

From: P. Mary Fong

Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 4:58 PM

To: Ethnic Studies; Superintendent; [emails redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Arab-American and Pacific Islander Studies in CA Ethnic Studies

To whom it may concern,

My name is Patricia Fong, and I am a San Francisco resident who is currently a full-time college student. In this global moment of public awakening around racism and white supremacy, it has never been more important to invest in multi-faceted, in-depth education on anti-racism in our schools. 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, Breonna Taylor, and many other Black people by police points 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. Arab-American and Pacific Islander Studies are key components of Ethnic Studies and without them, students from all backgrounds will be less able to be powerful and constructive leaders and activists in their societies. 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. Ethnic Studies has been linked to increases in positive personal, academic, and social outcomes for students. In the post-9/11 era, exacerbated by Trump’s Muslim ban, Arab American students are desperately in need of curriculum that reflects their histories and current realities. Anti-Asian xenophobic violence in the United States as well as the continued repercussions of the American Imperialism in the Philippines and other Pacific Islands point to the same need to keep Pacific Islander Studies.

Furthermore, students of color like myself who attended CA public schools deeply need Ethnic Studies to find our place and our self-worth in our state, country, and world. As a multi-racial Asian-American woman, learning Ethnic Studies has been vital to my sense of personal and communal self-worth, cultural understanding, and anti-racist advocacy for my communities. Without essential anti-racist understanding, students fall into traps of shame and self-blame because they are unable to recognize the systemic injustice that oppresses them and their peoples. Ethnic Studies is a key resource that forms students into self-love and enables them to be strong and more compassionate scholars, leaders, and people.

For these reasons and more, I urge you to keep Arab-American and Pacific Islander Studies in our CA Ethnic Studies curriculums.

Thank you,
Patricia Fong

[address redacted]
San Francisco, CA