

**From:** Harveen Shergill  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 31, 2020 4:26 PM  
**To:** Ethnic Studies  
**Cc:** Deep Singh  
**Subject:** Sikh inclusion in CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee,

I urge and request the inclusion of Sikhism in the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum for entry into the public record.

My name is Harveen Kaur and I live in Bakersfield, California. I attend University of California, Irvine and am a graduating senior.

Being born and raised in Bakersfield I was constantly surrounded by a diverse community. Growing up on the East side isolated me from the Sikh community, but this further motivated me to ensure that the Sikh community was being represented in the classroom. Whether it was taking traditional Punjabi food to school for lunch and having to explain to other kids that what I was eating wasn't gross and smelly, to constantly having to explain that I wasn't going to Bible Club with my classmates because I am Sikh. These children weren't to blame for all of their questions for they simply were never taught. Although there were two sentences on Sikhs in our AP World History class sophomore year of highschool, in others' eyes, Sikhism was non-existent. The only knowledge they had on it was due to the personal responsibility I felt to teach those who were curious. The K-12 public school classrooms, overlook Sikhism and continues to do so to this day. Perhaps if Sikhism was taught while I was in K-12 I wouldn't have been bullied for having hairy legs, armpits, and etc. Maybe my peers would've been educated in the fact that Kes(hair) is one of the tenets of Sikhism. I strongly believe my classmates would've been more comfortable with my identity if Sikhism was a part of the curriculum.

The Sikh community has grown to be an extremely influential and an essential part of California's past and present economy. From being field workers to owning their own farms, Punjabi's have worked tirelessly and contributed tremendously to California's growth. Thus, I am deeply saddened to see that the Sikh community is not being accurately reflected in the initial Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum draft.

With about 250,000 Sikhs in California, the need for the inclusion of Sikhism in K-12 curriculum is growing rapidly everyday. From agriculture, business, medicine, to trucking, the Sikh community is on the forefront of many professions. Due to all of the contributions made by the Sikh community, it is time we get accurate representation in our schools. In order to overcome the ignorance, bullying, and harassment towards members of the Sikh community, I implore you all to include Sikhism in the model curriculum in an accurate and meaningful way.

Specifically, I request:

1. A detailed lesson plan about the Sikh American community to be inserted into the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.
2. More specific examples throughout the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that focus on the myriad of *positive* Sikh contributions made over 125 years in California, to balance the current language's focus on the hateful backlash against Sikhs in the context of post-9/11 Islamophobia.

The Sikh Coalition and the Jakara Movement will be in communication with you soon, specifying the details of these requests. I ask that the recommendations made in their forthcoming letter be incorporated into the final Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum on my behalf.

Sincerely,

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**Harveen Shergill**

B.A Social Policy and Public Service | University of California, Irvine  
President | Jakara Movement Chapter at UCI