

From: Doris Bittar
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 5:12 PM
To: Ethnic Studies; Superintendent
Cc: [email redacted]; Doris Bittar
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Do Not Erase Arab Americans from Ethnic Studies!

Dear Supervisor Tony Thurmond and Ethnic Studies:

Ethnic Studies must be inclusive, and not an excuse to further erase the voices of Arab Americans. Arab American studies as a core part of the Asian American studies curriculum is not only essential but a moral imperative. An outcome that excludes or casts aside this vulnerable community will further diminish a voice that is already underrepresented and feeling unsafe as a result.

The national uprising in response to the murder of George Floyd point to the need for anti-racist education: All students need comprehensive Ethnic Studies in their K-12 curriculum to build empathy, unity and solidarity with each other, strengthening our movements for justice and build their self esteem. We need more discussion and not less to forge stronger bridges between people.

The National Association of Asian American studies issued statements defending the inclusion of Arab American studies in the CA ESMC. Core pillars developed by the founders of Ethnic Studies in 1969 include American Indian studies, Africana/Black studies, Chicana/Latinx studies, and Asian American studies. A decades-long momentum in higher education includes Arab American studies within Asian American studies.

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. TURATH (Teaching Understanding and Representing Arabs Throughout History) is a 2020 report researched and written by the teenage members of Arab Youth Organizing (AYO). According to AYO's findings, more than 66% of the students surveyed said they received most of their information on Arabs and/or Muslims from the internet or television; only 2.3% learned about Arabs and/or Muslims at school.

As president of Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee, San Diego Chapter, Professor of Art at California State University, San Marco, and founder of an ESL program for Syrian refugees, I see additional problems. Arab American youth self-esteem is at an all time low. They feel under siege and singled out. In Arab American mosques, churches and synagogues Arab Americans feel marginalized, under attack and erased. It is a moral responsibility to make sure that all people, especially those blatantly discriminated against, be given proper attention.

Best Regards.
Doris Bittar

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Faculty, California State University San Marcos School of Art-SofA
President, San Diego Chapter, American Arab Anti-Discrimination
Committee-ADC