

Ethnic confusion Britain 'Differentiating Sikhs from Asians'

Italian children assumed by turban meant I was an associate of Bin Laden

SINCE the defining moment of September 11th 2001 the world we live in changed forever and the geopolitical climate further endorsed the writings of Samuel Huntington, author of the book 'Clash of civilisations and the remaking of world order'.

Then of course came the London bombings of 7/7 which further accentuated the division of society into a bipolar 'us' and 'them'. As a consequence of the divisions that spawned from these terror attacks against Western Governments, the Sikh community sadly became the victims of mistaken identity across the globe. The Sikh experience across the world told a similar tale of ignorance and intolerance of the Sikh identity. The most shocking manifestation of this ignorance and 'mistaken identity' was the murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi in Mesa Arizona, days after the 9/11 attacks. He was shot five times by a gunman on September the 15th 2001. Sodhi's Killer Frank Roque was convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Anecdotally, I myself was also a victim of this 'ethnic confusion' in Venice in 2003, naturally the young Italian children assumed by 'turban' meant I was an associate of Bin Laden and that I resided in a cave in 'Torah Bora' and therefore screamed 'Bin Laden' at me, with the need of an encore generated by some older children nearby, joyfully heck-

ling their ice cream cone's during the barrage of insults. Since this incident and having spoken to many Sikhs on Panjab Radio, both turbaned and non turbaned who had had similar experiences home and abroad, I came to the heartfelt conclusion that some form of initiative had to take place to address the 'ethnic confusion' facing the Sikhs.

"We have had many concerned callers ring us up and talk about how they have become victimised or even physically attacked since 7/7, hearing the personal stories of these victims and the impact it has evidently had on their everyday lives is frightening" explains Satinder Singh from the Sweetsikhi Team, Panjab Radio.

"A Sikh man who spoke with us had worked for the railways was spurned by his colleagues post 7/7 and also was spat at by a group of passers by because they assumed he was an Arab and something to do with Osama Bin Laden. This behaviour is both disgusting and uncalled for" he Added An inspiration came in the form of Valarie Kaur, the director of Divided we fall Americans in the aftermath. A young University student who took it upon herself to make a documentary film and catalogue the stories which the mainstream media missed. Stories of hate crimes and reprisals against in the main, American Sikhs.

In America Valarie Kaur and Dawinder Sidhu set up DNSI in 2004. Discrimination

and National Security intelligence initiative, this is a non profit project affiliated to the eminent Harvard University pluralism project. www.dnsi.org/blog/

The Discrimination & National Security Initiative (DNSI) is a research entity that examines the mistreatment of minority communities during times of military action or national crisis. "The human consequences of a backlash are not reduced to statistics or numbers, but are still real and should be presented to the general public and policy-makers for their consideration," says Dawinder 'Dave' Sidhu, a civil rights attorney with the federal government and co-founder and co-director of the DNSI project along with Kaur.

"These human consequences of a backlash include a Sikh boy deciding to cut his hair in the hope that he will be more accepted by his peers, a Muslim couple avoiding air travel, or even families moving back to their countries of origin," explains Sidhu. In March 2007, having been motivated by the American Sikhs spirit and drive for increased awareness of the issues at hand, <http://ethnicconfusionbritain.blogspot.com/> blog was launched with the following premise in mind.

(1) To chronicle the mistreatment of Sikhs post 9/11 and 7/7, with a look at Global incidents, however a focus on Britain.

(2) To Survey the surfers of the site and produce reports and data that will be available for reference and referral.

Nick Geering is a contributor to 'Ethnic confusion Britain' an Oxford/Bristol Graduate with an interest in worldwide ignorance of ethnic diversity.

"Just the other day I was wondering what we could achieve if the indigenous UK population were only a tiny bit less ignorant of the constituent beliefs of the country."

Then I answered the door. I was asked to hold a parcel for the neighbours, the delivery man would not leave the parcel with the family on the other side of the recipients' house 'because' "they're Sikhs, and Sikhs are funny people." I am willing to bet he was not referring to the pointed comedy of Hardeep Singh Kohli (Glasgow's finest) and can only conclude that he has taken a step forward in awareness, but that the level of tolerance has not advanced." Mr Geering Said.

One of the advantages of the site is that it allows us to provide news and commentary in a fluid and dynamic format. We look forward in reporting the results from our first survey to analyse the effects of 'Ethnic confusion' and encourage everyone to participate in the questionnaire and providing their comments via logging onto the site. <http://ethnicconfusionbritain.blogspot.com/blog>

Hardeep Singh



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