

**From:** Sabeena Singh  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 1, 2020 8:21 AM  
**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 is Sabeena Singh and I have been a resident of California since 1986. I am a community volunteer and most importantly, a devoted mother of a 15 year old boy and 12 year old girl.

My son, a turban wearing Sikh, began his education journey at the young age of 3 at a local Montessori School. Despite being located in a diverse community of Northern California, the lack of knowledge his peers and their parents had about Sikhism was shocking to me. I grew up educating my peers on Sikhism, correcting their misconceptions and biases. It didn't occur to me that my children and their Sikh peers would have to do the same due to the lack of education on Sikhism despite the fact that it is the 5th largest world religion and that Sikhs have been contributing Californians for 125 years. From the day I had that realization, so many years ago, till today, I have made it a point to compensate for the lack of Sikh education in California by presenting on the subject to students, teachers and administrators in various schools and districts.

Just last year, my daughter asked me to write to her Social Studies teacher asking why Sikhism was not going to be covered in the world religions unit for their 7th grade class. Upon inquiring, I was told that despite Sikhism being included in the H-SS Framework, it was not mandatory for it to be included in the curriculum. However, she was thrilled that I had asked and invited me to present to the entire grade. In the 10 years that I have been presenting on Sikhism, the content has always been well received and appreciated. If it were to be included in the State curriculum and textbooks, our students would have a more comprehensive education in Social Studies and Ethnic Studies.

A more comprehensive education in terms of religion and culture is the key to mitigating prejudice and hate among our young Californians. Requests for my presentations have been made by teachers who desired to supplement their curriculums and also by parents whose sons or daughters were being bullied and targeted due their Sikh identity, in hopes that educating their children's peers would put a stop to the ignorant behavior that no child should have to tolerate. The presentations have always helped! Why wait for an incident to occur, why not educate and inform preemptively.

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,  
Sabeena Singh