

A Resolution in Support of the Creation of a Southwest Asian and North African Checkbox on the University of California Application

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WHEREAS, The current University of California application provides applicants the opportunity to select the ethnicity that best describes their ethnic background; and,

WHEREAS, The racial and ethnic groups represented on the application conform to the racial and ethnic groups represented on the United States Census; and,

WHEREAS, Federal data collected on race and ethnicity is needed to “monitor equal access in housing, education, employment, and other areas, for populations that historically had experienced discrimination and differential treatment because of their race or ethnicity;”¹

WHEREAS, These standards are also implemented on “household surveys, on administrative forms (e.g., school registration and mortgage lending applications), and in medical and other research;”² and,

WHEREAS, According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the ethnic categories on federal data of race and ethnicity “represent a social-political construct designed for collecting data on the race and ethnicity of broad population groups in this country, and are not anthropologically or scientifically based;”³ and,

WHEREAS, The classification of “Middle Easterners” as Caucasian on a federal level was cemented in 1977 by the OMB when the government standardized the use of racial and ethnic categories and recognized four racial groups: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, and White;⁴ and,

WHEREAS, Though numerous Caucasian peoples exist, for example Georgians, Armenians, and Circassians, the idea of a “Caucasian” race is a social and political construct intertwined with politics of power, that has been used to define a community – specifically persons of European descent– as distinct from peoples of African and Asian descent;⁵ and,

WHEREAS, The classification of North Africans, Middle Easterners, and at times South Asians, as “Caucasian,” is a manifestation of the historic racialization of minority groups within the United States and the exclusion of persons of Middle Eastern descent from this discourse; and

¹ Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. "Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity." *Federal Register* Notice (1997). <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_1997standards/>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Baum, Bruce David. *The Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race: A Political History of Racial Identity*. New York: New York UP, 2006.

⁵ Ibid.

WHEREAS, Racialized identities are a social construct that affect institutional access to education, training, employment, wealth, and social capital;⁶ and,

WHEREAS, In 1997, due to increased criticism of the effectiveness of the census in terms of reflecting the increased diversity of the United States, the OMB accepted the following recommendations of the Interagency Committee for the Review of the Racial and Ethnic Standards for revisions to the standards for the classification of federal data on race and ethnicity:

- (1) The separation of the Asian or Pacific Islander category into “Asian” and “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander,” and
- (2) Changing the term “Hispanic” to “Hispanic or Latino;”⁷ and,

WHEREAS, In 1997 the OMB accepted certain recommendations of the Interagency Committee for the Review of the Racial and Ethnic Standards, while rejecting a number of requests to add an ethnic category for Arabs/Middle Easterners due to a lack of agreement on a definition for the category;⁸ and,

WHEREAS, Arguments against the creation of an “Arab/Middle Eastern” category include the belief that persons of Arab or Middle Eastern descent would unfairly benefit from programs aimed at the socially and economically disadvantaged, and that the lack of consensus on what geographically constitutes the “Middle East” makes it impossible to create such a category at this time;⁹ and,

WHEREAS, In a review conducted between 1993 and 1997 in collaboration with the Interagency Committee, multiple principles to govern the review process of federal data on race and ethnicity were established, including that “Any changes in the categories should be based on sound methodological research and should include evaluations of the impact of any changes not only on the usefulness of the resulting data but also on the comparability of any new categories with the existing ones;” and,

WHEREAS, The OMB did recognize that further research should be done to determine the best way to improve data collection on the Middle Eastern population;¹⁰ and,

WHEREAS, Accurate research, evaluation, and analysis on a population and the “usefulness” of such data without the existence of a pre-existing category to record such research is impossible, because the number of those who check “Caucasian,” “Asian or

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. "Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity." *Federal Register* Notice (1997). <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_1997standards/>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Office of Management and Budget. "Review of the Racial and Ethnic Standards to the OMB Concerning Changes..." *Federal Register, Part II* (1997). Pages 36873-36946. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_directive_15/#chap5>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Pacific Islander” or “African” in lieu of writing in their specific ethnicity in an “Other” category is unknown;¹¹ and,

WHEREAS, Persons who select “White/Caucasian” and specify that they are “Middle Eastern” or “Arab,” etc. are still recorded by the U.S. Census as “White;” and

WHEREAS, Advocacy on a national and federal level in response to the decision to exclude “Arab/Middle Eastern” from the Census can be seen in the work of community organizations such as the Arab Resource and Organizing Center (AROC) and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), which have organized campaigns to educate Arab Americans about the importance of the Census and in mobilizing the community to actively participate;¹² and,

WHEREAS, In 2010 the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) became a member of the 2010 Census Advisory Committee and thus serves as a link between the Bureau of the Census and a key stakeholder communities (responsible for advising and assisting the Bureau), and additionally ensures that “the Bureau exercises proper oversight in protecting the security and privacy of data on Arab Americans;”¹³ and,

WHEREAS, Because of the lack of representation in the United States, the Middle Eastern community has formed into an “invisible” minority, or a minority group that faces issues similar to other minority groups (such as a lack of access to resources and low socio-economic status) but does not receive recognition as such; and,

WHEREAS, Due to this status as an “invisible minority,” the Middle Eastern community is often excluded from programs centered on diversity and multicultural communities on a national and institutional level; and,

WHEREAS, These issues that are present on a national level are also manifested on a University level due to the current methods most University’s have for collecting data on the ethnicity and race of their applicants, including the University of California; and,

WHEREAS, Similar to the federal categories of race and ethnicity, the current University of California application provides the following ethnic categories: “*African American/Black*,” “*American Indian/Alaskan Native*,” “*Asian/Asian American*,” “*Hispanic/Latino*,” “*Pacific Islander*,” and “*White/Caucasian*;” and,

¹¹ Office of Management and Budget. "Review of the Racial and Ethnic Standards to the OMB Concerning Changes..." *Federal Register, Part II* (1997). Pages 36873-36946. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_directive_15/#chap5>.

¹² "ADC Named as Member of the 2010 Census Advisory Committee." *American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee*. Web. <<http://www.adc.org/media/press-releases/2005/august-2005/adc-named-as-member-of-the-2010-census-advisory-committee/>>.

¹³ Ibid.

WHEREAS, The “*White/Caucasian*” category includes the following subcategories: “*European/European descent*,” “*Middle Eastern/Middle Eastern descent*,” “*North African*,” and “*Other White/Caucasian*,” and,

WHEREAS, Ethnic data is not considered in the UC admissions process and applicants can select more than one ethnicity; and,

WHEREAS, Ethnic data from the UC application has many uses for community and campus organizations, including the evaluation of acceptance, admittance, retention, and graduation rates; and,

WHEREAS, Recruitment and retention efforts on individual campuses benefit greatly from the data collected from the UC application and utilize the data to measure outreach efforts to specific under-represented communities; and,

WHEREAS, In 2006, the “Count Me In” Campaign led by the Asian Pacific American Coalition was successful in changing the University of California application to better reflect the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities by creating 23 Asian American and Pacific Islander categories and reporting Pacific Islanders separate from Asian Americans;¹⁴ and,

WHEREAS, Motivations behind the “Count Me In” Campaign included highlighting the discrepancies between different Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in terms of access to education and admittance to the UC system; and,

WHEREAS, The Middle Eastern American community faces a similar issue of discrepancies between certain more privileged communities and less privileged communities under the broader identity of “Middle Eastern;” and,

WHEREAS, The term “Middle Eastern” is too broad to accurately document these discrepancies; and,

WHEREAS, The lack of data collection and consequently the lack of information on the number of students of various ethnicities that would fall under the umbrella of “Middle Eastern” prevents effective advocacy and functioning of program areas directed towards studies related to the Middle East and the Middle Eastern American community, recruitment of faculty members of Middle Eastern descent, and development of various other educational resources essential to the Middle Eastern student population; and,

WHEREAS, In order to solve these institutionalized issues of advocacy and representation on a UC-wide level, it is essential to separate the “Middle Eastern” and “North African” categories from the “White/Caucasian” category in order to create a new category that will allow for further disaggregation to create more specific subcategories that reflect the diversity of the Middle Eastern community; and,

¹⁴ Vázquez, Ricardo. "Asian American, Pacific Islander Data Collection Launches" *University of California*. University of California, 16 Nov. 2007. Web.
<<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/16826>>.

WHEREAS, Because the term “Middle Eastern” is problematic due to the colonial and Orientalist origins of the term, a more appropriate name for this new category is “Southwest Asian and North African” (SWANA) because it is based on the geographic boundaries of the region; and,

WHEREAS, The proposed SWANA category and its respective subcategories are as follows:

South West Asian/ North African

- Algerian
- Afghan
- Armenian
- Assyrian/Chaldean
- Azerbaijani
- Bahraini
- Berber
- Circassian
- Djiboutian
- Egyptian
- Emirati
- Georgian
- Iranian
- Iraqi
- Israeli
- Jordanian
- Kurdish
- Kuwaiti
- Lebanese
- Libyan
- Mauritanian
- Moroccan
- Omani
- Palestinian
- Qatari
- Saudi Arabian
- Somali
- Sudanese
- Syrian
- Tunisian
- Turkish
- Yemeni
- Other, North African
- Other, Southwest Asian

and,

WHEREAS, Just like federal standards of ethnic and racial data collection, these subcategories are socio-political and are not anthropologically or scientifically based; and,

WHEREAS, The inclusion of ethno-religious group is in an attempt to recognize the distinct ethnic and cultural roots of such groups; and,

WHEREAS, The proposed category and its subcategories are the product of numerous community discussions and development among UC students of Southwest Asian and North African descent across the UC system; and,

WHEREAS, The proposed subcategories are subject to change based on the needs of the UC community and discussions on a UC-wide level between the SWANA Campaign Committee, students, faculty, and administration;

WHEREAS, The creation of a SWANA category on the UC application will have wider implications in terms of general issues of representation of the Middle Eastern community and the erroneous assertion that persons of Middle Eastern descent are “Caucasian” and therefore do not constitute as an ethnic minority facing issues stereotypical of many minority communities; and,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the UCLA Undergraduate Students Association Council recognizes the important positive effects the creation of a Southwest Asian/North African category on the UC application will have on UC students of North African or Southwest Asian descent. These positive effects include increased advocacy and information necessary to create recruitment and retention centers geared towards this community; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the UCLA Undergraduate Students Association Council supports the creation of a Southwest Asian/North African category with the proposed subcategories on the ethnicity portion of the UC application; and

THEREFORE LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED, That the UCLA Undergraduate Students Association Council recognize Southwest Asian and North African communities as multicultural and ethnic communities on all applications, scholarships, or programs.