



Statement Condemning Violence Against Sikh Americans April 22, 2021

On behalf of the Asian American Psychological Association and the Division on South Asian Americans, we are heartbroken to learn of the murders of eight innocent people at the FedEx facility in Indianapolis, Indiana on Thursday, April 15, 2021, only days after one of the most important Sikh holidays, Vaisakhi, was celebrated. We mourn the early loss of these innocent lives: Matthew R. Alexander, 32; Samaria R. Blackwell, 19; Amarjeet Kaur Johal, 66; Jaswinder Kaur, 64; Amarjit Sekhon, 48; Jaswinder Singh, 68; Karli Smith, 19; and John Weisert, 74. While the investigation is ongoing, it cannot be overlooked that this FedEx facility employed a largely Sikh workforce (90% of employees) and that four of the victims were Sikh.

These acts of violence clearly impact the well-being of the local community as well as the Sikh community nationally. American Sikhs have been a vital part of the United States since the late 1800s, serving in the military and in cities across the nation as farmers, small business owners, academics, and elected officials to name a few. And yet, this tragedy is but the newest incident in a long history of hate violence targeting the Sikh community in North America. As anti-Iranian hate escalated in the 70s and 80s, Sikh Americans were targeted. As anti-Muslim racism escalated post 9/11, Sikh Americans became targets of hate violence. Within days of 9/11, Sikh American Balbir Singh Sodhi of Arizona was murdered. In 2012, a white supremacist murdered 6 and wounded 3 other Sikh Americans at a gurdwara, a Sikh place of worship, in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. We also cannot ignore the impact of persistent stress, grief, and trauma of the ongoing farmers' protests in India already felt by Sikh Americans leading up to this moment.

We are horrified and grief-stricken by the multiple tragedies that have taken place in the last year, and especially in this past month. As an organization, we unequivocally condemn acts of hate and violence and commit to supporting victims, families, and communities hurting during these difficult times. For many individuals and communities, religion and spirituality are fundamental components of psychological and community health. As such, we are especially concerned about the persistent onslaught of violence impacting ethnic, racial, and religious minoritized communities, both within the U.S. and abroad.

We urge our membership to remain vigilant and sensitive to the loss of safety felt in our community and workplace. We support our Sikh members in engaging in personal and community care. Your longevity in these times of heightened stress is important. We must engage in active support of our Sikh community. We can do so by donating to organizations listed below, volunteering our time, attending vigils, learning about and educating others about Sikh history and experiences, and speaking up in alliance with those who are directly impacted by this violence. We must advocate for culturally informed support and resources for the Indianapolis Sikh community so that they can heal collectively from this tragedy, much as how the Sikh community in Oak Creek, Wisconsin was supported in their healing process by AAPA and DoSAA psychologists as well as many other volunteers. We must also remain vigilant in our roles as bystanders to the growing hate in the people around us and when we are faced with racism. We stand in solidarity with our Sikh American families.

List of Resources

Get Involved Resources

Sikh FedEx Workers Memorial Fund: <https://gofund.me/193dd753>

Solidarity Vigil: <https://www.solidarityvigil.com>

Mental Health Organizations & Resources focused on Punjabi/South Asian Community in the U.S.

The Hume Center <https://www.humecenter.org/south-asian-community-health-promotion-services>

South Asian Therapists <https://southasiantherapists.org/>

Sahara: Caring for the South Asian Community <https://saharacares.org/>

South Asian Mental Health Initiative & Network <https://samhin.org/>

MannMukti <https://www.mannmukti.org/>

Taraki <https://www.taraki.co.uk/>

SOCH Mental Health <https://www.sochmentalhealth.com/>

South Asian Mental Health Alliance <http://samhaa.org/>

South Asian Public Health Association <http://joinsapha.org/>

South Asian Americans Leading Together <https://saalt.org/>

National Alliance on Mental Illness - New Jersey SamHaj <https://www.facebook.com/SAMHAJNJ/>

South Asian Sexual and Mental Health Alliance <https://www.sasmha.org/mental-health>

To learn more about the Sikh Community & Learn About Vigils & Solidarity Events:

The Sikh Coalition www.sikhcoalition.org or <https://www.facebook.com/thesikhcoalition/>

Jakara Movement www.jakara.org or <https://www.facebook.com/jakaramovement/>

United Sikhs www.unitedsikhs.org or <https://www.facebook.com/UNITEDSIKHS.org/>

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund <https://saldef.org/>

Educational Resources:

Ahluwalia, M. K., & Pelletiere, L. (2010). Sikh men post-9/11: Misidentification, discrimination, and coping. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 1*(4), 303–314.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022156>

Ahluwalia, M. K., & Alimchandani, A. (2013). A call to integrate religious communities into practice: The case of Sikhs. *The Counseling Psychologist, 41*(6), 931–956.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000012458808>

Sohi, K. K., Singh, P., & Bopanna, K. (2018). Ritual participation, sense of community, and social well-being: A study of Seva in the Sikh community. *Journal of Religious Health, 57*, 2066–2078.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0424-y>

The Sikh Coalition's Middle and High School Resources on integrating Curriculum and Videos
<https://www.sikhcoalition.org/get-involved/resources-for-educators/middle-high-school-resources/>

Learning for Justice toolkit for talking with K-12 students on Sikh experience in the US
<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/summer-2018/invisible-identity>

CNN's United Shades of America with W. Kamau Bell Season 3, Episode 2, being Sikh in America
<https://edition.cnn.com/shows/united-shades-of-america>