

From: Rex Halafihi
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2020 2:38 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies Statement

Malo e lelei,

My name is Rex Halafihi. I am a queer person of Tongan and Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry who is born and raised in California. I am a San Francisco State University alumni and organized to establish the Critical Pacific Islands and Oceania Studies Program at SFSU in 2016. I demand that Pacific Islander and Arab American experiences be represented in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. This is important because even though Pacific Islanders and Arab Americans are consistently referenced as "Asian-Pacific Islanders" we are rarely given the self determination we deserve within that framework. We demand a decolonial approach and specific language around Pacific Islander and Arab American communities and histories -- this including Palestine. As a jew of color, I am here to reaffirm that a critique of Israel does not equate to anti-Semitism, this is a dangerous rhetoric we need to be aware of. On that note, we are still grappling with the legacies that built this work and improving it for future generations. Specific language and divestment away from the API social rubric is an important step in reconciliation. The AA/PI terminology was born out of the Third World Liberation Front of 1968 in Northern California and became nationalized through the non-profit industrial complex in the 1970s onwards. We must continue to question these AA/PI narratives because nuance is the path to liberation. May we continue to keep up the work and continue to ask: "Who Defines Ethnic Studies?"

Best,
Rex Halafihi