

Mistaken Identity - Sikh Americans

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"MISTAKEN IDENTITY: Sikhs in America" is a film for television that *triumphs in breaking down misconceptions and barriers*. This is one example of bridging the mainstream media to our communities by the young **Host, Amanda Gesine, Producer and Director, Vinanti Sarkar** and **Philip Marshall** (4-time Emmy award winning editor) and music by the popular, Dya Singh of Australia.

Since September 11, our use of the media to provide compelling stories that share our common humanity to mainstream America is often a reaction to individual events - more often than not tragic events.

This TV program *touches on the experiences of Sikh Americans using the post September 11 climate as a back drop* and uniquely charts a journey of discovery of the Sikh American heritage, over 100 years, through the eyes of 23 old Armanda Gesine, host and investigative journalist. *A young white American girl, sheltered like so much of American society behind a white picket fence*, she speaks candidly of her view of the world, "September 11 changed us all-the question is whether it changed us for the better or for the worse? It was not only a **wake up** call but also a **sense of innocence lost and the coming of age for my generation**. Stories of cultural diversity *not only need to be told but celebrated*".

A student at Georgetown University, Amanda immediately *saw the light at the end of tunnel and sought to break new ground in bringing stories of cultural diversity to an American audience which she felt is more relevant now than ever*. She saw 'the demonization' of the turban and the beard create a huge backlash against Sikh Americans, and felt *if making this film will save one life then we will make a difference*. *"I believe in this project. If I can help one person understand more about the Sikhs, I hope it will be a domino effect to educate others"*.

With **Amanda's** initiation, the television documentary discusses the experiences of Sikhs in America, *demytifying the enigma of Sikh Americans* and *shares the hopes and desires of Americans from all backgrounds who seek to close ranks against bigotry and hate and make a united stand against terrorism*. Sadly Amanda died of a tragic accident this summer. Her deep compassion, vibrant spirit, love of life, and sense of peace, will be greatly missed, after having shared her life with us for nine months in making this TV program. We all loved her. This is her legacy to her fellow Americans and non-Sikhs worldwide.

Festival of Lights

With Diwali, the festival of lights, soon approaching us ***this television program is very poignant and in its own way seeks to be a beacon***, to mainstream America to ***gain positive insights through music, wisdom and rich imagery that leaves them with a compelling empathy towards the South Asian American community.***

The lighting of candles is a universal gesture that is widely understood as an ***act of silent prayer, solidarity***, and for some the ***sense of seeking to illuminate the feeling of darkness around them.***

For those of us who celebrate or participate in the spirit of Diwali, let us light a candle this year - firm in ***the conviction that where there is darkness let there be light, thus where there is ignorance let there be truth.***

With extensive travel across the United States, filming over 40 hours of footage, "MISTAKEN IDENTITY: Sikhs in America" was produced and directed by **Vinanti Sarkar**, President of WLWD Inc, New York (a boutique digital television production house). With six cameramen, shooting over nine months, it is being supported by one voice "**United We Must Stand**".

Initial funds were raised by the Executive Producers from the United Kingdom (Paul Cane and Nirmala Sarkar), American {Mainland} Chinese (Ava Chien), Taiwanese (Shinging Sung), Pakistani (Shahid Hussain), fellow Sikh Americans (Teji "Tony" Singh and Vikram Chatwal), Virginia Stuart (Providence, RI), and members of the Punjabi American Heritage Society in Yuba City and the Sikh Educational and Cultural Society of Indianapolis.

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