

My name is Bob Metz and I am a social studies teacher and Student Justice Union Co-Advisor at South Burlington High School. As a veteran teacher of 22 years, I can say explicitly that there is a need to be very direct with the language used regarding genocide. The proposed language as it currently stands is simply inadequate. The term genocide must be incorporated into the language used to ensure that those marginalized groups who have been victims of a deliberate and systematic effort to completely eradicate them are not forgotten. To overlook this is to minimize the suffering and does a great disservice to our society.

Genocide is far different from persecution or inhumane treatment, to suggest otherwise implies a lack of understanding of the concepts. Denying someone access to essential services because of their religion, that is inhumane. Imprisoning someone for advocating for their freedoms and that of their group, that is inhumane. However, to somehow suggest that genocide is simply inhumane is missing the point. It is far more evil of an event and therefore it is far more important for everyone to learn about systematic efforts to murder a group of people based on their identity.

I cannot understand the logic behind the omission of genocide from ethnic studies. It does not feel anywhere near adequate or appropriate to discuss ethnic groups and their experience without specifically referencing actual instances of genocide. Therefore, to ensure that students are made aware of genocide and the horrors it visited on ethnic groups, the term genocide must be included. To suggest otherwise is to overlook the sheer horror and terror associated with events like genocide. It puts our students in a situation where they are not exposed to the true nature of evil which is an unfortunate aspect of humanity. The Holocaust, Rwandan genocide, Armenian genocide, Cambodian genocide, and the Kurdish genocide are just a few examples of specific ethnic groups targeted systematically in an effort to completely eliminate their existence. To not study these events is to not understand the history of the people subjected to the genocide. To not understand their history seems to run contrary to the idea of ethnic studies.

This is quite simple in my mind: include genocide and all its horrors in addition to discrimination, persecution, and inhumane treatment. There is no reason to not include it as it assists in creating a more robust and thorough examination of marginalized groups and their experiences. This does not have to be zero sum: there is room for the inclusion of genocide without diminishing the efforts to explore other groups and their experiences. To provide a more comprehensive examination of the experiences of others is to empower students with the knowledge necessary to better understand the world in which they live.