Bigotry and Religious Intolerance

The Jyot Curriculum

THE SIKH COALITION
Bigotry and Religious Intolerance

Learning Objectives
• Define bigotry and religious intolerance
• Describe how all minority groups are negatively affected by bigotry
• Recognize their own personal prejudices
• Apply learnings to actively fight hate and intolerance
• Practice strategies to change personal prejudices

Skills to Learn
• Community Bridging
• Critical and Analytical Thinking

Materials Needed
• Laptop, projector, and screen
• Internet access
• Speakers
• Easel with chart paper or white board
• Post-its
• Markers

Facilitator’s Key
- Say out loud
- Video
- Conversation/Debrief
- Reference Powerpoint

Prerequisite?
What is Privilege?

More Than a Label Exercise 45 mins
The Pyramid of Hate 45 mins
Religious Intolerance 20 mins
Ways to Fight Hate 10 mins

Total Time 2 hours
More Than a Label Exercise

To start, I’m going to test your observational skills in this exercise.

➢ Show youth a set of photos on the screen (powerpoint attached)

➢ Look at each photo & write down the first word or words that come to mind about the person’s character in the photo. This should not be a description, as in “He’s wearing a blue coat,” but what they can tell about the person or his/her personality/values. This is a safe space, so you do not need to write down your answers. This exercise is meant to be a time for self-reflection, so please think to yourself and be honest with what your first thoughts are.

➢ Show the photos quickly, so the youth don’t have much time to rethink their initial impression/judgment.

➢ Ask the youth to shout out descriptors/answers they used for several of the photos. Write out the list on chart paper.

➢ Discuss why they made the choices that they did. What (false) assumptions were these descriptions based on?

➢ Show youth the second set of photos included in the powerpoint. Show paired photos side by side and ask youth to note to themselves their initial, unfiltered responses to associated questions that you ask for each pair of photos. The questions are included in the powerpoint.

➢ Discuss the youth’s answers and why they made the decisions that they did. What (false) assumptions were these decisions based on?

➢ Lead a brief discussion about bigotry (and how our assumptions and judgments play into it). Questions might include:

➢ What is bigotry? [have youth brainstorm and try to come up with a definition together.] Below are some examples

➢ a person who has strong, unreasonable ideas, esp. about race or religion, and who thinks anyone who does not have the same beliefs is wrong (Cambridge Dictionary)

➢ stubborn and complete intolerance of any creed, belief, or opinion that differs from one’s own. (Dictionary.com)

➢ obstinate or intolerant devotion to one’s own opinions and prejudices (Merriam Webster Dictionary)

➢ What are examples of some of the bigotries that society encourages?
More Than a Label Exercise (continued) 45 mins

➢ What bigotries did you notice from the activity we just did?
➢ Why do we often make snap judgments about others?
➢ How do our snap judgments affect our worldview and our ability to be good citizens?

_lead a brief discussion on “why we do it?” Sample questions might include:

➢ When we treat a person or group with prejudice, what do we get out of it?
➢ How does it make us feel?
➢ How does it make others feel?
➢ What kind of world are we creating when we judge another group?
➢ Ask youth to brainstorm: What actions can we take to reduce bigotry on both a personal and societal level?

Pyramid of Hate 45 mins

➢ Have participants close their eyes. Read out the following “have you ever?” questions and have them contemplate the answers in their heads:

➢ Overheard a joke that made fun of a person of a different ethnic background, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation?
➢ Been the target of name-calling because of your ethnic group, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation?
➢ Made fun of someone different from you?
➢ Left someone out of an activity because he/she was different from you?
➢ Not been invited to attend an activity or social function because many of the people there were different from you?
➢ Engaged in stereotyping (lumping together all people of a particular race, religion, or sexual orientation? i.e. White men can’t jump!)
➢ Been threatened by someone who is different from you because of your differences?
➢ Committed an act of violence against someone because that person was different from you?
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Pyramid of Hate (continued)

Lead a debrief discussion using some or all of the questions listed below:

➣ Why do you think people tell ethnic jokes about other groups, insult others, or exclude them socially? (A possible response might be that “others” are different.)

➣ Why would these differences cause a person to put down someone else? (Possible responses might be that it makes the person feel superior or more important, that he/she is afraid of the “other,” or that he/she fails to understand another’s culture.)

➣ Where do people learn to disrespect people who seem different? (Responses may include home, school, friends, or the media – newspapers, television, movies, and music.)

➣ Can you give examples of a prejudice you have perceived and/or learned through the media?

➣ Read the following case study out loud

In one school, a group of four boys began whispering and laughing about another boy in their school that they thought was gay. They began making comments when they walked by him in the hall. Soon, they started calling the boy insulting, anti-gay slurs. By the end of the month, they had taken their harassment to another level, tripping him when he walked by and pushing him into a locker while they yelled slurs. Sometime during the next month, they increased the seriousness of their conduct – they surrounded him and two boys held his arms while the others hit and kicked him. Eventually, one of the boys threatened to bring his father’s gun into school the next day to kill the boy. At this point, another student overheard the threat and the police were notified.

Debrief: Ask the students if something similar to this could happen at their school. How do they think a situation like this could affect the entire school? What could have been done to stop the situation from escalating? Who should have stopped it?

What you have been discussing a situation that started out as “whispering and laughing” and became more intense, escalating to violence. A visual way of describing this type of progression is called a Pyramid of Hate.
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Pyramid of Hate (continued)

➢ Draw a pyramid on chart paper/on the white board. Write only the titles of each pyramid level. Briefly review each level of the pyramid starting with Level I (use the ADL’s Pyramid of Hate supplement for reference.)

➢ Ask students to provide one or two examples to exemplify each level.

➢ Based on the case study, ask students the following questions:

  ➢ Where would you place “whispering and laughing” on the pyramid? (Level I)

  ➢ Why do you think that what seemed harmless initially progressed into violence?
    ➢ (Answers might include that nobody stopped it, that the perpetrators gained confidence that they could continue without interference or consequences, or that the victim did not seek help, etc.)

  ➢ Even if it seemed harmless to the perpetrators and bystanders, do you think it felt harmless to the victim? How do you think he felt?

  ➢ At what level of the pyramid do you think it would be easiest for someone to intervene? What would be some possible ways to intervene?

Religious Intolerance

We’ve talked a lot about bigotry today. Religious intolerance is one type of bigotry.

➢ Review a few examples of religious intolerance - ideally, use events that have occurred recently. Otherwise, you can find some examples below. Feel free to print out articles or have examples listed on chart paper.

  ➢ Corsican mayor bans burkini after violence at beach and protests
  ➢ Muslim Police Officer Sues NYPD Over Beard Ban (He was later reinstated)
  ➢ Man says facial hair got him kicked off Alaska Airlines flight
  ➢ Trump Says Racially Profiling Muslims Should Be The Country’s Response To San Bernardino
  ➢ Actor And Designer Waris Ahluwalia Kicked Off Plane Because Of His Turban
Religious Intolerance (continued)  20 mins

This type of intolerance, religious intolerance, is a major factor that leads to hate crimes.

➣ Review a few examples of hate crimes against Muslims - ideally, use events that have occurred recently. Otherwise, you can find some examples below. Feel free to print out articles or have examples listed on chart paper.
   ➢ Minneapolis Students Wounded After Drunken Gunman Opens Fire While Screaming ‘F*ck Muslims’
   ➢ Suspect charged with hate crime in murder of Lebanese neighbor
   ➢ Man Yells He Wants to ‘Kill Muslims,’ Attacks Store Owner in NYC: Police, Victim
   ➢ Man Charged With Arson in California Mosque Fire

These are all examples of Muslims being targeted and attacked. What was fueling hate towards this minority group?

Sikhs are also targeted in hate crimes – often because of our “foreign” external appearance.

Minority groups must stand together and fight hate collectively. Review a few examples of hate crimes against Sikhs - ideally, use events that have occurred recently. Otherwise, you can find some examples below. Feel free to print out articles or have examples listed on chart paper.
   ➢ Sikh man is hit by a truck and beaten by two men in Fresno hate crime
   ➢ Gunman, six others dead at Wisconsin Sikh temple
   ➢ Two Elderly Sikh American Men Shot in Possible Hate Crime
   ➢ Man Indicted On Hate Crime Charges After Allegedly Ramming Sikh Man In Queens
   ➢ The First 9/11 Backlash Fatality: The Murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi

As a collective community, we should avoid saying “Sikhs are not Muslim,” in response to a comment about terrorism because it implies that Muslims should be the target of bigotry. We should never throw another community under the bus, as no community deserves this kind of hate. Instead we should make it a learning opportunity to educate about Sikhism.

➣ Does anyone have any questions?
We all have a role to play in preventing hate crimes and stopping religious intolerance. This is part of our purpose and mission as Sikhs, and as activists—we must work to tackle hate crimes and injustices long before they take place, by stopping bullying based on religion and other factors in schools. There are a lot of ways we can combat hate. What are ways that you have seen others combat hate? Discuss.

(Write this out on chart paper before the workshop and set aside, or this is also available on the powerpoint for ease in presenting)

10 ways to Fight Hate

➢ Act
  Do something. In the face of hatred, apathy will be interpreted as acceptance by the perpetrators, the public, and — worse — the victims. Community members must take action; if we don’t, hate persists.

➢ Join Forces
  Reach out to allies from churches, schools, clubs, and other civic groups. Create a diverse coalition. Include children, police, and the media. Gather ideas from everyone, and get everyone involved.

➢ Support the Victims
  Those who have experienced hate crimes are especially vulnerable. If you have ever experience hate, bias or discrimination, report every incident — in detail — and ask for help. If you learn about a hate crime incident in your community, show support. Let them know you care. Surround them with comfort and protection.

➢ Speak up
  Hate must be exposed and denounced. Help news organizations achieve balance and depth. Do not debate hate group members in conflict-driven forums. Instead, speak up in ways that draw attention away from hate, toward unity.

➢ Educate Yourself
  An informed campaign improves its effectiveness. Determine if a hate group is involved, and research its symbols and agenda. Understand the difference between a hate crime and a bias incident.

➢ Create an alternative
  Do not attend a hate rally. Find another outlet for anger and frustration and for people’s desire to do something. Hold a unity rally or parade to draw media attention away from hate.
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Ways to Fight Hate 10 mins

➢ Pressure Leaders
Elected officials and other community leaders can be important allies. But some must overcome reluctance — and others, their own biases — before they’re able to take a stand.

➢ Stay Engaged
Promote acceptance and address bias before another hate crime can occur. Expand your comfort zone by reaching out to people outside your own groups.

➢ Teach Acceptance
Bias is learned early, often at home. Schools can offer lessons of tolerance and acceptance. Host a diversity and inclusion day on campus. Reach out to young people who may be susceptible to hate group propaganda and prejudice.

➢ Dig Deeper
Look inside yourself for biases and stereotypes. Commit to disrupting hate and intolerance at home, at school, in the workplace and in faith communities.

➢ Also direct youth to Sikh Coalition resources.

[If you want to end on a light/humorous note, screen this short video with Samantha Bee discussing Muslims in America.]

Wrap up the discussion by having youth offer reasons why they commit to helping combat hate.
Sources


Anti-Defamation League; USC Shoah Foundation Institute, University of Southern California, “Pyramid of Hate Exercise.” 2003.