

From: MARGE SUSSMAN

Sent: Thursday, November 12, 2020 9:08 PM

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

Cc: [email redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Revision

I am writing to you as a concerned Californian and as a Jew active in the movement for racial justice and equity. I am very upset and disappointed at the destruction of the curriculum that was created with so much hard work by the experts on the advisory committee the CDE appointed to create the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. All students in California deserve and need to be exposed to this material, especially students of color who need to learn their own history and see themselves reflected in school. As poet Adrienne Rich said, "When someone with the authority of a teacher describes the world and you're not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing."

Ethnic Studies as an academic discipline has at its core anti-racism and anti-colonial education and has always focused on the four groups most targeted and impacted in this country. What you have done by sanitizing and gutting the original ESMC curriculum is to create something that removes that framing almost completely.

To have moved Arab American studies from its rightful place within Asian American studies to an appendix is an unspeakable insult and seems to indicate having given into the Islamophobia and anti-Arab sentiment that has infected so much of the public sphere in recent years.

As a Jew, I am deeply offended by your having inserted a definition of anti-semitism that equates criticism of the State of Israel with anti-semitism. I'm a member of Jewish Voice for Peace and we believe anti-semitism means hatred and actions against Jewish people for being Jewish. The State of Israel is a political entity that is fair game for criticism just as any other -- and certainly has earned it!

I ask - demand really - you put the Arab American lesson plan designed by the original ESMC committee back into the ethnic studies curriculum, put Arab American studies back into Asian American studies, and align all the lesson plans with the guiding vision of ethnic studies as a discipline. And lastly, remove that anti-democratic censoring definition of anti-semitism wherever it appears.

Do the right thing and restore the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum!

Sincerely,

Marge Sussman
Berkeley, CA