

Dear IQC,

We are scholars with a specific specialty in Armenian-American Studies, which differs dramatically from Area Studies on Armenia, Middle East Studies, and International Relations. We are scholars who are building research on the racialization of the Armenian-American diaspora and are part of the next generation of timely and urgent scholarship on the racialization of West Asian communities: including but not limited to, Arabs, Iranians, Armenians, Copts, Kurds, Mizrahi Jews, Assyrians, and Yazidis. We know how to write on these communities in the United States. Our field is on the cusp of critical foundational work within Ethnic Studies departments around the country. We know the issues around description, categorization, and inclusivity and write about these as historians.

We write to you today to express our concern that these communities are not in the main text of the proposed CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and the urgent need to edit the Armenian-American section of the appendix document. We are scholars who do this work on a daily basis, specifically with an expertise in *Armenian-American* Studies, and we ask that scholars who do this work be brought into the process.

We want to draw attention to some of the language that is of concern at this time:

“The Hamidian massacres, the Armenian genocide during World War I, the escape from Soviet rule of Armenia, and other conflicts launched multiple waves of immigration to the United States”

-- This leaves out vital communities who have been displaced from the region as a result of events like the Lebanese civil war, Syrian conflict, the Iranian Revolution etc. and instead makes a gap that invisibilizes Armenians or presents them inaccurately.

“Someone who migrated from communist Armenia may have a very different mindset than someone whose family has lived in the United States for a century.”

--The United States has a long history of red-scare tactics that have been specifically used against Armenian-Americans, especially those immigrating from Soviet Armenia. This categorization is ahistorical and attempts to paint a picture that further marginalizes the Armenian-American community.

“Armenian Activism with Darfur” as the example of Armenian organizing

-While Armenian activism around Darfur was an important moment of cross-community building and solidarity, this as representative of Armenian-American activism is incomplete, especially erasing the long history of Armenian-American advocacy on different issues including Ethnic Studies and social justice in the US itself. This is part of the perpetual foreigner narrative that Armenian-American Studies fights against specifically.

We have additional areas of concern, and that is why we ask that you bring in scholars specific to this field.

We reiterate that West Asian communities must be part of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. Our children are growing up under violent Orientalism, displacement, racism, and structural invisibility, in part because of the lack of public education in the United States built on knowledge of these communities. This is a question beyond representation, and one of righting deep historical, structural inequity.

We are part of the emerging generation of scholars publishing and teaching on West Asian American racial experience in the United States. Our efforts along with scholars in Arab American, Iranian-American, Kurdish-American Studies, among others, are helping to push a national conversation. California must be at the forefront of that conversation.

Thank you for your time and your continued commitment to our young people across California.

Sincerely,

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Thomas Dolan, PhD Candidate, George Washington University, Department of American Studies, speciality in Armenian-American Studies

Suzie Abajian, Ph.D., South Pasadena Unified School District Governing Board Member, Armenian School Board Association Member, CSBA Delegate Assembly Member.