

From: Nirvikar Singh  
Sent: Saturday, August 15, 2020 2:42 PM  
To: Ethnic Studies  
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Subject: Sikh inclusion in Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

This is a copy of my testimony for the IQC meeting held on  
Thursday August 13th 2020. Agenda item 2.A.

My name is Nirvikar Singh and I am a Sikh.

I am a Professor of Economics at UC Santa Cruz, and also served as Sarbjit Singh Aurora Chair of Sikh and Punjabi Studies from 2010 to 2020. I am also affiliated with the Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Department at UCSC, where I have annually taught a class I created, Introduction to the Sikhs. Through this university class, hundreds of students of all backgrounds have had an opportunity to understand the Sikh community in the United States (and especially California), in the context of the contemporary challenges faced by many minorities in this country. Many students from different minority ethnic groups have taken the class, and been able to compare their own experiences of growing up in California with those of Sikh heritage. Understanding the specific, over-century-long, history of Sikhs in California, with respect to their economic and political contributions to the state and the nation, and their own struggles for civil rights and human rights, enhances every student's in-depth understanding of the diversity of California's societal fabric.

Similarly, we need to bring a more robust and specific ethnic studies curriculum to the K-12 space, because it helps everyone understand who we are as a society and as a collection of human beings. Sikhs in California are a significant and long-present part of this picture, and deserve proper inclusion. The email petition submitted by the Sikh Coalition and the Jakara Movement, which was signed by 1220 Sikh community members, supports this more meaningful inclusion of Sikhism in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, through a lesson plan which teachers can use to teach about the positive and rich contributions by Sikhs in California over the past 125 years. The Sikh American experience should not be reduced to a narrative which only portrays the community through the lens of victimization post 9/11. It is clear that the IQC is willing to take this approach, given the recent commitment to include lesson plans on the Pacific Islander experience and Arab American Studies. The Sikh community's requests should not continue to be ignored.

Thank you so much for your time and attention to this major task on behalf of the people of California.

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