

From: Logan McGill
Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2020 3:23 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Superintendent; [emails redacted]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Keep the ESMC Intact!!

Dear California's Educational Board for Instructional Quality Commission,

I am writing to you to express the importance of including Arab American Studies and also specifically, the study of Palestine in the ESMC. Due to the unique confluence of Covid-19 and the rise in support for #BlackLivesMatter, we, as a society, have the opportunity to reflect on how education shapes our lives and worldview. With thousands of educational images and endless content related to the struggles marginalized groups face circulating daily, me along with many others have realized massive gaps in our education. Palestine is one of these glaring blind spots. The first time I heard about the struggle of Palestinians was in high school and it was not from a class. I learned about Palestine from two of my best friends whose family had been kicked out of their homes to pave the way for Israeli settlers. Every time they went to school and a student would come back from a "Birthright" trip with a support the IDF shirt, they felt scared, violated, and unsupported. Those two things represented violence and oppression against them and their families. I cannot imagine how it must felt that students at our school were able to travel to historical Palestine with ease. No check-points or being detained. Many who went didn't have family there or any ties to the land, but they could enjoy the privilege of visiting because they were not Palestinian. They were not like my two friends who endured hours and hours of check points and buses and detainment and searches just to go visit their grandparents. Our school did nothing to address my friends grievances, but then again our school took no effort to educate us on the subject. The second time Palestine came up in school was in a class called "Understanding 9/11". We only spoke of it in the context of Munich Massacre.

I am incredibly glad that I took it upon myself to do what my education didn't and I am privileged to have had two friends help me in my learning process. It has helped me be a better friend to them and gain a greater understanding for the impacts of colonialism on indigenous communities. This said, if my classmates and I had all learned about this much earlier, we could've helped ameliorate the pain my friends felt at school every single day. We could've all grown and learned together. Instead, my education put the burden of teaching me on the back of two 15 year old girls who had their own problems to worry about. This should not be the case.

Islamophobia has become mainstream by our president implementing acts like the "Muslim Ban" and the rise of hate crimes rooted in Islamophobia. Our education has the responsibility to provide us with the tools to think critically. We cannot do this without an accurate account of history and especially the histories of marginalized people. Our society is made up of different struggles and we will not move forward at all unless we attempt to understand each other. Our education is our primary way to do this. Martin Luther King Jr. said it best with, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice anywhere".

Best,

Logan McGill