



## **Courageous Conversations: Examining Experiences of Sikh-Americans in the Media**

### **Introduction:**

This classroom activity uses stories from the media highlighting the experiences of Sikhs in the United States. Students individually respond to a series of media accounts about Sikhs in America during a gallery walk activity. Students then engage in small group and whole class discussions about reactions, questions, and connections to other knowledge about Sikh Americans, religion in America, discrimination, and other related topics.

This lesson can be integrated into units about Sikhism, cultural diversity in the United States, or discrimination, stereotypes, and bias. This lesson is also easily incorporated into a study of media literacy. Alternative approaches described at the end can tailor the lesson for specific contexts or goals, including an historical analysis of the Sikh American experience.

**Time:** 45 minutes - 1 hour

**Topics addressed:** Race, religion, stereotypes, diversity, multiculturalism, articles of faith, identity, pluralism, hate, violence, bullying, discrimination, media literacy

**Grade Levels:** High School, College, Adult/Professional Development

### **Materials:**

- Copies of articles and/or images (recommendation: print with enlarged font for easier reading on posters) available at: <https://www.kaurfoundation.org/educator-resources.html> , or additional recent media sources.
- Poster/Chart paper or sticky notes
- Pins or Tape to hang up posters
- Markers/Pens

### **Objectives:**

Students will be able to...

- Analyze current events articles (or other primary sources) about the experiences of Sikh Americans to identify examples of discrimination, bullying, and violence.
- Identify causes of misunderstanding, bias, and discrimination against Sikh Americans.
- Discuss and compare the experiences of the Sikh Americans in the articles, as well as with their own experiences and with the experiences of other minorities.
- Reflect on assumptions and biases about people who are different from themselves, particularly people with visible articles of faith.

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### Relevant Standards:

C3 D2.Rel.8.9-12 Interpret how beliefs, behaviors, and experiences of belonging to various communities affect and are affected by other social, political, and cultural forces.

C3 D2.Rel.9.9-12 Give examples of how beliefs, behaviors, and community experiences shape and are shaped by one another in particular social and historical contexts.

C3 D2.Rel.10.9-12 Identify assumptions about the definitions of religion and the proper role of religion and private and public life.

C3 D2.Civ.13.9-12 Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes and related consequences.

C3 D2.Soc.14.9-12 Explain how in-group and out-group membership influences the life chances of individuals and shapes societal norms and values.

CCSS SL.9-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS SL.9-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and styles are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.RH.CCR.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.RH.CCR.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.RH.CCR.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.



## COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

### Preparation:

1. Print out the articles/images and stick each one to a large poster size sheet of paper.
  - a. Depending on space, hang posters around the room or place each on a table. Students should have room to gather at each and move easily around the room.

### Procedures:

1. Introduce or transition to the activity: "Today we are going to examine the experiences of Sikh-Americans in contemporary society by analyzing several media sources." As appropriate, briefly review prior lessons or discussions about Sikhism.
2. Divide students into 6 groups (or equal to the number of sources being used) and assign each group to one of the posters.
3. Ask students to respond to the source in front of them in silence by reading it and then writing any comments and questions that come to mind or how it made them feel. They can write words, sentences, or even emoticons. Students should not discuss the article with group members at this point. (5-10 minutes).
  - a. Prompts:
    - i. *What are the motivations of the different individuals in the situation?*
    - ii. *How do different individuals feel? What do they want?*
    - iii. *What else do you want to know about this situation?*
4. Once students have spent time with their assigned poster, ask them to do a 'gallery walk'. They should move around to other posters and read the other sources in silence and write down their own responses and questions on the sheet or comment on previous responses. (15-20 minutes)
  - a. Prompt students to move to new posters every 3-5 minutes. They will not have enough time to read all posters in depth, but should familiarize themselves with the issues and comments of classmates.
5. Once the class has been re-seated in groups with their original sources, ask them to review the new comments and questions on their poster. Allow time for groups to discuss their article and the comments that have been written. (5 minutes)
6. Ask each group to report back to the class in turn. They should repeat the title of the news article, briefly summarize the situation, and share noteworthy comments. Ask them to highlight any issues that these stories brought up and how they feel about them. Allow time after each group for comments and questions from the whole class. (15-20 minutes)
  - a. Prompts:
    - i. *What misunderstandings or assumptions fueled the conflict in this situation?*





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- Create an informational handout or pamphlet to educate people about an issues that caused the conflict in one of the situations. For example, students could create a pamphlet for human resource departments about the turban and how to not discriminate against employees who wear a turban.

### Follow Up:

- The posters can be a useful visual to keep and come back to. Posters could be left up for several days for students to continue to add responses and questions.
- Continue to bring in current events articles about Sikh Americans.
- Repeat this activity with media about other religious communities and have a conversation about connections between the experiences of different minority religious and cultural groups in the United States.

