

29 July 2020

Regarding: State of California Ethnic Studies model curriculum

Dear California Department of Education,

I am writing to add my voice to those who are urging you to be inclusive of Americans of West Asian descent as part of the larger category of Asian Americans. Additionally, I request that Armenian Americans be included as one of the peoples of West Asian descent.

As a scholar in the field of Armenian American studies, I have published work on Armenian Americans and racialization, especially in the context of the Asian exclusion era. I have also witnessed the geographic, racial, and religious misidentification of Armenian Americans on numerous occasions. Such misidentifications impede knowledge acquisition and skew people's understanding, while also harming Armenian Americans. We are a people with a long history of victimization and erasure, and to be misidentified or omitted adds to our experience of invisibility in the U.S.

As a college educator, I work with a racially diverse population of students, and I can attest to the fact that when students see their experience represented in curricula and course materials, they are more invested in learning, and ultimately they become engaged citizens of our democracy. My anecdotal experience is confirmed by sociological and psychological research documenting the positive effects of seeing "people like oneself" in history texts and other sites in the public sphere.

It is exciting to see the state of California creating this important model curriculum, and I very much hope to see that the way West Asians (including Armenians) are represented in it will reflect a commitment to honor our peoples by including us and identifying us accurately.

Sincerely yours,

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