

August 18, 2011

To: Baltimore Sikh Sangat

Re: School Bullying Survey

ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤ ਜੀ।

ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ
ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਿਹ॥

ਸਿੱਖ ਕੋਲੀਸ਼ਨ ਯੂਨਾਈਟਡ ਸਟੇਟਸ (ਅਮਰੀਕਾ) ਦਾ ਸਭ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਡਾ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਗਰਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰ (ਸਿਵਲ ਰਾਈਟਸ) ਦਾ ਸੰਗਠਨ ਹੈ। ਅਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਸੇਵਾਦਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਮਦਦ ਨਾਲ ਪੂਰੇ ਦੇਸ਼ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੌਜਵਾਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਸਰਵੇਖਣ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ ਹਾਂ, ਇਹ ਜਾਨਣ ਲਈ ਕਿ ਕੀ ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਜਾਂ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਪਛਾਣ ਹੋਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਕੀ “ਬੁਲਿੰਗ” ਤਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਅਨੁਭਵ ਕਰ ਰਹੇ। ਅਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਨੀਤੀ ਬਣਾਉਣ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਸਾਂਝੀ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਅਮਰੀਕਾ ਦੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਸਿੱਖ ਬੱਚਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਗਰਿਕ ਅਧਿਕਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਰੱਖਿਆ ਕਰਨ। ਸਿੱਖ ਕੋਲੀਸ਼ਨ ਦੇ ਸੇਵਾਦਾਰਾਂ ਵਲੋਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਕੀਤੇ ਸਰਵੇਖਣ ਦੇ ਹੇਠਲੇ ਲਿਖੇ ਨਤੀਜੇ ਹਨ:

Highlights

- Total Number of Youth Anonymously Surveyed: **39**
- Average Age of Youth Anonymously Surveyed: **13**
- Percentage Teased at School Because of Sikh/Punjabi Identity: **46%**
- Percentage Hit or Touched at School Without Permission: **28%**

The following anonymous survey responses illustrate the nature of bullying and harassment experienced by Sikh youth at schools in your area. Although our sample size was small, these responses are consistent with our findings around the United States:

- *“People do touch my patka quite often.”* –Male, aged 14
- *“People used to pull on my joora [topknot]”* – Male, aged 8
- *“They made fun of me because of [my] religion, long hair, what I eat, [and] how my beliefs are related to Muslims.”* – Female, aged 13
- *“People have called me a terrorist ... they were saying I was related to Osama.”* – Male, aged 14

Recommendations

1. Build Relationships with School Officials

The Sikh Coalition recommends that the Sikh community of Baltimore bring issues of teasing, bullying, and harassment of Sikh youth to the attention of local and state school officials. For example, based on our survey results, the following state official can be contacted directly:

Dominic Romano, Education Program Specialist
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, MD 21201
Phone: (410) 767-0301 | Email: dromano@msde.state.md.us

The Maryland Department of Education maintains a comprehensive anti-bullying website at http://www.msde.maryland.gov/MSDE/divisions/studentschoolsvcs/student_services_alt/bullying/

2. Ask School Officials to Adopt Strong Anti-Bullying Policies

The Sikh Coalition recommends that the Sikh community of Baltimore work with state and local school officials to promote stronger anti-bullying policies. A strong policy includes clear prohibitions on bullying and harassment, as well as data collection requirements; a process for students to report bullying incidents; and diversity appreciation programs for students and staff. The Sikh Coalition can provide copies of model anti-bullying policies upon request.

3. Ask Government Officials to Support Strong Anti-Bullying Laws

The Sikh Coalition recommends that the Sikh community of Baltimore work with government officials to promote anti-bullying laws. For example, the Sikh Coalition is a strong supporter of the Safe Schools Improvement Act—proposed federal legislation that would require schools and school districts to collect and publicize data about bullying incidents. The following government officials can be contacted and encouraged to support this important legislation:

U.S. Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger
<http://dutch.house.gov/>
Phone: (410) 628-2701

U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski
<http://mikulski.senate.gov/>
Phone: (410) 962-4510

U.S. Senator Ben Cardin
<http://cardin.senate.gov/>
Phone: (410) 962-4436

For more information about this survey, or to support our efforts to combat school bullying, please contact Sikh Coalition Volunteer Advocate Charanpreet Singh (charanpreet.sikhcoalition@gmail.com).

Respectfully submitted,

THE SIKH COALITION