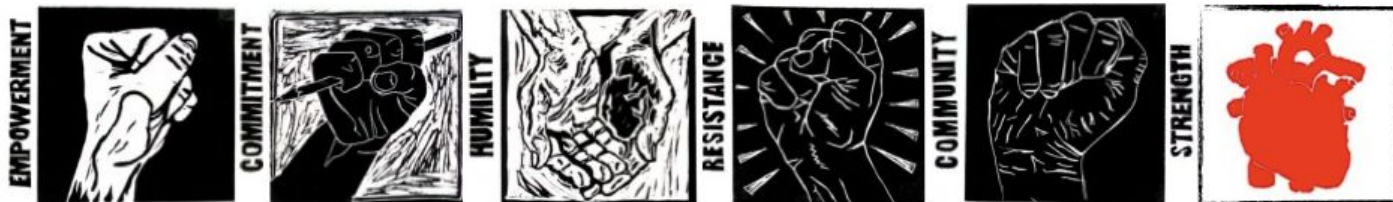


TEACHERS 4 SOCIAL JUSTICE



January 19, 2021

Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent, CA Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: Teachers 4 Social Justice in OPPOSITION to Current Revisions of CA ESMC

Dear Superintendent Thurmond,

Teachers 4 Social Justice opposes the current version of the **CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC)**, which undermines the values, principles and pedagogy of Ethnic Studies. Essential Ethnic Studies terminology, including the definition of race, has been eliminated, incorrectly defined, or moved to the footnotes. The decolonial, anti-racist, and liberatory focus of Ethnic Studies has been buried in an avalanche of vague and contradictory language. Arab American Studies has been moved from its rightful place in Asian American/Pacific Islander Studies to an “interethnic bridge-building appendix.” We share the anger of our Arab siblings that their history and community has been relegated to an appendix. We are also concerned that the Ethnic Studies educators who wrote the original ESMC have been sidelined, while politicians and powerful lobbyists have wielded the most influence in what revisions get made. The sidelining of the original committee echoes an all-too-familiar experience amongst Black, Indigenous and People of Color of having our expertise denied.

As an organization that serves the needs of our communities, Ethnic Studies is foundational to our work as educators. Teachers 4 Social Justice is a grassroots group of educators organizing for social justice and the transformation of learning spaces to realize education for liberation. We are teachers, counselors, community-based educators, parents, professors, and more, organizing inside and outside of our schools and workplaces to transform systems from the bottom up. We believe children are the foundation of our future and that teachers, parents, guardians, and communities are crucial to a child’s growth and development. We have been organizing for over 20 years and have engaged tens of thousands of educators in professional development through our annual, national conference, regularly held study groups, workshops, policy and advocacy work.

The legacy of Ethnic Studies is deeply intertwined with our work. Part of our vision is to actualize schools as an extension of the community, reflecting the different histories, issues, and forms of resistance of our diverse peoples. We want schools to support the efforts of Arab

people to develop a critical understanding of their power and role in affecting meaningful change at the local, national, and global levels. Arab students in California should have access to a curriculum that includes their history and stories.

We are echoing and uplifting the demands of the Save Arab American Studies Coalition, and taking the lead from Ethnic Studies educators:

- Re-empower experts in the field of Ethnic Studies to decide on revisions to the ESMC that align with the principles, values, and pedagogy of Ethnic Studies.
- Put Arab American Studies—including Palestine—back where it belongs, within the Asian American Studies section of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.
- Approve an ESMC that is anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory—that centers the voices and experiences of communities of color and their struggles for liberation.

We call on the CA Department of Education to take immediate action to protect the integrity of Ethnic Studies. We want a curriculum that meets the needs of our youth and carries on the spirit of the original 1968 Third World Liberation Front and Black Student Union strikes that led to Ethnic Studies as a discipline. It is not too late to be with us on the right side of history and support an ESMC that will educate, protect, and inspire all our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Teachers 4 Social Justice