

**From:** Amira Jarmakani

**Sent:** Friday, July 24, 2020 7:51 AM

**To:** Ethnic Studies; Superintendent; [email redacted]

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Arab American studies is a crucial aspect of ethnic studies

Dear members of the IQC,

This past February my daughter came home from school and said, with an incredulous face, "Ma, do you know how they treat some women in other parts of the world? Women in Iran can't even vote!" She went on to describe a series of stereotypes and untruths about the Middle East that had casually been described to her and her classmates in the middle of their 15-minute lesson on social justice. As the author of a book about harmful stereotypes of Arab and Muslim woman in US popular culture, I was horrified, and immediately contacted her teacher to offer to come give a lesson that could correct some of the false information and stereotypes they had been given.

But that's just one class.

Given the state of anti-Muslim bias in the US (exacerbated by the so-called "Muslim ban"), and the way that Arabs are conflated with Muslims in the ongoing war on terror, now more than ever our students need a critical education on the longstanding role of Arab Americans in the US, especially in a state that has the largest population of Arab Americans in the country.

I am thrilled about the CDE's validation of ethnic studies as a crucial component of K-12 education.

Just because "Arab American" as a category didn't hold as much weight during the student strikes for ethnic studies in the 1960s does not mean that Arab Americans were not involved. Agitating to be named through the acronym SWANA (Southwest Asian and North African) in recent decades is just one indication of how Arab Americans have been part of Asian American frameworks and struggles -- just one clear scholarly example is the importance of Edward Said's book "Orientalism" to ethnic studies as a field.

As a Palestinian scholar, Said's commitment to advancing accurate and contextualized knowledge about Palestine and the Arab world were always linked, and they have also been foundational to ethnic studies.

Removing Arab American studies from the ethnic studies curriculum would be a grave mistake a totally antithetical to the foundations of ethnic studies itself.

thanks for your consideration,  
Amira Jarmakani