WE ARE SIKHS
Our IMPACT. Our STORY.
Friends,

The concept of National Sikh Campaign humbly started in 2013 on the back of a Starbucks napkin. Over the course of four years, a small band of volunteers committed to introducing their faith and values to their neighbors after the tragic shooting in Oak Creek, Wisconsin grew into a nationwide movement.

Because of your support, National Sikh Campaign’s We Are Sikhs initiative in 2017 gained the backing of advisers that have counseled Presidents Obama and Bush, as well as former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, reached over 92 million people, and demonstrably improved awareness of Sikh Americans in Fresno, California and Phoenix, Arizona — two areas of the United States most impacted by hate crimes on Sikh Americans.

Accordingly, the Sikh American community has had more positive and informative coverage in 2017 than any other year in our over 100-year history in the United States. After struggling for decades to communicate our values in the United States, the We Are Sikhs initiative helped our community communicate our values and our story on our terms.

Most importantly, this campaign has demonstrated that – no matter how polarized our current politics and culture may be – our common values are more important than our differences.

Your support has is sincerely appreciated. We look forward to the work ahead.

Very best,

The National Sikh Campaign and We Are Sikhs Team

Dr. Rajwant Singh
Gurwin Singh Ahuja
Shawn Singh Ghuman
Neha Bhatti
Inderpal Singh
Pritpal Singh
Surinder Singh
Sumeet Kaur
Sandy Kaur Dhilliwal
Jas Sajjan
Jivan Singh Achreja
THE MAKING OF A MOVEMENT

This is a story about what is possible when a group of committed individuals transforms their deeply held convictions into action. It is not easy to change hearts and minds, but that is exactly what a group of everyday Sikh Americans set out to do when we began the National Sikh Campaign in 2014.

Rallied to action by the 2012 mass shooting in an Oak Creek, Wisconsin Gurdwara that sent shockwaves of grief and fear throughout Sikh communities—and sustained by the belief that Sikh values truly reflect the core tenets of the American ethos—the individuals behind the National Sikh Campaign volunteered countless hours, weeks, and years assembling what would become the most extensive awareness campaign ever coordinated for Sikhs in America.

Yet we were not alone on this journey. In the pages of this report, you will meet the people and organizations—both within and outside the Sikh community—who committed time, words, resources, and energy to setting the record straight on who Sikhs are and what values we stand for.

In cities like Fresno, California, the needle is already moving: nearly 80% of residents who saw our campaign ads report knowing “some” or “a great deal” about Sikhs in America. Nationally, the campaign generated over 500 stories in the media and won the support of local and national government leaders, as well as prominent institutions ranging from the National Council of Churches to the Center for American Progress.

HOW DID WE DO IT?
Read on to learn the answers to these questions and more:

• What impact did we have, and whose perceptions of Sikhs changed most?
• How did we mobilize key leaders from across the political spectrum?
• Why is one of our ads called “funny neighbors,” and what made it our most effective?
• What’s next for We Are Sikhs?
On August 5, 2012, a white supremacist fatally shot six Sikhs and injured several others as they gathered to prepare a community meal inside their place of worship in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. This dark and harrowing day was not the first time Sikh Americans suffered violence at the hands of fellow countrymen ignorant to the peaceful identity of the Sikh community. Painfully, it wouldn’t be the last.

While Sikhs endured discrimination throughout their immigrant experience to the United States beginning in the early 1900s, the false association of turban-wearing Sikhs with terrorism in the years following September 11th marked a heightened level of widespread bigotry and hate.

In July 2014, the National Sikh Campaign recruited Hart Research Associates to conduct a qualitative and quantitative research study on Americans’ perceptions of the Sikh community. We wanted to go beyond the most striking incidents of violence and discrimination and better understand—what do everyday Americans know and think about Sikhs?

The results were dramatic: most Americans don’t know who Sikhs are or what we believe in:

- While 99% of American men who wear turbans are Sikh, just one in 10 Americans could identify a man wearing a turban as a Sikh. Americans were much more likely to identify turban wearers as Middle Eastern or Muslim.
- 60% of Americans said they “know nothing at all” about Sikhs.
- 31% of Americans claim they have never seen a Sikh before, and nearly 70% have never interacted personally with a member of the Sikh community.
- While 16% of Americans feel cool or cold toward Sikhs, the majority (56%) feels neutral.

The last point illustrates the opportunity we have as Sikh Americans to positively influence a significant number of Americans who are simply unaware of our faith.

“I don’t know anything about Sikhs. It’s the first time I’ve ever heard that word. I’m judgmental about it, and I’ll admit it.” – Focus group participant, Chicago

The greatest challenges facing Sikhs in America stem from a lack of awareness about our faith and values. By working with Hart Research Associates, a national leader in research methodology, we were able to gather insights on Americans’ perceptions of Sikhs with unprecedented rigor and technical sophistication.

Hart Research Associates has conducted polling for prominent institutions including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the United Nations Foundation, and Harvard University. The Chief Pollster who led the research for our study was Geoff Garin, Chief Strategic Advisor to the 2008 Hillary Clinton presidential campaign.

By incorporating existing reports such as Turban Myths conducted by the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) and Go Home, Terrorist, conducted by the Sikh Coalition, Hart Research Associates was able to build on and strengthen a long history of Sikh American studies.
We Are Sikhs: Our Impact. Our Story.

FINDING THE WORDS TO MAKE OUR MESSAGE HEARD

In addition to helping our team better understand the extent of Americans’ knowledge of Sikhism, our study also investigated how core tenets of Sikh faith could be used to create messages that would resonate with the average American and leave the greatest impression with listeners.

The results showed that while most Americans know little or nothing about Sikh Americans and some feel uncertain or anxious upon seeing Sikhs, there is enormous potential to enhance positive feelings toward Sikh Americans through education and awareness building:

• A description of Sikh religion, beliefs, and history in America evokes a strong, positive reaction—nearly two in three survey respondents (65%) rated their feelings as highly favorable (ratings of 8-10 on a 0-10 scale) after hearing the description, including initially skeptical audiences such Republicans and Americans who did not attend college.

• The most effective messages connect Sikhism with American values, particularly equality and religious freedom, and describe how Sikhs embody the quintessential American immigrant story.

After completing the most thorough perception study on Sikhs ever conducted in the United States, we had determined the messages that would help us turn the dial on awareness and tolerance of Sikhs in America. Armed with key insights and strategies, we set out to take action on making the We Are Sikhs campaign a reality.

Messaging significantly increases positive attributes associated with Sikh Americans.

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<th>Pre-Messaging</th>
<th>Post-Messaging</th>
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<td>33%</td>
<td>68%</td>
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<td>They are generally hard workers</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<td>They are generally generous and kind</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<td>They are generally good neighbors</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<td>They are generally patriotic</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<td>They generally have American values</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>61%</td>
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How We Did It

Pre-campaign polling began with three focus groups of white Americans with mixed education levels and ages in Iselin, NJ and Chicago, IL. Following the focus groups, a national survey of 1,000+ non-Asian Americans was conducted online, allowing respondents to view and react to images of Sikh Americans and engage in interactive exercises to gauge which messages stood out most.

“‘The fact that Sikh Americans stand for equality and individual rights stands out to me. I feel more positive toward Sikh Americans knowing they have the same ideals as our Founding Fathers.’” – National survey participant
We identified Fresno, California as a city where our message stood to have a profound effect on the everyday lives of the Sikhs who live there.

Fresno and the surrounding areas forming California’s Central Valley have been home to Sikhs for over 100 years. The first Sikh gurdwara in the United States was built in the region in 1912, and since then it has become an area with one of the most heavily concentrated Sikh populations in the country. In 2016, two Sikh men living in Fresno—Gurcharan Singh Gill and Amrik Singh Bal—were victims of brutal hate crimes.

In an effort to build a safer future for the hundreds of Sikh families who call the region home, we worked with local gurdwaras to launch the Fresno component of the national We Are Sikhs campaign. This localized approach allowed us to use many of the same tactics as the national campaign, such as digital and television advertisements and earned media placements, while also going deeper at a grassroots level through influencer outreach and community events.

While gauging mindset shifts at the national level would have been difficult, in Fresno we were able to conduct comprehensive perception polls before and after our ad campaign, allowing us to clearly see changes in perceptions toward Sikhs among residents who had seen our ads versus those who had not.

“The campaign’s power comes from storytelling. As Sikhs, we have to tell our story in order to build a new future for Sikh American youth—one where they can focus more on becoming class president and focus less on making it through the day without being bullied. As Americans, we have to tell our story because through these interactions we contribute to the hard work of fulfilling America’s promise of one nation united.”

– Dr. Rajwant Singh, cofounder, National Sikh Campaign
We Are Sikhs: Our Impact. Our Story.

OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE

Taking place from April 2017 to July 2017, We Are Sikhs achieved significant and measurable progress toward our goal of increasing Americans’ knowledge on who Sikhs are and what values and contributions we bring to the United States.

We informed Americans on the facts of Sikhism. 59 percent of Fresno residents—a clear majority—say they know at least something about Sikhs who live in America. The proportion of residents who saw the ads are nearly twice as likely to say they know at least something about Sikhs who live in America (78 percent) than those who did not see the ads (40 percent).

More Americans feel confident about their knowledge of the religion. 58 percent of Americans who saw our ads know that Sikhism is an independent religion, and 61 percent know it originated in India—a dramatic increase compared to just 34 percent who knew these facts before the campaign.

We shifted perceptions on the values Sikhs represent. 54 percent of Americans who saw our ads reported “warm” or “very warm” feelings toward Sikhs, while just 29 percent of those who did not see the ads reported these positive associations.

The perceptions on Sikhs in America that showed the most dramatic polling increases reflected key themes of the campaign. In our Fresno polling:

- 67% of those who saw ads feel Sikhs believe in equality and respect for all people. This is 31% higher than those who did not see ads.
- 60% of those who saw ads feel Sikhs have American values. This is 25% higher than those who did not see ads.
- 68% of those who saw ads feel Sikhs are good neighbors. This is 33% higher than those who did not see ads.

MEASURING OUR IMPACT

To measure impact at the national level, we used reach as a key indicator—how many Americans heard our messages? How many stories did we generate in the media, and which leaders were speaking with key demographics on our behalf?

At the local level in Fresno, we were able to go a step further and measure how our campaign influenced individual perceptions on Sikhs in America. Through randomized phone polling conducted by Hart Research Associates among non-Sikh Fresno residents before and after the We Are Sikhs ad campaign ran locally, we acquired comprehensive data on what people know and how they feel about Sikhs.

Though local in scope, this data offers important insights that validate the larger We Are Sikhs campaign — exposure and education can and do positively shift Americans’ perceptions on Sikhs.

“Thousands of Sikhs call California home. We must always welcome people of diverse backgrounds and religions. #WeAreSikhs” – Xavier Becerra, Attorney General of California

92 MILLION IMPRESSIONS WERE GENERATED
(Opportunities for individuals to engage with our content)

500+ STORIES ABOUT SIKS IN AMERICA

We mobilized influential voices to speak up for Sikhs in America.

We won bipartisan support from government and private sector leaders, including California State Senator Andy Vidak, U.S. Congressman Jim Costa, and even President Barack Obama’s administration. Organizations ranging from the American Conservative Union to the Islamic Networks Group joined our movement and lent their voices to our cause.
Beginning in April 2017, we launched a first-of-its-kind television ad campaign, bringing the many different faces and voices of Sikh Americans to the living rooms of families across the country.

The ads, featuring Sikhs of different ages, genders, occupations, and even races, focused on the values Sikhs represent, the meaning behind the turban, and the Sikh immigrant pursuit of the American dream. Through pre-campaign perception studies conducted by Hart Research Associates, these themes were identified as having the greatest potential to positively influence Americans’ feelings toward their Sikh neighbors.

The messages are told through the voices of Sikhs themselves and the ads use more than just words to convey key ideas—Sikhs are seen living out their values at home around the dinner table and “funny neighbors” ad, featuring a diverse group of Sikh Americans explaining their shared values and favorite television shows, performed best. It evoked positive feelings among 73% of viewers, and also ranked as most likely to capture and hold viewers’ attention. Finding common ground, whether in television shows or values, worked: survey participants reported feeling that “Sikhs are people just like me” and “Sikhs share American values.”

In order to ensure our ads were clear, compelling, and memorable, we partnered with Hart Research Associates to conduct a national online ad test. The survey presented hundreds of Americans with several versions of commercials we had filmed and produced, asking them what messages they took away from each.

The ad, featuring a diverse group of Sikh Americans explaining their shared values and favorite television shows, performed best. It evoked positive feelings among 73% of viewers, and also ranked as most likely to capture and hold viewers’ attention. Finding common ground, whether in television shows or values, worked: survey participants reported feeling that “Sikhs are people just like me” and “Sikhs share American values.”

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The ads reached Americans nationally through placements on CNN’s New Day and AC360, Fox News’ Special Report with Bret Baier, and Fox Business’ Morning with Maria and Lou Dobbs Tonight, as well as targeting Fresno, California markets locally, home to one of the nation’s largest Sikh populations. The 35,000+ Sikhs who live in Fresno have experienced violence and discrimination at shocking rates, making it a critical community to focus on educating, informing and changing perceptions nationwide. It presented the achievements and progress of our campaign.

Through pre and post campaign surveys in Fresno, we can clearly see the achievements and progress of our campaign.

REACHING NEW AUDIENCES: 54% of Fresno residents recalled seeing or hearing something on TV or in the media about Sikhs in the United States. Most were able to recall seeing commercials about how Sikhs share American values.

SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS: Of those who saw the ads, their perception of Sikhs as embodying American values grew substantially.

BUILDING AWARENESS: 57% of residents who saw the ads would associate a bearded man wearing a turban with Sikhism, compared to just 26% of residents who did not see the ads.

BUILDING CONNECTIONS: The proportion of respondents who said that they know a Sikh American personally grew across all demographics following the campaign, including a 23% increase among women over 50.

WHY MIGHT THIS BE?

• Now more aware about Sikhs, viewers realized that they do in fact know someone who is Sikh—they just never made the connection.

• Our commercials were successful in helping viewers connect with Sikhs on an individual level, a key step in overcoming divisive stereotypes.

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EARLY ON IN THE CAMPAIGN, WE REALIZED THAT DESPITE SEVERAL SOURCES COVERING THE DETAILED HISTORY AND THEOLOGICAL NUANCES OF THE SIKH RELIGION, THERE WAS NO WEB CONTENT CREATED SPECIFICALLY WITH THE AUDIENCE OF NON-SIKH AMERICANS IN MIND.

In order to serve as a go-to learning hub for individuals with little to no formal knowledge of Sikhs in America, we launched www.WeAreSikhs.org.

The website uses language that everyone can understand to tell the story of Sikhism’s founding and origins, answer frequently asked questions on Sikh beliefs and lifestyle, highlight Sikhs’ contributions to the United States, and more. All content was fact checked and approved by knowledgeable Sikh experts.

Inspired by the findings of our 2014 perception study, the website clearly conveys the alignment between Sikh and American values including gender equality, racial diversity, freedom of religion, equality of opportunity, and service to country and community.

In addition to learning about Sikh religion and culture, visitors to the site can:
- Use the Gurudwara Finder to locate the nearest Sikh place of worship
- Register to receive campaign updates and learn about upcoming events
- Sign a petition against hate and intolerance
- Donate to help reach more Americans with stories of Sikhs in America

WeAreSikhs.org will function as a lasting resource for Sikhs to direct curious new friends and acquaintances, and for non-Sikhs to find clear and accurate facts on the beliefs and identity of Sikhs in America.

In order to engage Americans and Sikh community members where they already are—on their smartphones—we launched Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages where Sikhs and non-Sikhs actively engage in supporting the campaign and pushing our messages to new audiences. These growing social media communities are the first of their kind, dedicated to addressing the discrimination of Sikhs in America through positive stories and education.
We Are Sikhs: Our Impact. Our Story.

GRASSROOTS ACTION AND EARNED MEDIA

After years of information gathering, preparation, and rollout of the multi-faceted We Are Sikhs campaign, one of the most exciting components was the support and contributions of those outside the campaign team.

From media reporters, to political leaders, to volunteers at local gurdwaras, the many individuals and institutions that stood up to be part of this movement helped transform it into something greater than what any of us could have accomplished alone.

500+ news stories highlighting the We Are Sikhs campaign were published in local, national, and international media outlets. These sources include:

"Get to know a Sikh and you will make a new friend."
– Jim Patterson, California Assemblyman, in an op-ed encouraging Fresno community members to learn more about their Sikh neighbors

POWERS VOTES SPEAK UP FOR SIKHS
Throughout the campaign, dozens of high-profile leaders representing a diverse array of political affiliations and social ideologies spoke out against the discrimination of Sikh Americans in forums ranging from town hall meetings to Twitter. These included:

David Axelrod, CNN contributor and former Obama administration staffer
Jon Favreau, Actor and Film Maker
Neera Tanden, Advisor, Center for American Progress
Andy Vidal, CA State Senate

Melissa Rogers, Director, Faith Dept. in Obama administration
Jim Costa, U.S. Congressman
Xavier Becerra, CA Attorney General
David Valadao, U.S. Congressman
Randi Weingarten, Head of the American Teachers Federation

SIKHS RESCUE JULY FOURTH FIREWORKS DISPLAY
When the mayor of Visalia, in California’s Central Valley, mentioned to a local Sikh that the city might have to cancel their annual July Fourth fireworks display due to financial concerns, the We Are Sikhs Fresno community stepped up to ensure the show would go on.

The news of the Sikh community’s $10,000 donation spread quickly, and carried with it the message that Sikhs are indeed patriotic and enjoy celebrating the freedoms of America alongside their neighbors of diverse faiths and backgrounds. Adding to the fireworks display, other grassroots events across the region attracted media attention to the campaign and fostered personal connections among Sikhs and fellow Americans. These included:

- A campaign launch press conference with Fresno Mayor Lee Brand, members of the City Council, and other friends and allies of the community.
- We Are Sikhs’ sponsorship of a Fresno Grizzlies minor league baseball game, with a young member of the Sikh community throwing the first pitch and dozens of Sikhs carrying the American flag out onto the field during the national anthem.
- We Are Sikhs’ sponsorship of a cultural exchange event in Selma, attracting 400+ attendees who learned about Sikhism and other religions and cultures through food, dance, and conversation.

TYING TURBANS IN TIMES SQUARE
In partnership with the Sikhs of New York, We Are Sikhs participated in an event in Times Square where both Sikhs and non-Sikhs wrapped 8,000 turbans on passerby’s heads while teaching them about Sikh values.

BUILDING TOLERANCE IN THE CLASSROOM
Sikh students in Montgomery County, Maryland hosted after-school events at their local gurdwara to share their faith and culture with teachers. The students developed skills for advocating on behalf of their community and equipped their teachers to be allies for religious tolerance within the school system.
**KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR CAMPAIGN AND MULTI-FaITH ALLIANCE**

The final months of 2015 marked a rise in religious discrimination and violence following deadly terror attacks both abroad and in the United States. In order to promote increased unity among diverse religious and non-religious groups during this distressing time, *We Are Sikhs* spearheaded a nationwide alliance of over 15 faith and civil rights non-profits to join forces for peace.

With leadership from the National Sikh Campaign, this interfaith coalition launched *Know Your Neighbor*, a campaign encouraging citizens to reach out and get to know people in their communities in order to increase understanding and decrease the tensions that can lead to threats against religious liberty.

**KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

- From March to June 2016, the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, in partnership with U.S. Attorneys and other federal agencies, hosted community roundtables across the country that focused on issues elevated by the Know Your Neighbor alliance.

- The Justice Department released a 2016 report titled *Combating Religious Discrimination Today* and announced new steps to combat religious discrimination. These include the Department of Education issuing a revised online complaint form to better serve individuals who believe they have experienced racial, ethnic, or national origin discrimination involving their religion, and the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA updating their websites to highlight trainings and guidance for communities on how to protect their houses of worship.

- We launched *#ChangeTheStory* for people to share positive stories of interfaith encounters and relationships in order to counter negative media messages about religion as a divisive force.

- Today, the alliance has grown into a collaborative effort of nearly 100 national and regional organizations and groups with diverse missions and objectives, working together on campaigns that push back against bigotry and discrimination while promoting civil dialogue across differences. Learn more: knowyourneighbor.us

- In January 2017, the US Army announced a permanent exemption from its uniform policy for unshorn beards and turbans—led by members of the *Know Your Neighbor* coalition.

**KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR CAMPAIGN AND MULTI-FAITH ALLIANCE**

"Community leaders of various faiths have joined together to launch an innovative public awareness campaign called *Know Your Neighbor*. I want to applaud the spirit of mutual respect and collaboration that they bring to this vital work of community engagement."

— Vanita Gupta, Head of the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice during the Obama administration
PRESSING FORWARD IN DIFFICULT TIMES

As we write this report, tensions are high in cities and towns across America.

In the past year alone, we’ve watched unthinkable acts of violence unfold and time again, including most recently in Charlottesville, Virginia, where a white supremacist drove a car into a crowd of anti-racist protesters, killing a young woman. In February, three men were shot and one killed in a suburban Kansas bar when a shooter targeted a pair of Indian patrons and was heard yelling “get out of my country”. Just a few months earlier, a Sikh American man was shot in an anti-immigrant hate crime in Kent, Washington while working on his car in his own driveway.

The forces of discrimination and intolerance at work in our communities and country each day are real and powerful.

Yet so too are the voices of Americans who are uniting unlike ever before to vocalize the belief that America is a country that succeeds because of our diversity—not in spite of it.

While we alone can’t extinguish all of the complex factors that lead to heartbreaking acts of violence, we can promote facts, critical thinking, and human connection—all of which lead to greater unity over time.

Through the promising results of the We Are Sikhs campaign, and the many unprecedented efforts and partnerships that led to our success, we can say with bold certainty that is possible to change hearts and minds. Today’s skeptics and fearers of Sikhism—and any other misunderstood group—have the potential to become our greatest allies tomorrow. For this reason, our work continues.

WHAT’S NEXT FOR WE ARE Sikhs

Energized by the momentum of this campaign, we are currently raising funds to continue reaching out to our neighbors through grassroots efforts, purchasing much-needed advertising, and engaging with new communities to advance our goals.

With every mind we are able to change, we bring our country one step closer to embracing the differences that make our communities stronger. We offer our sincere thanks to our generous supporters—past, current, and future—who are making this progress possible.

I n recognition of the tremendous results of the We Are Sikhs campaign in 2017, the National Sikh Campaign (NSC) won the PRWeek U.S. Award for ‘Best Cause’, an honor firmly established as the communications industry’s highest accolade. A PR Week award is often referred to as an “Oscar” in the PR and marketing industry.

We Are Sikhs was among five finalists for the “Best for a Cause” award, which recognizes the premier marketing communications cause showing a tangible, worthwhile benefit to a specific community. The campaign competed against Cigna Health Insurance, Facebook’s FWD.us, Planet Fitness, and Clorox/Brita.

It’s an incredible feeling to know that our work won this award in a category filled with other excellent campaigns that have also made a tremendous social impact. It is also incredible to have won the award in 2017—a year marked by social activism campaigns.

The National Sikh Campaign was also a finalist for a Shorty Awards, which honors the best of social media by recognizing influencers on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat. Previous winners include Michelle Obama, JK Rowling, Adele, Bill Nye the Science Guy, Neil Degrasse Tyson and DJ Khaled.

We want to deeply thank all our donors and supporters. The campaign started as a small team working in coffee shops and college libraries in Washington D.C., and within a few short years the campaign grew into a nationwide movement.

Countless Sikhs have had to face bullying, discrimination, and hate crimes due to the lack of understanding of our faith and our values. Our community decided that we needed to take a stand by using this campaign to share the Sikh American story and share our values. Thousands of Sikhs across the country volunteered and donated to make this campaign a reality with the ultimate intention of creating a better future for their children and loved ones.

This campaign absolutely would not have made it this far without these folks.

Accordingly, these honors do not belong to National Sikh Campaign. They belong to the entire Sikh community.