian American studies in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, including Arab American Studies and Palestine. We urge you to listen to the voices of California's West Asian Americans and the voices of leading Ethnic Studies scholars in staying true to the charge of Ethnic Studies to dismantle white supremacy, epistemic violence, and erasure.

Signed,

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