

DATE: December 1st, 2002

TO: The Sikh Coalition

FROM: Anu Jagga-Narang, PR Consultant

SUBJECT: Sikhism in post-9/11 World

Executive Summary

Sikhism is the world's fifth-largest and youngest organized religion, unjustly characterized as having predominately male followers¹. Sikhism was established by Guru Nanak and ten other Sikh Gurus starting in 1469. It is a monotheistic belief system that originated due to Guru Nanak's passionate endeavor and his profound dissatisfaction with the existing order of things between Brahmanism and Islam². A vibrant community of disciples called 'Sikhs'(literally meaning a learner) shape their beliefs in tone and spirit by the first words of the Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib: *Ek Onkar, God is one*³.

This memo outlines a communications plan to spread the key messages of Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak believed that there is one formless God, and the name of God is Truth⁴. He emphasized on the importance of purity of words and deeds. He was outspoken in his critique of hypocrisy and superficiality in religious practice of Hindus and Muslims⁵. His teachings were about equality of all people, including women, since they were considered inferior to men⁵.

Situation Analysis

Sikhism is over 500 years old. Sikh men are easily recognized throughout the world because of their beards, turban and steel wristbands. As a sign of complete dedication of body and soul to God, Sikh men and women follow one of the basic vows - not to cut the hair but to let it grow naturally. Sikh men ear Turbans in fulfillment of this basic vow⁶.

Because of their turban and beard, Sikh men bear "resemblance" to radical terrorists. Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Sikhs have faced racial profiling and discrimination⁷. Hate crimes have escalated, making it our priority to promote Sikhism as a peaceful religion that does not support terrorist organizations who commit heinous crimes in the name of religion. The intent of the messages is to broadly educate the public about Sikhism.

Goal

The goal of this communication plan is to promote the teachings of all ten Gurus, and generate awareness of the religion that advances peace and equality of all people.

Objectives

The following objectives underline the goal:

1. Endorse the Sikh heritage of truth, equality and respect.
2. Promote key messages (mentioned below) reiterating that Sikhism is a peaceful religion.
3. Emphasize the concept of equality through communal meals, *or langar*.

Target Audience

This plan will focus on all members of the public – men, women and children, and specifically include justice department, law enforcement and homeland security agencies in US, UK and Europe.

Key Messages

This plan will emphasize the following key messages to the target audience³:

1. Sikhism is a peaceful religion that propagates equality for all people, even if they observe any religion or belief.
2. God may be spoken of in many ways – Allah, Ram or Jesus – but the great name of God is Truth. God cannot be known as an image as He is formless.

3. Purity comes from words and deeds, not from rituals.
4. All men and women are created equal and can approach God equally.
5. Communal meals, or *langar*, serve all humans equally, and everyone coming to the langar must sit together as equals.

Strategies

The following strategies, once employed, will prove powerful in accomplishing the goals set forth:

1. Use of all media channels (digital, social and traditional) to create and spread compelling messages in the community.
2. Employ regional brand ambassadors as disciples of Guru Gobind Singh that will become the face and voice of the movement.

Tactics

The following tactics will be used to conclude these strategies:

1. Post inspirational and spiritual messages on Twitter and Facebook on a daily basis.
2. Arrange talks and public speeches for brand ambassadors in schools and police departments to generate awareness about Sikhism and to spread key messages.
3. Arrange appearance on talk shows to spread the message of peace and equality, emphasizing the inherent value Sikh heritage brings.
4. Publish posters, videos and press releases of the events on various Sikh temple, *Gurudwara*, websites for easy access.
5. Sponsor Culture Heritage Day at schools and/or colleges.
6. Publish YouTube videos that depict everyday lifestyle of a Sikh individual that includes service (*seva*), yoga and meditation.

Budget

The approximate cost of logistics, creation of posters and advertisements will be \$50,000 in U.S, and €60,000 in UK and Europe. We will engage the services of volunteers to spread messages on social media and other channels. There will be no consulting fee for my firm.

Measurement

The influence of the messages and public sentiments will be measured before and after the campaign, on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, by:

1. Monitoring conversations on social media - likes, shares, tweets and retweet of messages and posts.
2. Calculating YouTube video views, shares and comments.
3. Closely "listening" to the traditional media outlets for any incidents of hate crime or racial profiling against Sikhs or ethnic minorities.

Conclusion

This plan is created with the sole purpose of promoting Sikhism as a religion that brings peace, equality and respect. This plan is aimed at generating awareness and familiarity about Sikhism. If you have any questions related to this plan, please email to me.

References

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- ¹ Nesbitt, E. (2005). *Sikhism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
 - ² Griffin, L. (1901). Sikhism and the Sikhs. *The North American Review*, 172(531), 291-305. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25105131>
 - ³ The Pluralism Project. (n.d.). *Harvard University*. Retrieved from <http://www.pluralism.org/religion/sikhism>
 - ⁴ Shackle, C., & Mandair, A. (Eds.). (2013). *Teachings of the Sikh Gurus: Selections from the Sikh Scriptures*. Routledge.
 - ⁵ Singh, R. (2012). *Guru Nanak: His Life & Teachings*. Rupa Publications. Chicago
 - ⁶ The Pluralism Project. (n.d.). *Harvard University*. Retrieved from <http://www.pluralism.org/religion/sikhism/experience/five-ks>
 - ⁷ Rajwant Singh, C. (2005). Sikhism: Building a Basic Collection on Sikh Religion and Culture. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 45(2), 108-116. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20864473>