

From: Pathma Venasithamby <pathma@
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2020 1:09 PM
To: Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public comment to Ethnic Studies

Greetings to members of the IQC. Thank you for including Pacific Islanders and Arab Americans.

My name is Pathma Venasithamby, UC Berkeley staff member and member of Jewish Voices for Peace. My comments are towards the attempts to rewrite the Ethnic Studies curriculum Agenda 2.A.

As a person of color and resident of the Oakland, I have concerns about the hostile Supremacist culture that has started from the highest power in the land, and forcing this rewrite of Ethnic Studies.

Their victims of White Supremacy today and yesterday, have been communities of color and Native peoples. Islamophobia is on the rise all across the country.

As Superintendent Thurmond put it very concisely,
"Oppression anywhere is a threat to all of us."

The definition of anti-semitism has been modified to include criticisms of actions of the Israeli government, which has nothing to do with race or racism, and is a violation of our American constitutional values of freedom of speech. We should be free to explore and question the ideologies that have been responsible for the oppression of peoples like the Palestinians.

The purpose of this is to silence a discussion on Israeli actions affecting the human rights of Palestinians and to stifle Palestinian voices. President Carter described the Israeli occupation as an Apartheid system, so using their rules, his statements would also be censored.

Thank you Director Coats for reminding us of John Lewis quote, the one about
"You have to tell the whole truth ..."

If we are to be true liberals, we must take his words seriously. We must be able to call out injustice even when it happens in Israel.

I urge our leaders to deal with this challenge courageously. We support leaders who will not allow these power brokers driving this divisiveness to co-opt and censor certain subjects like Palestine or BDS that they do not want discussed.

My requests, to put it simply are:

1 Please allow the experts on Arab American curriculum, who were the original committee of Arab American scholars and teachers to revise the ESMC.

2 Include Pacific Islander and Arab American studies course outlines in the Arab American studies, and please don't allow censorship of the Palestinian topic, as its central to Arab issues. If we fear to speak the truth on this, we will inculcate a culture of fear.

3 Please don't dilute or convert ESMC to a different field, like multicultural studies, diversity studies, or something else.

Thank you, to all, for listening to my concerns.

Best Regards

Pathma

--

--

Pathma Venasithamby, EECS IDSG