

ARTICLE OF FAITH

Discussion Guide

A PART OF THE PROJECT
WITHWINGS
ANDROOTS

Article of Faith: Discussion Guide

About the Film

Article of Faith is a 10-min documentary portrait of Brooklyn-based Sonny Singh, an activist working against bullying in New York City with the Sikh Coalition. A devout Sikh, Sonny wears a turban and does not cut his hair. These practices, however, make Sikhs the regular targets of harassment and violence. Memories of being teased and having his turban pulled from his head both as a child and adult, fuel his work with young people. Organizing Sikh youth from across New York City, Sonny leads a successful a campaign to pass a Department of Education regulation to combat bias-based harassment in public schools.

Discussion Questions

1. What was film is about?
2. Why do you think it is called Article of Faith?
3. Who are Sikhs? What did you learn about the religion from the film? What questions do you still have?
4. What is Islamophobia? (If no one has heard of that word, take a guess!)
5. What were some of the reasons that Sonny explained about why Sikhs wear turbans?
6. What were some of the challenges faced by Sonny as a kid in school?
7. How do those challenges impact him as a young person, then again as an adult?
8. What were some of the ways Sonny dealt with those negative experiences?
9. Is bullying a problem in your school or community? Why do students get bullied?
10. Are students bullied or teased because of having a different racial/ethnic/cultural background, an accent, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or size? This is called *bias-based bullying*.
11. What is bias or prejudice? (Bullying that is bias-based affects not only the person being bullied but all students who share that student's identity (i.e. their race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.). If a student is harassed because he wears a turban, this has an impact on all students who wear turbans -- it makes them all feel unsafe and unwelcome.)
12. Did you relate to anything that Sonny shared about his experience? If so, would any of you like to share a story of experiencing prejudice or bullying?
 - a) How did you feel?
 - b) How did you respond?
 - c) What kinds of support could other people have given which would have made the experience easier.
13. What do you think that *students* can do to improve the situation with bullying at your school?
14. What you think your *school* (teachers, administrators, etc.) could do to improve this situation with bullying at your school?

Resources

About Sikhism:

<http://www.sikhcoalition.org/resources/about-sikhs/at-a-glance>

Educational Materials About Sikhism:

<http://www.sikhcoalition.org/resources/educational-materials>

Director's Statement

I was living four blocks away from the Twin Towers on 9/11/01. That day was devastating; not one of us who witnessed the destruction will ever be the same. And yet, it has been heartbreaking to see our suffering in NYC used as an excuse to violently target Muslims and Arabs, as well as people perceived to be Muslim, such as Sikhs and Hindus.

This violence has not only targeted people abroad, but also hundreds of thousands of American adults and young people. Sikh Americans have been among the most vulnerable in this post-9/11 era because of their turbans – a religiously mandated article of faith. In fact, Sikhism is the only religion that mandates its followers to wear a turban. There have been numerous deadly hate crimes against Sikh Americans since 9/11, and many Sikh youth and adults experience daily harassment.

Much of this fear and hatred has been fueled by mainstream media representation. When I met Sonny, I felt that his story demanded to be told. As a media-maker, I had an opportunity to create a counter-narrative. I was moved by his willingness to share difficult stories about how racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia impact him in intimate ways every day. But more importantly, I was inspired by how he had turned this hardship into a motivation to fight for social justice for all people. It was an honor to be able to document Sonny and his communities. I was welcomed with incredible warmth, and inspired by the Sikh traditions of seeing the Divine in all people and fighting for equality.

About with WINGS and ROOTS

Article of Faith is part of *with WINGS and ROOTS*, a transmedia project set in New York and Berlin. - two cities emblematic of immigration to Europe and the USA. The project reframes the immigration and integration debates in the USA and Germany, through the stories of children of immigrants from diverse backgrounds who are actively pushing against narrow definitions of belonging. In addition to a feature-length documentary and several short films, the project leads workshops and interactive online engagement. Sonny is one of feature film's protagonists, where his story is expanded.

About the Sikh Coalition

The Sikh Coalition is a community-based organization that works towards the realization of civil and human rights for all people. In particular, they work towards a world where Sikhs may freely practice and enjoy their faith while fostering strong relations with their local community wherever they may be.