

From: Pritpal Kaur

Sent: Wednesday, September 30, 2020 11:27 AM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Satjeet Kaur; Deep Singh; education

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Sikh Lesson Plan for ESMC - Official Public Comment Submission for September 2020

To: California Department of Education, Instructional Quality Commission, and State Board of Education Officials,

To date, the following submissions have been made by the Sikh Coalition and the Jakara Movement regarding the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC):

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- On March 31, 2020, a series of specific recommendations for the ESMC was submitted to ensure accurate
- and meaningful representation of the Sikh community in the Curriculum (Attachment 1).
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- This was accompanied by a letter from 52 California gurdwaras (Sikh houses of worship) supporting
- these requested changes (Attachment 2).
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- On August 11th, 2020, a petition signed by over 1220 Sikh community members from California was
- submitted in support of more meaningful, accurate representation in the Curriculum. (Attachment 3).
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- On August 14th, 2020, a response to the IQC statement released on August 13th, 2020 (which stated
- that lesson plans about additional communities had been included in the Curriculum) was submitted (Attachment 4).
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None of the recommended changes were taken on board or effected in the second draft of the Model Curriculum. In fact, none of the recommendations or submissions listed above, ever received a formal response or any indication that they were even seriously considered as part of the 2020 review process. This email is our fifth formal joint organizational submission for the September 2020 public comment review period.

Alongside this submission, we also include a letter signed by 25 California Assemblymembers and Senators, supporting the Sikh community's ask for inserting a lesson plan about the Sikh community in the ESMC. (Attachment 5).

The academic grounds for the Sikh community to be taught about in Ethnic Studies are robust, non-controversial and should not be dismissed:

- a.
- b. Teaching about the Sikh community falls under the category of Asian-American
- c. studies which is one of the four traditional Ethnic Studies groups.
- d.
- e.
- f. The latest draft strips away multiple mentions of the Sikh community and its
- g. rich, century-old California contributions to a single story in the context of discrimination in the aftermath of 9/11. Sikhs should be mentioned here because it is absolutely true that there has been a rising number of bias, bullying, and hate crimes against
- h. Sikhs in California (according to the Sikh Coalition, since 2015 no other state has had more anti-Sikh hate crimes in the nation). However, Sikhs must also be equally recognized for the work that has been done to counter the rise of xenophobia in California.
- i. Singly encountering the Sikh community only through the lens of victimization results in the continued flattening and dehumanization of our communities.
- j.
- k.
- l. Sikhs have a large population in the state, numbering approximately 250,000 and
- m. a significantly high density in the K-12 student population in more than 20 of California's public school districts (Yuba City Unified and Central Unified have more than 12 percent, and Punjabi is the third most commonly spoken language in the Central Valley).
- n. Given this magnitude and concentration of the Sikh population in California, our powerful immigration stories, our immensely positive contributions to the state for more 125 years, and our involvement in anti-racist and anti-colonialist movements, it is imperative
- o. that we are also included in a positive way which highlights our unique stories and contributions in a distinct context--not in comparison to other communities. Such minimal representation would result in further marginalization and misunderstanding of the
- p. Sikh community.
- q.
- r.
- s. The decision to ask individual schools and school districts to choose which communities
- t. to include--as opposed to laying out a strong, detailed curriculum with many specific examples--will mean that teaching about Sikhism will continue to be ignored in most classrooms across the state (as has been the case with the H-SS framework since 2016).
- u. This will have devastating long-term repercussions for the California Sikh community in our shared efforts to educate all Californians about the history and contributions of communities that make our state great.

v.

The Sikh community should not only be considered as a religious group. There are significant features about the community which align with Ethnic Studies. Other communities are being rightfully considered, and official statements from the IQC have pointed to those exceptions, but the Sikh voice continues to be ignored. The salient points are duplicated here:

- a.
- b. Teaching about the Sikh community falls under the category of Asian-American studies which is one
- c. of the four traditional Ethnic Studies groups.
- d.
- e.
- f. Many Sikhs identify as South Asian and Punjabi is the third most commonly spoken language in the
- g. Central Valley.
- h.
- i.
- j. The Sikh community in California has pioneered anti-racist and anti-colonialist movements, including
- k. immigration legislation and reform, and movements which led to resistance against British Empire and colonialism.
- l.

Our recommendations:

- 1.
- 2. Insert a lesson plan about the Sikh community (which falls under the discipline of Asian American
- 3. studies), in order to ensure that meaningful teaching about Sikhism will actually reach classrooms. The lesson plan can be found at the end of the original letter of recommendations and edits submitted in March 2020. (Attachment 1).
- 4.
- 5.
- 6. Reconvene the original committee of writers and experts of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum
- 7. and include the Sikh community as a stakeholder in this process.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10. Maintain the integrity of the Ethnic Studies framework with disciplinary knowledge, language, and
- 11. pedagogy.
- 12.

We wish to clarify that all of the above recommendations, and the previous submissions, are solely focused on addressing the concerns of the Sikh community. They are based on analyses of academic content, accuracy and rigor of the curriculum. There is no intention of excluding any other community fighting for accurate representation in the ethnic studies framework, including the Arab American and Asian Pacific Islander communities. We have, and always will, strongly support the idea that every community maintains the right to self-determination and the right to advocate for accurate representation.

We hope that the CDE and IQC will not only consider the Sikh community's recommendations, but will also recognize that a strong ethnic studies framework, and one that will advance anti-racist education and accurately represent marginalized communities, is critical to California's wellbeing.

The CDE and IQC must stop ignoring the requests of the Sikh community and address our concerns. We are committed to working with the CDE and IQC as a stakeholder in the process for more meaningful and accurate representation of the Sikh community in the Curriculum.

On behalf of

Satjeet Kaur, Executive Director, The Sikh Coalition
Naindeep Singh, Executive Director, The Jakara Movement

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