



August 15, 2019

California Instructional Quality Commission
and State Board of Education

Re: Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum – Support

On behalf of the Black Lives Matter Global Network’s California Chapters, we write to express our support for the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum as submitted and to oppose proposed modifications that would expand the definition of Ethnic Studies beyond its scope, whereby eroding its intent. As you know, Black Studies is, perhaps, the most enduring victory of the Black Power era. As a current iteration of the Black freedom movement, Black Lives Matter understands the deep importance of Ethnic Studies and its four sub-disciplines: African-American/Africana/Black Studies, Asian/Asian-American Studies (including API Studies), Chicanx/Latinx Studies, and Indigenous/Native American Studies, especially in an era of soaring hate crimes, White-supremacist rhetoric, racist policy-making, and White-supremacist violence against racialized “others,” especially Black and Latinx communities.

A Stanford University study demonstrates that in school districts where quality Ethnic Studies curricula are implemented, students experienced a rise in grade-point-average of up to an entire point. A California State University, Los Angeles study affirms that students who enroll in at least one Ethnic Studies course perform better overall, even in seemingly unrelated courses like math and science. Moreover, scholars like Gloria Ladson-Billings assert that Ethnic Studies curricula enable students to develop greater cultural-competency and are much better equipped to engage diverse communities.

The passage of AB 2016 indicates that the California Legislature sees Ethnic Studies as a worthwhile investment for the students of the state. As such, the integrity of Ethnic Studies must be protected. The Model Curriculum, as submitted, protects the integrity of Ethnic Studies and engages the field in a manner that fosters a greater understanding and embrace of groups that have been historically oppressed by race in the Americas. The proposed curriculum further engages the intersectionality of each group, without collapsing race-based oppression and resistance with other axes, like culture and religion. While the expansion of the definition of Ethnic Studies might appear to advance “tolerance,” it does so at the expense of deepening our commitment to the communities that have been most marginalized by race. Ethnic Studies is not the same as “multicultural studies,” “diversity studies,” or even “American Studies.” The thrust of Ethnic Studies focuses on the particular (and intersectional) experiences of the four historically oppressed racialized groups. We offer our strong support of the current model curriculum and encourage the Commission to accept the definition as presented by virtually every scholar in the field.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Melina Abdullah, Ph.D.
for the Black Lives Matter Global Network, California Chapters