
From: Kian Kafaie
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2020 2:00 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment 8/13 IQC Meeting

Hello,

My name is Kian Kafaie and I'm a college student and California community member.

I was lucky enough to have an ethnic studies course offered in my high school and it helped provide me with a crucial analytical framework grounded in social justice that I continue to value immensely. So I was extremely disappointed to find out that – because of pressure from outside interests – the original model curriculum, created by recognized experts in the field, was revised to exclude Arab American studies, Palestine, and Pacific Islander studies. This is an affront to the foundational values of ethnic studies, and to California students, and it's especially egregious given the current climate of stark racialized injustice and white supremacist violence. *Accurately* educating students about the struggles of Palestinians, Arab Americans, Pacific Islanders and other colonized peoples should not be deemed “controversial” simply because of pressure from outside groups who are not at all representative of California's students. I know that superintendent Thurmond has said that the IQC intends to include these sections eventually, but it's critical to acknowledge that a strong Arab-American studies draft curriculum was *already* developed by ethnic studies experts, with great support from affected communities, and it was only removed because of pressure from unrepresentative special interest groups. Legitimate concern about antisemitism does not justify erasing palestinians. So I'm urging the IQC to reconvene the original committee of expert writers of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and to pass a model curriculum that includes Palestine as an integral part of Arab-American studies, along with Pacific Islander studies, rather than simply watering down the content to create a more politically palatable curriculum that doesn't actually serve students' needs, or attempting to separate the experience of immigrant communities from struggles that take place in their homelands. The future curriculum development process must be transparent and faithful to the anticolonial values at the heart of ethnic studies. Supporting Palestinians is not in any way “one-sided” or antisemitic, and continuing the erasure of the palestinian struggle against oppression amounts to an endorsement of cultural genocide.

Thank you.