

From: Isherpreet Kaur
Sent: Tuesday, March 31, 2020 11:59 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Naindeep Chann
Subject: Fwd: Request for email comments - CA ethnic studies

Dear Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee,

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 Isherpreet Kaur, I live in Sacramento California, I currently attend American River College in my last semester prior to transferring to an undecided CSU.

I would like to start my letter with a quote that was found in the back glossary of my seventh grade history textbook; "Sikhism was founded 500 years ago by Guru Nanak Dev Ji and is a monotheistic religion."

Just this one sentence in the very back of a textbook. Could you imagine this being the first time your community is mentioned in a textbook? Could you imagine one of the largest communities having only one sentence being your "inclusion", not by the teacher, not in our lesson plan, I found this through my own curiosity and boredom in the class.

I am writing to explain how much experience I have had regarding the education and inclusion of Sikh Americans in K-12 public school classrooms. To be short I can say little no representation of Sikhism was ever found in a textbook or uttered out of a teachers mouth in my years of K-12. It is excluding for a Sikh to look to my left and right and see so much diverse representation of ethnicities and religions around me in my classrooms, yet I would be the odd one out and feel like such a minority. I would feel extremely misrepresented and unrecognized.

Growing up, Sikhism was never mentioned in class. I remember specifically learning about the Holocaust in 7th grade and thinking to myself, Sikhs had undergone a tragedy similar to this in 1984. Why is my teacher not talking about it? Should I raise my hand and teach her and my class? I am only 12 at this time... However I found myself trying to educate some of my close peers on this matter but being so young myself, I couldn't teach this history. Ultimately, due to the California education system failing to have Sikh students in California feel equal, I took it upon myself to study through the American Councils program of studying in Punjab to learn how to teach back home. I now teach Sikhism at my local Sikh Temple weekly to ensure that the youth of Sikh Americans have some outlet to learn about their religion and feel a sense of belonging and importance as their fellow classmates feel daily in K-12 public schools. Our education system can not leave certain groups out of their curriculum. Students should not have to wait until college to find one ethnic studies professor who finally mentions Sikhism for the first time. I feel as though the California curriculum has failed me personally in feeling included and represented, I urge a change so the future generations will not go to the extremes I have had to, so that there is education being passed to the future generations.

Being a Sikh in California and not having it be mentioned by those in higher education is extremely discouraging and places this inner hierarchy of inequality, as California is an intensely diverse state that encourages the representation of "minorities".

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

There are approximately 250,000 Sikhs 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 in 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,

Isherpreet Kaur