

September 29, 2020

Dear California Department of Education:

This is an exciting – and especially crucial - time in history to incorporate Ethnic Studies in our Public Education System. Racism, racial tension, racial conflicts, stereotypes, and prejudice has no place in our education community. Ethnic Studies will educate our children about their heritage and expand their minds to become the new generation that condemns the racism that we are witnessing throughout the United States today. Hopefully, this will foster respect for people of all backgrounds, truly defining what it means to be an American.

Our nation needs healing from the past to prevent the future hurts of inequality and racism. Through the Ethnic Studies curriculum, I hope to witness healing amongst the different ethnic groups in our great State of California which is made up of diverse cultures, ethnicity, and languages. It is historic to witness the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum moving forward.

In 1992, Korean Americans in Korea Town Los Angeles experienced the civil unrest, which resulted in financial and social damage. However, we were able to overcome this period after many leaders from all the communities came together in solidarity to educate each other about their respective ethnicities, embrace each other's diversity, and work together to rebuild Los Angeles in harmony. The leaders from spiritual, civil, organizational and other communities came together to bring healing. This was a great role model of overcoming racial conflicts and embracing diversity!

It is essential for the lesson plan to reflect the diversity of the Asian American community (Korean Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Japanese Americans, Asian Indian Americans and the Asian American Pacific Islander(AAPI). As Americans soon to be passing the baton to our posterity, I believe that they should be raised understanding the importance of acceptance, diversity, and harmony.

As a Korean American public official, I am particularly concerned that Korean American studies have been excluded. The Korean American community has long helped shape the American landscape through its community activities, its contributions, and more. California recognizes Korean Americans through two resolutions. Hangul Day, Korean Alphabet Day, which was passed on October 19, 2019 and recognizes the Korean American community as "an integral part of mainstream American society" that has "made important contributions as Californians in the fields of finance, technology, law, medicine, education, sports, media, the arts, the military, and government, as well as in other areas." California also recognized Korean American Day on January 13, 2020 by passing Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 142, which declares that "with diligence, fortitude, and an enduring belief in the American dream, Korean immigrants have helped to turn emergent areas within the State of California into thriving and respectable communities, while raising their children to be productive Korean Americans."

Many scholars and educators have been developing lesson plans on Korean studies for Ethnic Studies Curriculum and their works include the Korean American community's significant presence, impact, and history in California.

I firmly believe that the “Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies” unit must offer the full spectrum of the AAPI community, and include Korean American studies in its Asian American studies section.

Thank you for your consideration!

*James Na, Trustee, Chino valley unified School District*

*Rosa Kim, Trustee, Fremont Union High School District*

*Sandra Lee, Trustee, Cypress School District*

*Soo Yoo, Trustee, ABC Unified School District*