

From: Dina El Dessouky
Sent: Monday, July 27, 2020 8:05 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Save Ethnic Studies! Tell Arab American Stories.

Dear Ethnic Studies Open Comment,

It's never been clearer how important Ethnic Studies is and we urge you to support the inclusion of Arab American studies in the Asian American studies curriculum.

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 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.

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. FRANKLY, it is also ETHICAL TO TEACH AND DISCUSS THE HISTORY OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING ARABS AND PALESTINIANS--EVEN IF THAT HISTORY IS UNCOMFORTABLE TO CONFRONT--RATHER THAN TO PRETEND THAT IT DOESN'T EXIST.

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.

OUR YOUTH ARE CAPABLE OF CRITICALLY ASSESSING COMPLEX HISTORIES AND ENGAGING IN UNCOMFORTABLE CONVERSATIONS regarding multiple intersecting histories of marginalization, oppression, and discrimination, including those of Jews, the state of Israel, Arabs, and Palestinians. If we stifle these learning opportunities and conversations before they are able to both begin and mature, we do a disservice to everyone's collective human rights, dignity, and well-being.

The CA Model Ethnic Studies Curriculum should be fully inclusive, and should not exclude thoughtful discussion of Arab Americans, including Palestinians.

On a separate note, I hope that the model also accounts substantially for Indigenous Pacific Islanders and doesn't simply lump them into an AAPI group with little discussion of their important histories, which have been fundamental to the U.S. I mention this because they are frequently left out and forgotten in discussions surrounding people of color or even Native communities.

Thank you!

Sincerely,
Dina El Dessouky