



August 15, 2019

California Department of Education

To Whom It May Concern:

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) strongly urges the California Department of Education to protect the ethnic studies courses that communities across the state have fought for. JACL also supports the implementation of ethnic studies in public schools across California with the K-12 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, which must include the histories of all Californians.

When students learn about the history of their community, they are better able to connect with their identity, form a sense of self, and understand themselves as critical, civically engaged Americans. All students have the right to see themselves represented in curricula, and to receive an education that actively challenges the racial myths that the study of American history has long told.

Beyond that, all students benefit from learning the histories of all communities. JACL believes that all Californians benefit from learning about the history of the Japanese American community. In many ways, our story is universal in the United States and most students would see their own lives and ancestors reflected in our history including discriminatory immigration policies, racist laws restricting land ownership and citizenship, and economic segregation into ethnic ghettos.

The World War II incarceration experience, however, is specific to the Japanese American community and especially demonstrative of the damages of racial animus run amok, but also the capacity of our country to make amends and apologize for an egregious wrong. Students should learn the mass incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans was a consequence of wartime hysteria, combined with racist traditions and widespread popular indifference to the stripping of civil rights from a minority group. Students who learn this history would draw caution from our story and strive to see that the United States never repeats such gross violations of civil rights.

JACL stands firmly behind diverse ethnic studies curricula in California and across the country. The California Department of Education, in the service of all California's children, must ensure that the education provided is representative and inclusive of those children and the stories of their diverse histories.

Sincerely,

David Inoue
Executive Director