

**From:** Nada Dibas

**Sent:** Friday, November 13, 2020 5:34 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>; [emails redacted]

**Cc:** [emails redacted]

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Save Arab American Studies! Support Arab Youth!

Dear IQC, Superintendent Tony Thurmond, and Chair Linda Darling-Hammond,

My name is Nada Dibas. I am a born and raised resident of California, 2020 UC Berkeley graduate, and a member of the Palestinian Youth Movement (San Diego Chapter). As a Palestinian American that grew up in California's public school system without a proper ethnic studies curriculum, the impact of excluding Arab American studies and Pacific Islander Studies from the ethnic studies curriculum is dangerous and neglectful. The demands for racial justice that are being chanted across the entire country is a result of years of racial injustice and oppression that you will be contributing to by neglecting our histories and narratives. Defining criticism of Israel as antisemitism is a gross disservice to real antisemitism and an abhorrent attempt to silence and censors virtually all criticism of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian human rights and equality. I am a displaced Palestinian in America as a result of the massacre of my parent's village, Ramlah, Palestine, in 1948, which left my mother's family either dead or in refugee camps. This is a fraction of the extremely expansive narratives you are erasing and you are once again leaving students to fend for themselves in an increasingly racialized and polarized political climate. Pro-Israel interest groups should not define antisemitism. Definitions that name criticism of Israel as antisemitic are opposed by many Jewish organizations, both within the United States and internationally. These definitions violate our constitutional right to free speech. These definitions also grossly neglect the real source of antisemitism in the United States, which is white nationalism.

For too long, Arab youth have learned little about their history besides offensive and racist images and stereotypes. Arab-American studies curriculum provides a critical intervention to these stereotypes in K-12 education. I will not allow my 4 baby siblings, ages 5, 7, 9, and 13, to endure the horrendous racism as I endured through my K-12 education in California.

I demand:

1. the inclusion of the Arab American lesson plan submitted to the California Department of Education by members of the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) advisory committee.
2. the re-insertion of Arab American studies in its rightful place—within Asian American studies.
3. the alignment of all lesson plans with the guiding principles of ethnic studies, which are anti-racist, decolonial and laboratory.
4. a complete rejection of debunked definitions of antisemitism that equates criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

I hope that you, the ones responsible to uphold the demands of the people, take the side of justice. Deciding against including us in the ethnic studies curriculum will be a harmful and unjust outcome that you will be accountable for. Thank you for your time and consideration, I hope to see that our voices mean something to you.

Sincerely,  
Nada Dibas

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**Nada Dibas**

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