

From: Nawal Zahzah

Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2020 7:48 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Superintendent; [email redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] INCLUDE ARAB AMERICAN STUDIES IN CA ETHNIC STUDIES CURRICULUM!

Hello,

My name is Nawal Zahzah and I am an academic, an activist, a sister, aunt, daughter, and I am Arab American. Palestinian and Lebanese.

FIRST OF ALL: I support the ESMC, including Arab American Studies. In this era of Islamophobia and Xenophobia, it is **so** crucial to have a well-rounded curriculum that involves ARABS/Arab Muslims/MUSLIMS - program(s) that teach students about global cultures. If we disregard the histories of non-American people, especially Arabs - we are **INSULTING** the very core of academia.

FURTHERMORE, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY: Islamophobia is already rampant in the united states, and contributes to so much violence against Muslim Americans, from all backgrounds (non-Arabs too). **REMOVING THIS CURRICULUM WILL ONLY ENSURE MORE VIOLENCE - A LAW THAT DENIES STUDENTS (and ARAB/MUSLIM FOLK) FROM LEARNING ABOUT ARAB AMERICANS/THEIR OWN PEOPLE SENDS A MESSAGE THAT WE AS ARABS AND MUSLIMS ARE NOT WORTH OF A PLACE IN ACADEMIA. THEREFORE WE ARE SUBJECT TO RIDICULE. AND SUBJECT TO DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE.**

If the California schools CARE about the safety and representation of all cultures, they would NOT ELIMINATE ARAB-AMERICAN STUDIES FROM THE CURRICULUM. THEY WOULD ENCOURAGE THEIR STUDENTS AND FACULTY TO ENGAGE IN AREAS THAT IMPACT THE PEOPLE WHO EXIST IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

California is one of the most diverse states in the world, with some of the largest Arab populations **KNOWN**. To deny the curriculum study of Arab people is to **DENY** Arabs a place in CA as diaspora. TO **DENY** US, IS TO **SEND A MESSAGE THAT WE ARE NOT WELCOME**. That's **RUDE**.

Beyond that, the topic of **PALESTINE** should remain a crucial topic of engagement in academia. **PALESTINE** and the **PEOPLE** of Palestine have a right in history, especially now more than ever when Israel's **VIOLENT** actions against the people of Palestine are so visual and apparent. **IT IS NOT ANTI-SEMITIC TO LEARN OR RESEARCH PALESTINE OR ITS**

PEOPLE. PALESTINIANS HAVE BEEN AND ARE ENDURING THE VIOLATION OF THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS, IT IS NOT ANTI-SEMITIC TO SAY SO. IT IS A REALITY. IF YOU IGNORE THAT FACT, IT DOESN'T GO AWAY. IT ONLY SERVES TO 1) EMBARRASS THOSE WHO DENY THAT REALITY AND 2) CAUSE FURTHER VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION ON THOSE WHO ARE A PART OF THOSE COMMUNITIES.

To DENY Palestinian rhetoric is to DENY THE EXISTENCE OF REAL PEOPLE/COMMUNITIES. Past AND present.

MY FATHER IS PALESTINIAN. His parents were FORCED out of Palestine in 1948 and ended up in Southern Lebanon. I am a Palestinian. My PEOPLE'S HISTORY MATTERS. **I AM NOT ANTI-SEMITIC.** I oppose Zionism, but I do not hate Jews. I am SIMPLY against the justification of Zionism - which is a direct threat against the human rights of Palestinians.

I demand that revisions that impact Arab American Studies should be made in collaboration with Arab American scholars and Ethnic Studies practitioners.

TURATH - (Teaching Understanding and Representing Arabs Throughout History) is a 2020 report researched and written by teenage members of Arab Youth Organizing (AYO). According to their 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/Muslims at school.

What a SAD notion that as an education board, you will be deciding if this sort of education should remain strictly imported through the internet/television and not enriched, supported, encouraged, through institutions.

SAVE ARAB AMERICAN STUDIES
Nawal Ahmad Zahzah