

From: Jaskeet Raika

Sent: Tuesday, March 31, 2020 5:38 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Sikh Inclusion in CA Ethnic Studies Curriculum Model

I am writing today to request the meaningful inclusion of Sikhism in the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum for entry into the public record.

My name is Jaskeet Kaur Raika and I live in Fresno, California. I am currently finishing my last semester at California State University, Fresno as a Business - Computer Information Systems major.

Though my major field of study is not within the ethnic studies department, I have always had a passion to learn about the histories, traditions, and migration of different cultures. I was able to pursue that curiosity through women's studies and Asian American studies courses/presentations on campus. It is because of my experience in those courses, combined with my experience in public, private and charter schools before college, where I can say-with certainty- that there has been a complete lack of Sikh representation in my education. I have read/seen the work "Sikh" in a classroom twice in all my 17 years as a student, and in neither instance had it been carried beyond a sentence. California is home to one of the largest populations of Sikhs outside of Punjab, India, and the institution of Fresno State has a very large Sikh presence in all fields of study. It is unfortunate that Sikh Americans do not have the same option to learn about our history at an elementary, high school or collegiate level. It is equally unfortunate that students on campus complete ethnic studies without ever learning about Sikh History - especially in spaces where we are large in numbers.

I am extremely disappointed that the Sikh community, which has been an integral part of California's history and economy since the early 1900's, is not represented in a meaningful way in the Ethnic Studie Model Curriculum draft.

There are approximately 250,000 Sikh in California. A report by the Sikh Coalition found that turbaned Sikhs are bullied at a rate double the national average. I wish to reiterate that the inclusion of Sikhism, the world's fifth largest religion, in the model curriculum in a meaningful way, is an essential step in overcoming ignorance and reducing bullying and harassment.

Specifically, I request:

1. A detailed lesson plan about the Sikh American community to be inserted into the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.
2. More specific examples throughout the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that focus on the myriad of positive Sikh contributions made over 125 years in California, to balance the current language's focus on the hateful backlash against Sikhs in the context of post-9/11 Islamophobia.

The Sikh Coalition and the Jakara Movement will be in communication with you soon, specifying the details of these requests. I ask that the recommendations made in their forthcoming letter be incorporated into the final Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum on my behalf.

Yours Sincerely,

Jaskeet Raika