

March 12, 2021

Dear California State Board of Education,

We are at a critical moment with regard to the recent changes being proposed to California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. It is up for vote at the California Department Education State Board on March 17-19, 2021. The new proposed changes to curriculum will be voted on at that meeting. As the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum original advisory community and writers, we urge the State Board of Education not to move forward with this curriculum until critical issues are addressed.

The changes in the previous drafts were already problematic but after reviewing the latest proposed revisions, there are four glaring areas that undermine the origin, purpose and practice of Ethnic Studies:

- 1. The delegitimization of Ethnic Studies scholars and the discipline of Ethnic Studies.**
  - The language in the proposed revisions creates a unnecessary wedge between Ethnic Studies in Higher Education and K-12 and makes sweeping generalizations about faculty in Ethnic Studies
- 2. The elevation and privileging of opinions outside of the field.**
  - Non-educators and individuals with no Ethnic Studies background are defining who should be and what should be included in the field
  - The proposed revisions privileges terms like “multiple perspectives”, “diversity”, “all students” and “broad range of groups” undermining the primary focus on the BIPOC communities that compose over 80 percent of California's student population.
  - Lack of analysis and critique of racism and other systems of oppression which is the central purpose of Ethnic Studies and without it, the curriculum is not Ethnic Studies.
  - For example, even in the African American lesson on the Black Lives Matter movement, which is a direct response white supremacy fails to call out and analyze racism and systemic oppression.
- 3. Inequitable representation of each of the four groups.**
  - For example Chicana/o/xs-Latinx/o/a represent the largest population in California but the number of lessons focused on Chicana/x/o/Latina/x/o is significantly underrepresented in relation to other groups in the curriculum.
- 4. Egregious errors in revising key sections of each of the disciplines.**
  - For example, there is a proposed revision statement in the curriculum that includes Jewish American Studies under the AAPI umbrella. This is grossly inaccurate, and has no institutional history. We are concerned that this addition is based on pressure from pro-apartheid Israel interest groups given the attempts to erase Palestine and Arab American Studies from the ESMC. Since 2018, we have been fighting to have Arab American Studies to be included in the model curriculum protected under the Asian American and Pacific Islander umbrella. Despite statements from Asian American scholars, Ethnic Studies scholars, Pacific Islander scholars, and the dozens of community organizations that makeup the statewide Save Arab American Studies

Coalition, the California Department of Education refuses to include Arab American Studies, developed by Arab American scholars, as part of the main curriculum

- For example, The artistic work of Mexican muralists: Rivera, Siqueiros and Orozco is referred to as Chicano muralism and, not a single Chicano/a muralist is listed. Among the four Latinx/a/o historical figures identified in this section, there is not a single Central American.

In drafting our original request to remove our names from the document **Letter from the whole advisory community and writers of the curriculum**, we said,

Ethnic Studies guiding principles, knowledge, frameworks, pedagogies, and community histories have been compromised due to political and media pressure. Our association with the final document is conflicting because it does not reflect the Ethnic Studies curriculum that we believe California students deserve and need.

This draft has continued to disconnect the model curriculum from Ethnic Studies. You can not consistently whittle away at Ethnic Studies and continue to call it, Ethnic Studies.

**We urge** the SBE not to give in to the pressures and influences of political lobbyists, racist & privileged white voices, and individuals and organizations appropriating “Ethnic Studies.” Reject and say no to this, and the previous version of the ESMC. We must get this right, California’s students depend on it.

Sincerely,

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