

From: Tom Panas

Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 10:29 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: APISBMA.

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Japanese Americans must be included in the ESMC - [APISBMA] Inclusive AAPI Unit

Dear California Department of Education Instructional Quality Commission,

I was born in 1951 and I am a lifelong resident of California. My name is Tom Panas and I am a trustee of the West Contra Costa Unified School District. I went through fifty years of my life completely ignorant of the enormous economic and cultural impact that Asian Immigrant families and communities have had on our state. As such, at this moment when we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get the story right, I am shocked by our failure to properly include the story of the Japanese and other Asian communities in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

I personally went from being completely ignorant about twenty years ago to being, today, a renowned expert on the Japanese presence in West Contra Costa County. I personally wrote the applications that qualified for the federal and state registers significant Japanese and Chinese heritage structures in West Contra Costa County. Yet I remain intellectually poorer because it took me fifty years to even learn that there was a story, much less learn significant parts of the story and the deep impact it has had on all of us. While it's commendable that we are removing our traditional over-dependence on the history and culture of European immigrants from American history, if in the process we leave out the history, contributions, stories, culture, and lives of significant groups of immigrant peoples, it actually makes them more, not less marginalized.

Our Japanese community here in West Contra Costa County had an enormous impact, as it did in so many other parts of California; our state would be a shadow of what it is today without our these immigrant populations. This is self-evident without even mentioning the grossly unjust incarceration of more than 100,000 Japanese during World War II in, as President Roosevelt called them, concentration camps. The historic parallels between that deplorable episode in American history and what we see happening in America and other parts of the world today are stunning; to deliberately omit this from the proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum is flabbergastingly the poor judgment.

I fully support the Asian Pacific Islander School Board Members Association (APISBMA) position that the following revisions be made to the third draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) to be presented to the Instructional Quality Commission in November 2020:

1. Restore lesson plans on Cambodian Americans and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (as a pan-ethnic group) that were present in the July 2019 draft, specifically curricula on:
 - Myths and Realities Surrounding the Asian Pacific Islander American Community
 - Cambodian Americans
 - Deportation Breaking Families Apart

2. At minimum, include additional lesson plans for Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Vietnamese Americans, and Asian Indian Americans. These ethnic groups represent some of the largest Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) ethnic groups according to 2010 Census data.

The "Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies" unit must offer the foundational overview of the AAPI pan-ethnic identity, include the full spectrum of the AAPI community, and align with the expansive CDE vision imagined in Chapter 3.

I urge you to protect and improve the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and reach out to AAPI community stakeholders to review lesson content for authenticity and prior to submission to the Instructional Quality Commission in November.

Sincerely,

Tom Panas, Trustee
West Contra Costa Unified School District