

To Ethnic Studies Educators,

The current war between the government of Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip region has led to heartbreaking tragedy, with numerous casualties and injuries. As an Ethnic Studies program whose staff, students, and families have ties to both Israel and Palestine, our thoughts go out to all whom these recent events have directly impacted and we hope for a just and lasting peace that can be reached and maintained. We know these events may very well come up in your classes and you may be in need of support or guidance for how to deal with them.

We strongly disagree with any perceived instructional guidance to teachers, which you may or may not have received, instructing “sites and individual classes not engage in whole class discussions about the Middle East conflict...because teachers may get themselves into situations that they are not equipped to manage.” Ethnic Studies was birthed through a struggle for humanizing education that places an emphasis on teaching through lived experiences, realities, current events, and the political forces shaping our times. As such, Ethnic Studies educators should not feel cowed from holding space for discussions about the dehumanizing forces of colonization, war, and terrorism, and about seeking peace by honoring perspectives of those most vulnerable in such conditions.

As Giroux and many others theorize about, [“all education is a struggle over what kind of future we want for young people.”](#) Please know that we will always defend your right to teach about the events and issues affecting our students and families, in ways that promote our core values of building knowledge and love of self, solidarity in shared struggle for those most structurally vulnerable, and agency that recognizes the power of young people to move our society towards justice and equity. Of course, these discussions must unfold in developmentally appropriate ways and with appropriate humility and reflectivity, aware of our own beliefs and limitations in our historical or political knowledge. Ethnic Studies is as much about asking questions as providing answers.

The ongoing conflict and worsening humanitarian crisis beg very important questions:

1. What are the proximate and root causes of war? And how has the decades long conflict between Israel and Palestine taken shape over time to this current conflagration?
2. How do we teach toward ensuring the safety and security of all people, especially those most structurally vulnerable?
3. How do we educate in hopes of a truly just and lasting peace in Israel-Palestine?
4. How do we seek out and elevate the voices of those in the region who have been working for peace and intercultural understanding despite the oppositional positions of governing bodies?

Like all of us, students want and need healthy spaces to process what they are seeing, feeling and hearing, often in community. Classrooms can be engaging places to help youth unpack current events, provided educators take great care to cultivate humanizing spaces.

To this end, we invite Ethnic Studies educators to consider the resources below to help navigate difficult conversations about this conflict and *decide whether any of these resources would be appropriate for their classrooms and school communities*. The resource list is not meant to be exhaustive or complete but rather an offering to help teachers and students understand historical context, process current events, and use media literacy skills to analyze news coverage and social media responses.

TEACHING RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

As with all difficult and/or controversial topics, we as Ethnic Studies educators know to:

- Attune ourselves to the emotional impact these events have on students
- Pay close attention to students who are Palestinian or Israeli, Jewish or Muslim, those who may have family members in the region, and/or students who may be worried about how this crisis could impact them here in the United States. Check in with them with a concern for their wellness.
- Never single students out to speak about or explain related topics

[Teach Mideast.org](#): An aggregate of resources from background information to classroom activities that include multiple perspectives

[The Day After](#): Discourse guide for controversial and difficult topics

[Crucial Points: Talking Politics in Education, Tips for Educators and Everyone Else](#) This resource is primarily for best practices in having workplace conversations with peers around politically sensitive issues

[Arab American Heritage Month Resource Guide](#): There are many useful resources here about unpacking myths, stereotypes, and much more.

[Challenging Anti-semitism from a framework of collective liberation](#): PARCEO and Haymarket discussion on challenging antisemitism together with all forms of injustice.

<https://www.challengeislamophobia.org>: Offers lesson plans and resources to assist educators and student rethink Islamophobia

[Antisemitismcurriculum.org](https://www.antisemitismcurriculum.org): This new curriculum was created by PARCEO, together with educators, scholars, and activists. The need for educational resources on antisemitism within a pedagogic framework of collective liberation is particularly important for this moment—as rising white nationalist violence targets many of our communities, including Jews, Muslims, Black people, immigrant communities, trans and queer people, among others, and as false charges of antisemitism are directed at seekers of Palestinian justice.

[Making a Difference in the Midst of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | Wide Angle: Lesson Plan](#): This high-school-level lesson plan from PBS explores the history and complexity of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through videos, websites, and interactive activities that provide more insight into the conflict.

[What Is U.S. Policy on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?](#): This guide from the Council on Foreign Relations provides background information behind the conflict and explains what the United States has done to negotiate a resolution to the conflict.

[How do I talk to my kids about violence in the news?](#) and [Explaining the News to Our Kids](#): These two guides from Common Sense Media, a nonprofit that examines the impact of technology on children, provide age-appropriate tips on how to talk to kids about what’s happening in the news, especially when it involves violence.

[How to talk to your children about conflict and war](#): This guide from UNICEF provides 8 tips on how to support and comfort children when war dominates headlines.

[Handle With Care: Supporting Young People During Crises](#): Learning for Justice, a social justice and activism program for schools, provides ideas to support “meaningful” discussions about emotionally charged topics, such as the Hamas attack on Israel, with young people and potential follow-up steps and responses.

[Fostering Civil Discourse: How Do We Talk About Issues That Matter?](#): This guide from nonprofit Facing History and Ourselves gives educators ideas for how to prepare students to engage in reflective conversations on controversial topics.

[Teaching Controversial Issues: A Framework for Reflective Practice](#): This guide from Judy Pace, a teacher educator at the University of San Francisco, provides a research-based framework for teaching controversial issues.

[In brief: Misinformation](#): This infographic from the News Literacy Project provides an overview of the pervasive use of misinformation and how people can be more critical readers of news and other information.

We'll be holding a space for healing and reflection, specifically for Ethnic Studies teachers, on Wednesday, October 18, 2023 from 4:00-5:00pm

Thurgood Marshall Academic High School, Room 207
45 Conkling Street,
San Francisco, California 94124

Parking is available behind the school. Enter on Waterville.

In community,

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