

Date of Hearing: March 22, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
ACR 18 (Mike Fong) – As Amended March 8, 2023

SUBJECT: School curriculum: Asian American history and contributions

SUMMARY: Urges all schools to ensure that Asian American history and contributions are included in their curriculum, alongside those of other communities of color. Specifically, **this resolution:**

- 1) States that the State of California has the largest population and the second highest percentage of Asian Americans in the United States.
- 2) States that United States Census data show that Asians are the fastest growing ethnic group in California.
- 3) States that the Asian American population in California is comprised of over 20 ethnic subgroups, representing diverse countries of origin and over 50 languages, histories, and cultural backgrounds.
- 4) States that data from multiple research studies demonstrate the value of diverse populations in strengthening democracy, promoting equity, and expanding opportunity for more people.
- 5) States that Asians and Asian Americans have made rich contributions to the history of the United States and California, including Chinese immigrants who risked their lives to build the transcontinental railroads in the 1800s and Japanese Americans who fought for America in multiple wars, yet faced backlash and discrimination through laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II.
- 6) States that Asian Americans have made significant individual and community contributions to the economic, cultural, social, and political development of the United States, including advancing civil rights for all people, as demonstrated by Filipino American labor leader Larry Itliong, who fought for the rights of farmworkers in the Central Valley in the mid-1900s.
- 7) States that, despite the contributions and history of Asian Americans in the United States, Asian Americans continue to be targets of hate, violence, and discrimination. States that, most recently, hate incidents and hate crimes against Asian Americans have spiked dramatically, with nearly 11,500 hate incidents reported to the Stop AAPI Hate Reporting Center from March 19, 2020, to March 31, 2022, inclusive, driven largely by xenophobia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 8) States that Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 101 of the 2021–22 Session and AB 1460 of the 2019–20 Session, into law, making ethnic studies a high school and California State University graduation requirement in order to give pupils and students the opportunity to learn about the histories, stories, and contributions of historically marginalized peoples to American society.

- 9) States that Asian American representation in educational materials and media contributes to a more inclusive learning environment for all pupils and students, which affirms Asian Americans' place in society and combats harmful stereotypes, such as the model minority and perpetual foreigner stereotypes.
- 10) Resolves by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, that the Legislature urges all schools to ensure that Asian American history and contributions are included in their curriculum, alongside those of other communities of color; and
- 11) Resolves that the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of the resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires students, commencing with students graduating in the 2029–30 school year, to complete a one-semester course in ethnic studies, as specified. (Education Code (EC) 51225.3)
- 2) Requires local educational agencies (LEAs) and charter schools with pupils in grades 9 to 12, commencing with the 2025–26 school year, to offer at least a one-semester course in ethnic studies. (EC 51225.3)
- 3) Establishes the California Civil Liberties Public Education Act, for the purpose of sponsoring public educational activities and the development of educational materials to ensure that the events surrounding the exclusion, forced removal, and internment of citizens and permanent residents of Japanese ancestry will be remembered, and so that the causes and circumstances of this and similar events may be illuminated and understood. (Education Code (EC) 13000)
- 4) Encourages all state and local professional development activities to provide teachers with content background and resources to assist them in teaching about the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the contributions of Chinese Americans to the establishment of the transcontinental railroad. Requires that, when the State Board of Education (SBE) revises and adopts the curriculum framework for history-social science on or after January 1, 2017, the SBE consider providing for the inclusion, in that curriculum framework, evaluation criteria, and accompanying instructional materials, of instruction on the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the contributions of Chinese Americans to the establishment of the transcontinental railroad. (EC 51226.3)
- 5) States the intent of the Legislature to provide accurate instructional materials to schools on the internment in the United States of persons of Japanese origin and its impact on Japanese American citizens, the Armenian genocide, and the World War II internment, relocation, and restriction in the United States of persons of Italian origin and its impact on the Italian American community. (EC 52740)
- 6) Requires the CDE, in collaboration with, and subject to the approval of, the executive director of the SBE, by specified dates in 2022, enter into contracts with a county office of education (COE) or a consortium of COEs for the purposes of developing separate model curricula related to the Vietnamese American refugee experience, Cambodian Genocide, and Hmong history and cultural studies. Requires that the designated COE or consortia of COEs

to work with the California History-Social Science Project and Teaching California to ensure that the curriculum is accessible and compatible with its platform. (EC 33540.2, 33540.4, 33540.6)

- 7) Designates October 25 of each year as Larry Itliong Day, encourages public schools to conduct exercises remembering the life of Larry Itliong, recognizing his accomplishments, and familiarizing pupils with the contributions he made to this state. (EC 37222.18)

FISCAL EFFECT: This resolution has been keyed non-fiscal by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the resolution. The author states, “During the COVID-19 pandemic, reports of hate crimes against Asian Americans increased by 70%, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Harassment of Asian Americans range from verbal to physical with sentiments of ‘go back to where you came from’ expressed throughout the country. One way we can combat the belief that Asian Americans do not belong in the United States is through education. By ensuring that the contributions and history of Asian Americans are incorporated in our school’s curriculum, we can reduce ignorance while increasing appreciation of all people.”

Asian American history and contributions in Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, adopted by the SBE in 2021, contains several model lessons in Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies. Each lesson identifies themes, disciplinary areas, ethnic studies values and principles alignment, and content standards alignment (primarily in history-social science and English language arts). The lessons also identify connections to the History-Social Science Curriculum Framework adopted by the SBE in 2016, and in some cases the curriculum frameworks in English Language Arts/English Language Development (adopted in 2014) and Visual and Performing Arts (adopted in 2020). Model lessons in Asian American studies are titled:

- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and the Model Minority Myth
- Cambodian Americans— Deportation Breaking Families Apart
- Chinese Railroad Workers
- Little Manila, Filipino Laborers, and the United Farm Workers (UFW)
- Hmong Americans— Community, Struggle, Voice
- Indian Americans: Creating Community and Establishing an Identity in California
- The Japanese American Incarceration Experience Through Poetry and Spoken Word—A Focus on Literary Analysis and Historical Significance
- Korean American Experiences and Interethnic Relations
- The Immigrant Experience of Lao Americans
- Historical and Contemporary Experiences of Pacific Islanders in the United States
- South Asian Americans in the United States
- Vietnamese American Experiences— The Journey of Refugees

Asian American history and contributions in History-Social Science Curriculum Framework. The history and contributions of Asian Americans appear in many places in the History-Social Science Curriculum Framework adopted by the SBE in 2016. For example, the 4th grade chapter, entitled, *California: A Changing State*, explores the questions:

- Why did different groups of immigrants decide to move to California?
- What were their experiences like when they settled in California?
- How did the region become a state, and how did the state grow?

The following excerpts from the 4th grade chapter specifically discuss Asian American history and contributions:

- “Students analyze the contributions of Chinese and Japanese laborers in the building of early California’s mining, agricultural, and industrial economies and consider the impact of various anti-Asian exclusion movements. Hostilities toward the large Chinese labor force in California grew during the 1870s, leading to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and future laws to segregate Asian Americans and regulate and further restrict Asian immigration. The Gentlemen’s Agreement in 1907, singling out Japanese immigrants, further limited Asian admissions to the United States.”
- “Students examine the various ways that Asian Americans resisted segregation and exclusion while struggling to build a home and identity for themselves in California. In explaining a charged and sensitive topic like exclusion, teachers should emphasize the importance of perspective and historical context. Using multiple primary sources in which students investigate questions of historical significance can engage students and deepen their understanding of a difficult and complex issue. Historical fiction, such as Laurence Yep’s *Dragon Gate*, may also be utilized. To help guide their investigation, students may consider the following questions: Why did people migrate? Why did some migrants face opposition and prejudice?”
- “Students explore the relationship between California’s economic and population growth in the twentieth century and its geographic location and environmental factors. They determine the push-and-pull factors for California’s dramatic population increase in recent times such as the state’s location in the Pacific Basin, the 1965 Immigration Act, which brought a new wave of Asian immigrants from Korea, India, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, in addition to traditional Asian groups of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos, the 1980 Refugee Act, the reputation of social and cultural freedom in the cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles, and the state’s historical ability to absorb new laborers in its diversified economy. Students examine California’s growing trade with nations of the Pacific Basin and analyze how California’s port cities, economic development, and cultural life benefit from this trade. They learn about the contributions of immigrants to California from across the country and globe, such as Dalip Singh Saund, an Indian Sikh immigrant from the Punjab region of South Asia who, in 1957, became the first Asian American to serve in the United States Congress...”

Arguments in support. Stop AAPI Hate writes, “Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, over 11,000 reports of hate incidents have been shared with Stop AAPI Hate by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across the country, including more than 4,000 reports in California. California has the largest population of Asian Americans in the United States. While Asians and Asian Americans have long been part of this state and country, history books often erase Asian Americans. This erasure prevents students from understanding the discrimination Asian Americans have endured throughout U.S. history and contributes to current anti-Asian backlash. Failure to teach Asian American history in schools can reinforce harmful stereotypes, such as the model minority myth and perpetual foreigner stereotype. In contrast, Asian American

representation in educational materials will create a more inclusive environment for students and combat pernicious stereotypes that cast Asian Americans as somehow one dimensional or un-American.”

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

AAPI Equity Alliance

API Equality-LA

Cambodia Town INC.

Chinatown Service Center

Chinese for Affirmative Action

Koreatown Youth and Community Center INC.

National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse

Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment

South Asian Network

Stop AAPI Hate

UCLA Asian American Studies Center

Opposition

None on file

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