

**From:** Kiroun Saluja  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 31, 2020 10:11 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies  
**Subject:** Sikh Inclusion in CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

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 Kiroun Saluja and I have been a resident of California since 2013. I live in Walnut Creek and work as a retail consultant. I am a mother to three children (grades 1st, 3rd and 5th) who attend Tice Creek School in the Walnut Creek School District.

My three children follow the Sikh faith and maintain their unshorn hair, a major tenet of Sikhism. My 1st grade son, wears a "patka" (small turban) to keep his hair tidy. My son has been ridiculed because of his long hair and patka. He has even had his patka removed from his head. We have sought the help of teachers and the principal but not much has changed.

There is no education at the school level to teach the students about different faiths, let alone Sikhism. There is no understanding of the Sikh faith and tenets. The school just encourages students to "respect diversity". This is not enough.

My husband and I have visited all our our childrens' classrooms at least 1-2 times a year to educate their classmates on Sikhism in an effort to curb the ignorance and bullying. Again, this is not enough.

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,

Kiroun Saluja