

From: Roxanne L Makasdjian
Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 11:59 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Ethnic Studies

Dear IQC,

My name is Roxanne Makasdjian, and I am a native Californian, as well as an Armenian-American and board member of the Bay Area Armenian National Committee of America. I write to you in regards to agenda item 2A, Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, of your upcoming August 13 meeting.

The current draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum must be revised further to include a more accurate, rounded description of the Armenian-American experience.

With a population of 500,000 Armenian-Americans, California is home to the largest Armenian-American community in the United States, and the second largest Armenian community (after Russia) outside of the Republic of Armenia itself. We believe wholeheartedly in your purpose to develop an Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum for California schools. Ethnic Studies must include West Asian American Studies to shine a light on those communities marginalized by curriculum.

Within the Asian-American experiences, it's necessary to include the Armenian-American experience more fully. While the current draft duly notes the Armenian Genocide as the impetus for Armenian immigration to California and the efforts for U.S. recognition of the Armenian Genocide, unfortunately these references, absent a more full description of Armenian-American history, gives a false impression.

It's important to include the experiences of institutional discrimination against Armenian immigrants during the decades after first arriving in large numbers to California, in addition to the discrimination that took place here after subsequent phases of Armenian immigration prompted by the Iranian revolution, the civil wars in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and the fall of the Soviet Union; It's also important to include the major contributions by Armenian-Americans to virtually every major industry and field of culture in the U.S. and particularly California.

It's important that Armenian-American students see themselves and their experiences reflected in curricula. We support the spirit of Ethnic Studies to uplift the voices of marginalized communities to help our youth make sense of their realities.

Hear our stories. I urge you to hear community voices calling for the inclusion of West Asian American experiences within Ethnic Studies, and the necessity of Armenian-American histories within that experience.

Sincerely,
Roxanne Makasdjian