

**Testimony of Pardeep Singh Kaleka**  
*before the*  
**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security**  
**Committee on the Judiciary**  
**on**  
**“The Rise in Violence Against Minority Institutions”**  
**February 17, 2022**

Chairwoman Bass, Ranking Member Biggs, and distinguished members of the subcommittee:  
Thank you for welcoming me to testify today.

My name is Pardeep Singh Kaleka. I am a former police officer, educator, and trauma clinician; I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee. Today, however, I come before you as a member of the Sikh American community whose life was forever changed by the 2012 assault on the Gurudwara, our Sikh house of worship, in Oak Creek, Wisconsin.

On Sunday, August 5th, 2012, my family was on our way to the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin when my daughter confessed that she had forgotten her notebook for Sunday school. I'll admit that I was a little bit irritated, but we returned to our house, found the notebook in question, and headed out again.

When we arrived at the Gurudwara, the parking lot was filled with police vehicles. My immediate concern was for my mother and father, who were always among the first to arrive and prepare for services. I received a call from someone inside the building who told me that my father had been shot; that conversation was interrupted by a call from my mother, who whispered that she was hiding with others inside the building. My concern turned into urgency to find out if our loved ones were safe.

Eventually, it was confirmed that my father, Satwant Singh Kaleka, was among six worshippers who were killed in the attack, along with Paramjit Kaur Saini, Sita Singh, Ranjit Singh, Prakash Singh, and Suveg Singh Khattra. A seventh individual, Baba Punjab Singh, passed away in 2020 due to complications from the injuries he sustained that day. If my daughter had not forgotten her notebook, we could have also been killed.

Rather than turning inward in anguish and anger, we chose to believe that this country, its ideals, and its promise are worth fighting for. For example, not long after, we began a campaign

with the Sikh Coalition to ensure that anti-Sikh sentiment would be tracked and reported to the FBI; once the Bureau began cataloging anti-Sikh hate crimes, their reports have shown what every Sikh in America already knew: that we are among the top five most frequently targeted faith communities.

When we learned that the shooter, Wade Michael Page, had extensive ties to the white supremacist movement, I befriended Arno Michaelis, a former white supremacist and the founder of the Milwaukee chapter of the hate organization that Page belonged to. Over the past 10 years, Arno and I have traveled to countless cities; consulted with local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies; and spoken to thousands of people on how to prevent hate in their own communities. I also now work as a de-radicalization clinician with Parents4Peace and as a consultant with Not In Our Town. These organizations are on the front lines, providing counseling and treatment plans to engage entire communities and help individuals turn away from hate.

Despite these best efforts, hate continues to threaten too many minority communities in our country. A Black church was attacked in South Carolina. Synagogues were assaulted in Pennsylvania, California, and Texas. Masjids have been targeted for vandalism, arson, and violence across the country. And individuals--from these communities and still others--are increasingly targeted in hate crimes year after year. All of this comes from of a toxic mix of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and white supremacy.

As we meet this challenge, I urge you to ensure that the policies you implement to protect marginalized communities cannot be turned against us. Post-9/11 surveillance and profiling eroded trust in law enforcement and harmed Black and brown families--all while white supremacist extremism went largely unchecked. We must shift our framework to counter extremism from one fixated on security and law enforcement to one rooted in public health and community engagement.

We must further invest in our communities and empower the advocates who are leading at the local level. We have to de-radicalize those who are entrenched in hate, and invest in early stage interventions that work to cure the pain that often precedes acts of violence in our society. One way to do this is by ensuring that what is taught in our schools is both accurate and represents the rich tapestry that makes up America; another way is to hold social media platforms accountable for violent hate speech.

There are also bills that Congress could pass today. The Justice for Victims of Hate Crimes Act would instantly improve how we charge hate crimes; we can then further improve our data tracking around these crimes with additional legislation. Passing the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act would more effectively combat white supremacist extremism. And finally, we can better facilitate access to federal resources, like the Non-Profit Security Grant, to protect sacred places--like our own gurdwara in Oak Creek.

We can do all of these things and more, but only if we are willing to work together in pursuit of prevention and safety through a whole-of-society approach. As a father who is fighting to make a better world for my children, that is my wish--and that is why, above all else, I am here today.