

From: Vanessa Greenleaf
Sent: Monday, July 27, 2020 4:18 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Arab Americans cannot be excluded from Ethnic Studies.

Dear Ethnic Studies Open Comment,

A few weeks ago, two people from my high school graduating class ran their truck through a crowd of peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters in my hometown.

The next week, current students at my high school reached out to alumnae for support because they had uncovered a secret group chat where their fellow classmates were spewing racist, homophobic, and antisemitic rants. They had screenshots of their peers using racial slurs, posting memes glorifying killing Jews and POC, and threatening violence. There was even a channel in the group chat called "The Husks," where they would compile and create racist memes of their Asian classmates. On at least one occasion, those involved in the group chat went to one of the "Husks" houses and verbally assaulted them.

It is horrifying to see white supremacy and racism flourish in my hometown, and to see the violence it breeds becoming real. It's a stark and sobering lesson that hate grows in our own backyard. Paired with 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, it's clear that now, more than ever, we need anti-racist education. The curriculum must be inclusive, and cannot omit any groups who are affected by racist policies and violence, including Arab Americans.

I call on the you - the CA Department of Education, Superintendent Thurmond, and President Darling-Hammond - to require comprehensive Ethnic Studies in K-12 curriculum, including Arab American studies in the Asian American studies curriculum. Education is a powerful tool to combat white supremacist violence in our communities. Don't leave Arab Americans out.

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:

The ESMC is structured around the core pillars developed by the founders of Ethnic Studies in 1969: American Indian studies, Africana/Black studies, Chicana/Latina 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.

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.

Sincerely,
Vannessa Greenleaf