SUBJECT: RETHINKING AND ADVOCATING FOR ETHNIC STUDIES AS AMERICAN STUDIES

Dear educators, legislators, and stakeholders in education,

I urgently ask that you critically rethink, develop, and expand Ethnic Studies within American Studies in our K-12 schools. Ethnic Studies, as defined by Alice Tsui, is the interdisciplinary learning of history, race, and identity that centers the perspectives of racially marginalized groups in American society. Each individual and school defines Ethnic Studies differently. American history courses do not always include Ethnic Studies, even though Ethnic Studies is inherently American Studies.

According to the National Education Association, only California, Connecticut, Indiana, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia, have K-12 Ethnic Studies laws or policies as of January 2021. The Ethnic Studies laws and policies themselves vary significantly by location and in everyday practice in schools.

Ethnic Studies, in its current form, can include (but is not always inclusive of or limited to) Black, Latinx, Asian, and/or Indigenous Studies. Currently, a single class focusing on only one ethnic group's history is often what substantiates "Ethnic Studies" in a school. However, teaching and learning about only one ethnic group's history is insufficient.

To start, educators can listen to and read the work of culture holders, and learn the accurate, specific histories representative of their students and school community. Educators can then begin being culturally responsive and sustaining by teaching ethnic studies in an expansive, non-monolithic way that centers the joy, individual lives, and arts within each ethnic group.

Educators must also center each ethnic group's members taught in the classroom in an uplifting way that does not begin at a moment of historical trauma. Teaching Black History cannot begin at slavery. Teaching Asian American History cannot begin at the Chinese Exclusion Act. A trauma-informed approach to teaching must be utilized in teaching all ethnic studies.

In addition to advocating for the individual histories of each ethnic group identified in our local communities, we can demand more inclusive ethnic studies to understand and celebrate all marginalized voices and histories. The existence of an ethnic studies course focusing solely on one ethnic group's history is simply not enough to be actively anti-racist and dismantle white supremacy.

We can rethink ethnic studies as a way of understanding multiple histories, races, and identities occurring simultaneously as they intersect and diverge. We must decolonize American Studies

and abolish the current, common practice of teaching history as a linear timeline of events that prioritizes whiteness.

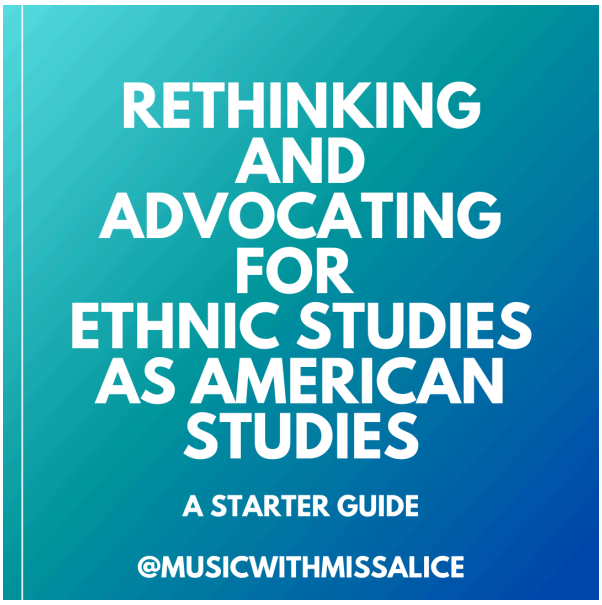
In rethinking Ethnic Studies as American Studies, educators can:

- Create brave spaces for student-led discussions on race and racism within ethnic studies
- Highlight cross-racial coalitions and solidarities between communities of color in history and present day
- Use critical race theory with actively anti-racist practices in teaching
- Empower students to better understand their individual identities and collective histories

It is imperative that through this ongoing work in anti-racist education, we collectively lift student voices through joy.

I, along with my community, urgently await your response and action through the work of Ethnic Studies as American Studies.

Instagram post @musicwithmissalice: https://www.instagram.com/p/COofVE2MLdP/



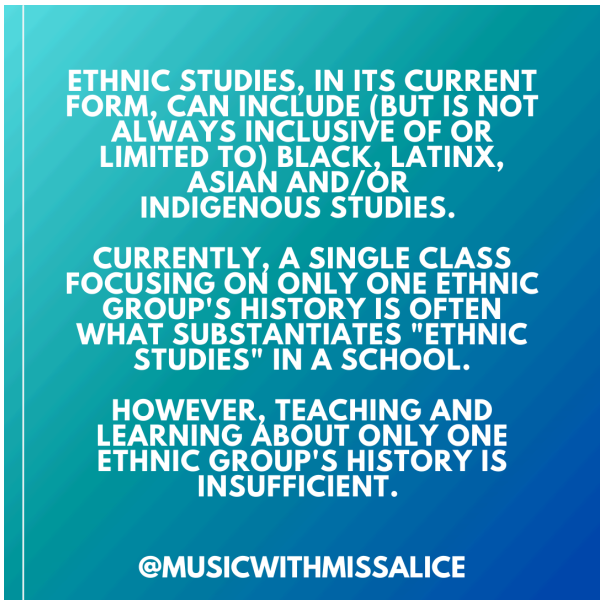
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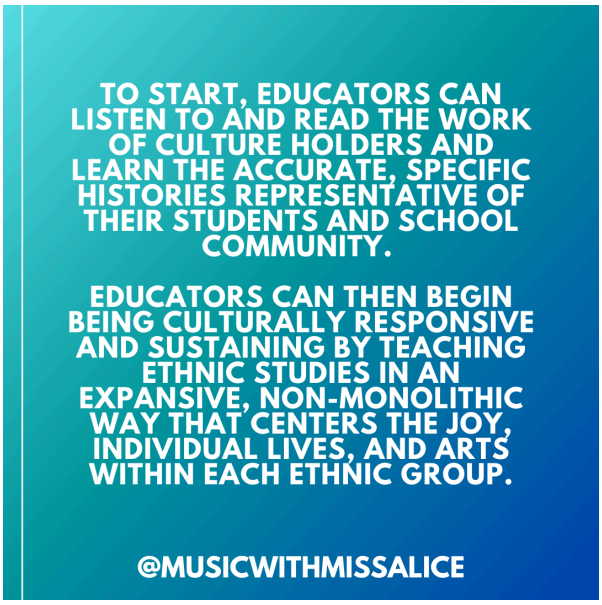
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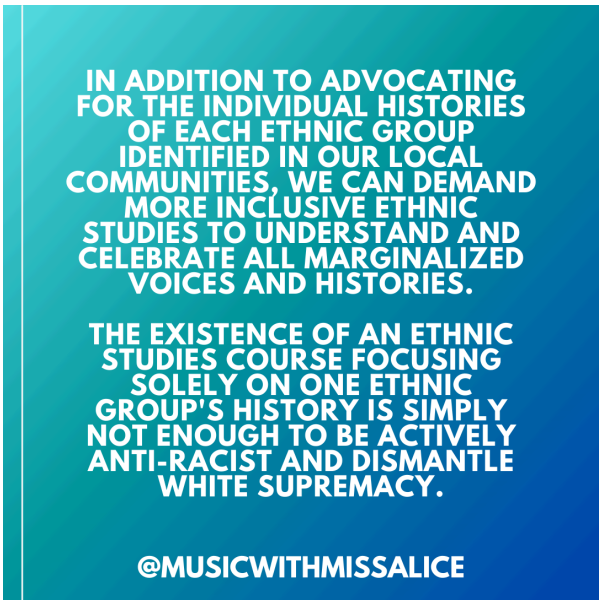
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