

Sept 29, 2020

Sent via email: ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov

From: Shereen@hinduamerican.org

Re: Hindu American Foundation Comments on ESMC

Dear Members of Instructional Quality Commission:

My name is Shereen Bhalla, PhD and I am the Director of Education at the Hindu American Foundation. The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) is an educational and advocacy organization established in 2003. HAF focuses on educating the public about Hindus and Hinduism and advocating for policies and practices that ensure the well-being of all people and the planet.

We have thoroughly reviewed the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) proposed for the 2021-2022 academic year. While we understand and appreciate that not all ethnic groups will be represented, we do ask that the Commission please examine spaces where inclusion of the Hindu American population can happen.

The Hindu American community, estimated at 3.2 million, represents diverse ethnic backgrounds, including but not limited to individuals of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Malaysian, Indonesian, Afghani, Nepali, Bhutanese, Sri Lankan, Fijian, Caribbean, African, and European descent. The majority of Hindus, however, are of Indian ethnic origin and are primarily an immigrant community. It was only after the lifting of the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924 in 1943, and the abolishment of quotas for immigrants based on national origin in 1965, that Indians and Hindus from other countries came to the United States in large numbers. Many Hindus have come to the U.S. as students or in search of better economic opportunities, while others have arrived in this country after facing religious persecution in their country of origin, such as Afghanistan and Bhutan. In the last few years, for example, approximately 90,000 Bhutanese (primarily Hindus) have been resettled across the country after being forcibly evicted from Bhutan in the 1990s and living in refugee camps in Nepal for nearly 20 years.

We are asking that all Asian American groups are adequately and fairly represented in this course outline. Many of the sample lessons are centered around particular groups (Hmong, Japanese, Chinese) and it is important to note that there have been significant contributions to the United States and California by many Asian American groups. In particular, the

history of immigration from India is quite rich and well documented, please ensure that all Asian American groups are equally and equitably presented in this section.

To be clear, we support the ESMC effort to fully address the historic and present-day experience of African American, Asian American, Chicano and Latino and Native Americans. This is especially so given the past and ongoing experience of these groups with systemic racism and marginalization, including in mainstream high school curricula. But, fully addressing these issues should not come at the expense of, and by marginalizing, other ethnic groups. As AB 2016 so clearly states, the broader term “ethnicity” (not just race or skin color) should be the criteria used when deciding which groups to feature in the ESMC. A curriculum based on a narrowly focused and politicized approach consciously and erroneously divides Californians into “people of color,” on the one hand, and all other supposedly ethnic and non-ethnic whites, on the other. California legislators envisioned a multi-cultural approach to ethnic studies in which the focus is for students to gain a deeper understanding of American society and its diverse ethnic composition and to develop respect for cultural diversity in our pluralistic society.

Based on a review of the legislative record with the support of counsel, we believe that inclusivity was a vital principle of the legislature’s intention when they passed AB 2016. This was not reflected in the more narrowly focused curriculum, which the CDE released in 2019 and appears ready to bring again with limited and inadequate revisions. As you know, AB 2016 calls for the state’s educational standards to be “guided by core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations” and notes the objective of preparing pupils “with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures.”³

Governor Newsom has outlined a vision of a “California for All” in which inclusiveness is a paramount principle. In that spirit, we are committed to working with you to incorporate the full spectrum of experiences of ethnic communities to ensure that California students receive a comprehensive education about the full ethnic diversity of the State. We would like to express our reservations as to the groups that have not been included and accordingly include a number of comments to help improve the model curriculum below.

With Respect,

Shereen Bhalla, PhD

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
[Enter the Chapter Number here, or just “General” for a comment that applies to the entire document.]	[Enter Your Name] [Enter the agency, organization, or business that you represent, if applicable.]	[Include the page and line number(s) here–Write your comment here]
Appendix A pg.1	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	While recognizing that the term Asian American is a broadly defined term, I would suggest listing the countries that comprise that population that is Asian American for clarity and transparency.
Appendix A pg.8	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	The word Coolie is a slur against low-wage, immigrant laborers. Please use a less culturally loaded word.
Appendix A Pg. 14	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Please define what is meant by “Southern Asiana”
Appendix A pg.72	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Please include Feminism and World Religions by Arvind Sharma and Katherine K. Young - for Readings that analyze the ways that intersectionality impacts the feminist movement by comparing and contrasting waves of feminism and who is represented. Students will develop a plan of action to counter patriarchal norms and gender roles through the creation of a working document that includes strategies for being ally in the current women’s movement
Appendix A pg.73	Shereen Bhalla, PhD	The Srila Roy book New South Asian Feminisms: Paradoxes & Possibilities may be too complex for high school students, we strongly

	Hindu American Foundation	suggest switching it out with We should all be Feminists as it is a more comprehensive reading primer for understanding the feminist movement and calls for proactive and inclusive approaches to challenging situations.
Appendix A pg.80	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	We recommend adding Examining the Impact of Mahatma Gandhi on Social Change Movements as it highlights the work of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers movement. Also, The Dharma of Cezar Chavez explains how Chavez's personal and professional life were shaped by his spirituality and community.
Appendix A pg. 315	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Please include Swami Viveknanda in Unit 3: Asian American Settlement and Exclusion as his visits to California in 1900 greatly influenced the Hindu South Asian Diaspora and led to the Vedanta Society Berkeley.
Appendix A pg. 315	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Please include the following places for possible field trips to conduct ethnographic exploration of the ways Asian American Social Movements have transformed higher education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Dharma Studies at UC Berkeley • Dharma Civilization Foundation at UC Irvine • Vedanta Society of Northern California in San Francisco, CA
Appendix A pg.321	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Please consider adding the California Alien Land Law of 1913, as one of the topics for analytical essays where students will analyze primary documents to write about. The California Alien Land Law of 1913 (also known as the Webb-Haney Act) which prohibited "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning agricultural land or possessing long-term leases over it, but permitted leases lasting up to three years. It affected the Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Korean immigrant farmers in California. This was one of the many documented anti-Asian prejudices and laws that impacted California Asian Americans.
Appendix A pg.322	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Please add the following to the list of movements that are rooted in a central problem that the Asian American community was facing. Students will also be studying the praxis of each of the movements to prepare for

		<p>the Youth Participatory Action Research projects that they will do in their final unit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lala Rajput Rai - UC Berkely - Rai, the founder of the India Home Rule League of America, visited the United States to meet with African Americans and the small Indian community across the country. • The Ghadar Party - which raised awareness for those who were part (as leaders and sponsors) of the relatively new civil rights struggle in the United States.
Appendix B pg.47	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	<p>Please include the Luce-Celler Act of 1946 and the Hart-Celler Act in 1965 as topics listed under a “A Policy in Flux.”</p> <p>President Harry Truman signed the Luce-Celler Act of 1946, which permitted Hindus and others previously excluded from becoming citizens to be naturalized. It also set up a quota of 100 individuals per year to immigrate to the United States from India.</p> <p>Congress passed the Hart-Celler Act in 1965, which scrapped the quota based on national origin, replacing it with a preferences-based system. This set the stage for a significant population of Hindus to immigrate to the United States.</p>
Appendix B Pg. 82	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	<p>The lesson plan references “They were following the tradition of nonviolent protests started by Mahatma Gandhi in India and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the South” and this resource discusses their connection: Examining the Impact of Mahatma Gandhi on Social Change Movements</p>
Appendix B pg. 85	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	<p>We recommend adding Examining the Impact of Mahatma Gandhi on Social Change Movements as it highlights the work of Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta and the United Farm Workers movement.</p>

Appendix B pg.88	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	It is important to note the significant contributions made by the South Asian population to the California Railroads and this resource discusses it in further detail: https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/echoes-of-freedom/chapter3
Appendix B pg.91	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	We suggest adding this resource on the Asian contributions to the California Railroads: https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/echoes-of-freedom/chapter3
Appendix B pg. 111	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Add these items to the Additional Sample Topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examining the Impact of Mahatma Gandhi on Social Change Movements • Luce-Celler Act of 1946 • Hart-Celler Act in 1965 • California Alien Land Law of 1913 • Swami Vivekananda and his impact on Berkeley, California
Appendix B pg. 112	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Please explain what you mean by “Desi American Cultural Production”
Chapter 3 pg.10	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Please include these: To further develop students’ literacy skills, ethnic studies educators should consider including literature or other language arts-based texts into their courses, which also speak to some of the principles of ethnic studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West • Hinduism in America: A Convergence of Worlds • Essential Hinduism • Dharma in America: A Short History of Hindu-Jain Diaspora • The Guru Chronicles

Chapter 3 pg. 20	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Please include Dharmic Studies, Hindu Studies, and South Asian Studies as part of the various fields of academic study that have emerged out of Asian American Studies. These departments will focus on sub-groups that have been marginalized and understudied within the field.
Chapter 3 pg.21	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	Please include the Hindu American experience as one of the topics for further study and examination of their contributions to the U.S. history.
Chapter 3 pg.31	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	We would like to note our concern that an emphasis on Asians as the 'Model Minority' will perpetuate stereotypes about Asians instead of pragmatically examining the challenges and contributions made by Asian Americans.
Chapter 4	Shereen Bhalla, PhD Hindu American Foundation	<p>We ask that you please add these resources to the existing list of student resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hinduism 101 • Hindu Hate Watch • Holi Toolkit • Working Towards Peace: Understanding the Kashmir Conflict • Examining the Impact of Mahatma Gandhi on Social Change Movements • Luce-Celler Act of 1946 • Hart-Celler Act in 1965 • California Alien Land Law of 1913 • Swami Vivekananda and his impact on Berkeley, California • Swami Vivekananda and his legacy of social justice in the United States • The Dharma of Cesar Chavez • American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation How Indian Spirituality Changed the West • Hinduism in America: A Convergence of Worlds

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essential Hinduism• Dharma in America: A Short History of Hindu-Jain Diaspora• The Guru Chronicles• Swami in a Strange Land: How Krishna Came to the West
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