

From: Shelli Andranigian
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 1:34 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: Corrected/ August 15, 2019 Letter to SBE

Good afternoon.

I have enclosed a corrected letter addressing concerns re: the curriculum model for ethnic studies in California. There are a few other formatting issues I am not able to correct, however.

Malia (spelling) in the SBE offices was extremely professional when I spoke with her yesterday. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Shelli Andranigian
Hye Sharzoom Editor/Co-Editor
CSU, Fresno 1980-81

August 15, 2019

Dear State Board of Education,

As a lifelong resident of California who is of Armenian descent, I took issue when I first heard about the proposed curriculum model for ethnic studies on Thursday, August 14, 2019.

The original plan was excluding both the Armenians and those of Jewish descent. I called your offices late yesterday and spoke with a nice young woman named Malia (spelling). While doing further research today on the subject, I learned the current proposed plan would now be reviewed and revised based on public comment, which is definitely necessary.

I am a granddaughter of Armenian immigrants who fled the massacres that began before 1915 in Armenia. Some of my relatives were not as fortunate, including my paternal great-grandfather who was killed on the way home from milling wheat for his family in the very late 1800's by those affiliated with the Ottoman Empire in Turkey. My maternal grandfather's brother, a student at Euphrates College was murdered along with his dog. These incidents were not just scenes that inspired the motion picture "The Promise" which chronicled the massacres. This actually happened and my relatives were not the only ones to lose their life. Over 1.5 million Armenians were annihilated in the first Genocide of the 20th Century.

My parents grew up poor. Those who were taught to hate Armenians also discriminated against both of them in school. My maternal aunts had to go to San Francisco to get jobs, as no one would hire them locally. They were also blamed for things they did not do in their elementary school and in one case, not given the scholastic honors they had earned. After all, they were Armenian and so it did not matter. Even in recent years, those of a certain background at school reunions would make ignorant remarks that only my relatives would know to be a slight. They chose to take the high road and ignore.

I fortunately did not have to deal with such ignorance by the time I began school. However, none of us were taught about the Armenians. I did learn about the Jewish Holocaust when I read about Anne Frank during my school years. I am not certain if it was part of our curriculum and/or as an avid reader, I made a point to read about her experiences. I learned about Armenian history from family and at a Saturday class held at a local church.

The local university I attended had an ethnic studies program. My Armenian studies professor shared his offices.

There was still a lack of respect and ignorance about the importance of campus ethnic newspapers back then on campus and probably ethnic studies programs, too. The editors of those representing Uhuru, La Voz de Aztlan and Hye Sharzhoom at the time, which included myself for the latter publication, all testified before a university board about the importance of continued funding for those newspapers. These publications served to educate others along with informing those in the community and beyond.

Although I did not remember meeting anyone Jewish in college, I met my future big sister in 1987 along with a number of lifelong friends in the next decade through work. When I informed a few yesterday of the news about the exclusion of their ancestor's experiences, they were appalled. Some thought such news could not be true. One friend I sent to had told me years ago about the experience her Jewish parents and relatives had in the camps. I was horrified at the time and that was why the news yesterday about the exclusion was unimaginable.

Learning about others backgrounds, origins and religions should matter. It is very important to learn about the history and background of others so uneducated stereotypes of people we know nothing about are less likely to be formed. We cannot expect to learn about others from ratings-seeking reality shows and uninformed social media posts.

If we are to truly create an all-inclusive ethnic studies program, there cannot be an omission of any ethnicity that makes up the fabric of California, the United States and the world.

Thank you in advance for your reconsideration of the curriculum for the ethnic studies program in California that will take effect this next decade. Our future high school students and generations deserve better than what was originally proposed.

Sincerely,

Shelli Andranigian
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