

Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum May 2019 Draft

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Include the chapter of the model curriculum, the page number, and line number(s) to ensure that the California Department of Education and Instructional Quality Commission can reference the content of the document when reviewing your comments. Please email this document as a Word document to ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov. You may contact Kenneth McDonald, Education Programs Consultant, at kmcdonal@cde.ca.gov with any questions regarding this template or the public input process.

Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Page 2 of 5

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
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Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Page 3 of 5

<p>[“General” for a comment that applies to the entire document.]</p>	<p><i>Peter H. St.Clair writing for himself, a retired person living in San Diego CA</i></p>	<p>Ethnic studies should be welcome in our schools at all levels, however the story of immigration to the United States is really in three parts: First, arrival of European colonizers. They did not understand the Native American culture or way of life yet in many respects they survived largely because of the caring, generosity and gifts given them by tribes, including how to select and plant crops, how to manage game, how to navigate the forest and rivers. The lessons they ignored include what we now call ecology—or how species interact, prosper or fail—and the influences of geography, geology, hydrology and climate. Second: slavery. Slaves were not willing immigrants to the United States. Every other story is contained within part 3 where new arrivals come for the promise of a better life. Indentured servants, largely from Britain started coming the U.S. to fill the vast demand for labor around 1630. Until the slave trade grew rapidly, the larger portion of all newcomers were indentured servants. Most stayed after then indenture. An interesting case study that supports the teaching of diversity and tolerance is the textile industry in New England in the early 1800’s. Owners were English speaking Protestants. Workers, largely women, were French speaking Catholics. The workers wanted better wages. The owners did not have any real contact with them, disliked their language and religion, and moved the mills (literally lock, stock and barrel) to North Carolina where workers spoke English, were Protestant and worked for lower wages. Germans began arriving as indentured servants and continued to immigrate in very large numbers to the United States for the next 300 years. By the middle 1800’s the density of German speaking immigrants to the U.S. in the upper Midwest, along the Mississippi River, and in Texas was great enough that they had their own newspapers, cultural/religious institutions, and later, radio stations. Slavery is the great exception to the idea that people came here for greater freedoms and a better life. Interestingly, in the period of greatest immigration from the Civil War on, a fairly high percentage of immigrants return home. They had earned the money the needed to have a stake in their native economy and society, or they disliked life in America. Mexican immigrants until recently were able to move between the U.S. and home, often for holidays</p>
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Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Page 4 of 5

		<p>and family events. So, for a fairly long period of time, immigration does seem to have been elective. Even today immigrants from India and Asia are often flying to and from the U.S. and enjoy H1b visa status allowing them to work at high paying jobs, mostly in California. Throughout the world, nations teach their school children to speak English. Why? Opportunity. Combined, the removal of native peoples from their lands and the introduction of slaves overwhelm all other aspects of the rise of a diverse population in America. Thus two stories: forced removals (Indians and slaves) and the quest for prosperity. The Chinese Exclusion Act is one of many attempts by our government to control immigration—which itself is an important issue in U.S. history courses. Yet ethnic studies imply something different from the study of history. Ethnicity is indeed culture, religion and language. The arrival of people other than English speakers to the United States begins a fascinating saga of acculturation and the persistence of culture. The story is not specific to the United States. Many if not most places on earth have experienced considerable immigration as well as changes in culture, language, religion, diet and practice as a result. And immigrants have prospered in many places other than here. Yet I think we are one of the few nations that welcomed immigrants. Not just as hard workers at low wages but as citizens populating a huge continent. (Thomas Jefferson believed the American Indians would have a kind of economic and cultural sovereignty over lands west of the Mississippi rather than thinking they would integrate into the diverse ethnic fabric of the booming areas of the Louisiana Purchase.) And while it took time for immigrants and women to gain the right to vote, the influence of immigration on American life was obvious from the start with respect to religion, culture, food and other aspects of life. So to study ethnicity in California and the United States is to distinguish between native people, slaves and all others, but largely to examine why people come here. The American narrative of freedom is not false. It is one of many narratives, some of which are darker and exploitive. Yet among competing narratives, it is the one that best explains the longevity of immigration from places with less opportunity and freedom to the United</p>
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Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Page 5 of 5

Chapter of Model Curriculum	Your Name and Affiliation	Comment (include page and line numbers where applicable)
		States and California. It is interesting that in California while there are some 200 languages spoken at home, the dominant language is English. About 35% to 40% of Californians speak another language at home, yet considerably more than 65% are fluent in English. After Spanish (spoken by 25% to 30% of Californians), the percentage of people here speaking other languages plummets. 2% Tagalog, 1% Vietnamese, 1% Korean, four others at 0.5% each. This is not all a story about disparity. It is one of diversity. It is much easier to teach the “how” and “what” of this diversity than the “why’s”. Why is speculative, at best. Suited for a course in political science, anthropology, cultural sociology. I hope what you are trying to do is to get all of our students to understand the vitality of our state, and its potential to have a better future, just as those children’s parents and grandparents also enjoyed a better life.