



# OAK CREEK

## Educator's Guide



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## Welcome

This guide is designed for educators and students to learn about the stories of Sikh Americans and the Oak Creek mass shooting on August 5, 2012 through the work of Sikh American activist Valarie Kaur. At the time, the Oak Creek shooting was the worst attack on a U.S. house of worship in nearly 50 years. Although Sikhs have been often targeted for hate violence, especially after the attacks of September 11, 2001, Sikhs are not merely victims. The story of Sikhs in Oak Creek, and in America as a whole, is one of resilience, service, bravery, and revolutionary love.

2022 marks the ten year anniversary of the shooting. We honor this anniversary as a time to remember, grieve, and continue to fight against white nationalist violence and the protection of the lives and dignity of all people. We invite you to use this guide to teach about Sikh Americans and commemorate the Oak Creek shooting through Kaur's book *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*.

In this guide, we explore Sikh American stories in Kaur's book through critical thinking questions, dialogue, and reflection activities. We aim to illustrate how this story teaches us all how to wonder, grieve, fight, breathe, and reimagine a nation where all are free of violence, and to be able to live with dignity and joy.

These lessons from Sikh Americans continue to be urgent in teaching about and responding to white supremacist violence that continues to target Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in present day. This work is especially urgent in present time, as we grieve those lost in the mass shootings in Atlanta, GA and Indianapolis, IN in 2021; in Buffalo, NY and in Uvalde, Texas and so many other sites of violence in 2022.

This guide contains a lesson plan designed for classroom educators in grades 9-12 and above. They can also be adapted for use on college campuses and in communities. We invite all educators—classroom teachers, community leaders, faith leaders, youth workers—to use this guide and utilize these stories to equip Americans to make brave choices, now and in the future. To read about how one elementary school educator taught about what happened in Oak Creek, [read this article](#).

## Learning goals

This guide has two primary goals:

1. To teach and learn from the stories, experiences, and contributions of Sikh Americans during and after the Oak Creek shooting, in order to inform our commitments to justice in the present day.
2. To explore the practices of revolutionary love in transforming ourselves, our communities, our nation, and world.

This educational guide is premised the following understandings:

- *Grieving collectively with others is an act of revolutionary love. Grieving gives us information to fight against injustice in solidarity with others.* Ten years after Oak Creek, we remember and grieve with the survivors to honor those who were lost and those whose lives were forever changed. These practices of grieving can help to inform our commitments to act in solidarity with Sikhs and all communities experiencing violence.
- *We recognize that hate violence is not merely the acts of individuals, but an outcome of the violent structures of white supremacy that are embedded in our nation's history and current structures.* While we focus here on the experiences of Sikh Americans, we recognize the impact of white nationalist violence on BIPOC communities at large. We recognize that these systems of violence also target women, queer, trans, poor, non-Christian, and disabled communities. We also recognize the specificity and structures of anti-Blackness, which continues to impact Black communities and defines much of American society today.
- *Those who experience hate violence and other forms of violence are more than just victims.* We understand that BIPOC communities, including Sikh Americans, have valuable lessons to teach America about healing, reckoning, repair, and revolutionary love.
- *We can make different choices.* As we learn the stories of Sikh Americans and Oak Creek, we can choose to draw connections between individual acts of hate violence and structural inequalities and violences that pervade our nation today. We hope that this case study on Sikh American stories can encourage educators and communities to address broader issues of inequality and justice for historically marginalized groups in the U.S.,\* as well as globally.

\*Educators seeking a comprehensive guide and toolkit to teach revolutionary love through the stories of BIPOC writers, activists, and stories, may download our [See No Stranger Educator's Guide](#).

\*\*Note: We use terms Sikh and Sikh American interchangeably in this guide to describe individuals of the Sikh faith residing in the United States.

## Introduction to Oak Creek and revolutionary love

This guide focuses on excerpts from Chapter 7, "Breathe" of Kaur's book *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*. [The full excerpt, pages 217-246 is accessible here](#). This guide also draws from concepts and practices from other stories in *See No Stranger*. The full text of *See No Stranger* is **not included** in this guide.

In Chapter 7 of *See No Stranger*, Kaur tells the story of the mass shooting at a gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin on August 5, 2012, the most violent hate crime against Sikh Americans in history. She writes of her experiences grieving with the Sikh communities in Oak Creek, working collectively to offer support, speaking to the media, and pursuing policy change.

In Kaur's chapter, she invites the reader to breathe with her and listen to the stories of the massacre and the grieving, healing, and activism that followed. She writes:

"Most people don't remember the Oak Creek mass shooting, if they even heard of it in the first place. Oak Creek did not receive nearly the same media coverage as other mass shootings...But I invite you to hear this story. I invite you to grieve with us and, in doing so, to love us. Listening to a story about mass violence is labor. But labor is bearable when we breathe together." (Kaur, 2020, p. 217)

Kaur contextualizes this hate crime as part of larger systems violence experienced by Sikhs, Muslim Americans, and others, particularly after 9/11. In telling these stories, Kaur emphasizes that Sikhs were, and are, more than merely victims of violence. Kaur writes, "I was seeing that the Sikh community's response to this massacre had something to offer the nation—how to grieve together, how to breathe through hate and violence together, how to practice love together" (p. 233). After the mass shooting at Oak Creek, and in the continued violence that we witness in present day, Sikhs have practiced breathing, grieving, and fighting collectively.

As a nation, we have much to learn from Sikh communities about breathing, loving ourselves and one another, and resilience in the face of violence and trauma. We can also learn how to fight against systems of injustice so that we can live in wellness, free from violence, and joy.

This lesson is based on Kaur's framework of revolutionary love. Kaur defines revolutionary love as "the choice to enter into labor for others, for our opponents, and for ourselves in order to transform the world around us. It is not a formal code or prescription but an orientation to life that is personal and political, rooted in joy" (Kaur, 2020, p. 310).

The revolutionary love framework has 10 core practices. This lesson includes a focus on the following five practices:

### **Wonder**

Wonder is the first practice of revolutionary love for others. To wonder is to cultivate a sense of awe and openness to others' thoughts and experiences, their pain, their wants and needs. It is to look upon the face of anyone or anything and say: You are a part of me I do not yet know.

- In this lesson, we ask: how can the practice of wonder help us to "see no stranger" and to build a world where all are safe and loved?

### **Grieve**

To grieve with others is to share their pain, without trying to minimize or erase it. Grieving with others requires a willingness to be transformed by their experiences, especially those who have suffered trauma and violence. Grieving collectively and in community gives us the information to build solidarity, to fight for justice, and even to share in one another's joy.

- In this lesson we ask: How can collective grieving with Sikhs and others who have experienced violence be a practice of solidarity and a revolutionary act?

### **Fight**

To fight is to choose to protect those in harm's way. To fight with revolutionary love is to fight

against injustice alongside those most impacted by harm, in a way that preserves our opponents' humanity as well as our own. When we fight for those outside our immediate circle, our love becomes revolutionary.

- In this lesson we ask: What do these stories of Sikhs in Oak Creek teach us about how to fight against violence and act in solidarity with others?

### **Breathe**

To breathe is both literal and metaphorical. It is the practice of taking conscious deep breaths. It is also the act of creating space in our lives to slow down and care for our bodies, minds, and spirits, even in the face of violence. Breathing as a practice of revolutionary love is to nurture one another in community, sustain ourselves and our labors for justice, and cultivate and create space for joy.

- In this lesson, we ask: What do Sikhs in Oak Creek teach us about how to breathe and care for ourselves and others in the face of violence?

### **Reimagine**

To reimagine is to explore a vision of a relationship, community, and world where we all flourish. Reimagining requires more than resistance and replacing people who hold power in unjust systems. Reimagining requires the courage to create systems of justice that represent what we are fighting for, not only what we are fighting against.

- In this lesson, we ask: How can we reimagine a world that honors the humanity and dignity of us all? How can the lessons learned from Sikhs in Oak Creek help us to reimagine and work to create this world?

\*For additional information about these and other Revolutionary Love practices, visit our [Revolutionary Love Learning Hub](#).

### **Content warning:**

Please note that this lesson focuses on mass shootings and gun violence. Please preface this lesson with a [content warning](#), and with encouragement and support for all students to take care of themselves as needed. We understand that many students may experience trauma for a number of reasons, including their own experiences with violence. You may choose to offer to students the option to skip pages 217-226 of the chapter, which include eyewitness accounts of the shooting at Oak Creek. If you are reading from [the excerpt offered here](#) you may suggest that students begin with the sentence: "In the recent past, too many Sikhs have been targeted and victimized simply because of who they are, how they look, and what they believe," said Attorney General Eric Holder.

We recognize that this labor is courageous, and we begin and end the lesson plan with an emphasis on wellness and a vision of the world that we seek to build. We encourage educators to take care of themselves as well, and to consider to follow this lesson with activities, music, and art that nurture students' joy and wellness.

### **To prepare**

This guide is designed to be an engaging and reflective learning experience for *educators* as well as for students. Rather than offering a strict script for teaching about Oak Creek, this lesson

serves as a guide to explore Sikh American stories and revolutionary love practices. Prior to teaching the lessons, we also recommend that educators explore the content in this guide and the materials listed above, preferably in dialogue or study with others. Dedicating this time will allow educators to reflect upon their own experiences and understandings of Sikhs, and to more thoughtfully adapt and customize the lessons.

The ideal engagement with this guide would begin with exploring information from our [Revolutionary Love Learning Hub](#) including

- the “Introduction: What is Revolutionary Love?” lesson in the [See No Stranger Educator’s Guide](#), which focuses on Kaur’s TED talk: [3 Lessons of Revolutionary Love in a Time of Rage](#)
- and the [Revolutionary Love Compass](#) which introduces the 10 practices of revolutionary love.

For educators unaccustomed to teaching about racial justice, we also recommend exploring some of the recommended resources in the introduction of the [See No Stranger Educator’s Guide](#), including setting or revisiting community agreements for your group.

## Lesson plan format

### **Description of the lesson plan**

Including:

- Learning Goals
- Materials Needed

### **Opening reflection**

The opening reflection is structured as a “think-pair-share” activity that asks students to *think* about their responses to a prompt, *pair* with others or a small group to discuss, and then *share* their thoughts with others in a larger group dialogue. This reflection may also be adapted as individual journal prompts, audio journals, or artistic/visual responses.

### **The story**

The main focus of the lesson is [the excerpt from See No Stranger \(Kaur, 2020\)](#). This reading should be assigned prior to class. This section of the lesson plan contains sample reading questions, which may also serve as class dialogue prompts, to engage students in exploring the chapter.

### **Engagement and dialogue**

This section introduces questions that highlight specific practices—wonder, grieve, fight, breathe, and reimagine—from the revolutionary love framework to help students explore these stories in greater depth. There are multiple sample dialogue prompts to choose from. Educators should feel free to select and adapt the prompts most relevant and useful to their classes.

We recommend that educators study the “Revolutionary love guiding principles” section below which offers key concepts to guide class dialogue.

### **Closing reflection**

The lesson ends with a reflection. As with the opening reflection, these may be assigned as individual journal writing, think/pair/share activities, or through visual, audio, or video expression.

### **Revolutionary love guiding principles**

This section contains concepts based on the framework of revolutionary love (Kaur, 2020) to help guide class dialogue about the stories and practices in this lesson.

The lesson also includes a brief section on additional resources to supplement class discussion.

## **How to use the lesson plan**

We encourage educators to adapt and customize these lessons to best suit your students' needs and contexts. Due to the challenging nature of this content, we recommend that this lesson plan be conducted **over a minimum of 2 class sessions**, in order to allow both teachers and students time for meaningful intellectual and emotional engagement. Below is a suggested format to engage with the lesson plan over a number of class sessions.

### **Class session 1:**

- Introduce the Revolutionary Love framework by utilizing the "Introduction: What is Revolutionary Love?" lesson in the [See No Stranger Educator's Guide](#), which focuses on Kaur's TED talk: [3 Lessons of Revolutionary Love in a Time of Rage](#) as a class. This step will familiarize students with the frameworks of revolutionary love which will be discussed throughout the lesson.
- After this discussion, introduce [the excerpt from Chapter 7 of See No Stranger](#) (pages 217-246) as a homework assignment.
  - Please preface this lesson with a [content warning](#), and with encouragement and support for all students to take care of themselves as needed. You may choose to offer to students the option to skip pages 217-226 of the chapter, which include eyewitness accounts of the shooting at Oak Creek.

### **Class session 2:**

- Begin with the [Opening reflection](#) in the Lesson Plan.
- Discuss students' responses to the reading, and connect the reading to the practices of *wonder, grieve, fight, breathe and reimagine* from the revolutionary love compass. Utilize the [Engagement and dialogue](#) prompts and the [Revolutionary love guiding principles](#) to guide class discussion.
- Feel free to select/adapt the prompts that are most useful and appropriate to your course and your students. You may also ask students to work in groups and assign a different set of prompts to each group, or to teach this lesson during adjacent class days, focusing on one practice and set of questions at a time.

### **Class session 3:**

- Continue the discussion utilizing the [Engagement and dialogue](#) prompts and see the [Revolutionary love guiding principles](#) to guide class discussion. End with [Closing reflection](#).

## Acknowledgements

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## Permissions

You can use this guide in classrooms, campuses, individual learning groups, community organizations, and other spaces of learning. You are permitted to adapt this guide to meet the needs of your students and communities so long as you maintain the fidelity of the revolutionary love framework and practices. The use of this guide must include the following attribution: Canlas, Melissa Ann (2022). Educator's Guide: Teaching About Oak Creek with *See No Stranger*. Revolutionary Love Project.

No commercial use is permitted. The revolutionary love framework, compass, educator's guides or derivations of its content can never be used to accrue money for yourself or your organization, ie., charging people or asking for donations in a session that includes the framework; or making and selling products based on materials from this guide or from the Revolutionary Love Learning hub. If you would like to discuss the possibility of partnering or training for you or your organization, [please contact us](#).

### Notes:

- All *See No Stranger* page references are taken from the US editions of *See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love*.
- For those wishing to engage more closely with *See No Stranger* as a full text, the [Reader's Guide](#) is an essential accompaniment for educators and students to this guide.
- To learn more about the work of the Revolutionary Love Project, our campaigns, and our calls to action, please visit [www.RevolutionaryLoveProject.com](http://www.RevolutionaryLoveProject.com) and follow us on social media at @RevLoveProject (Twitter and Instagram) and Revolutionary Love Project (Facebook).

# Lesson Plan: The Oak Creek Story

## Learning goals

- To teach and learn from the stories, experiences, and contributions of Sikh Americans during and after the Oak Creek shooting in order to inform our commitments to justice in the present day.
- To learn about the experiences of Sikhs in Oak Creek through the practice of *wonder* and “seeing no stranger”
- To explore how Sikh communities, in the face of violence, practice revolutionary love through grieving, fighting for justice, breathing, and caring for one another.
- To reflect on the relationship between acts of hate violence and other forms of structural violence facing Sikhs and other marginalized communities, including BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities, queer communities, disabled communities, and others.

## Materials needed

- Excerpt from [See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love](#) (Kaur, 2020). Chapter 7: pages 217-246 <https://rememberoakcreek.org/story-of-oak-creek/>
- *Highly recommended*: TED talk: [3 Lessons of Revolutionary Love in a Time of Rage](#) (Kaur, 2018, 20m)

Supplemental Materials (Optional):

- Short films: [“Oak Creek: In Memoriam”](#), [“Oak Creek: 5 Years Later”](#), and [“Oak Creek: 10 Years Later.”](#)

For reference:

- [Introduction to Revolutionary Love](#)
- [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)

## Opening reflection

**Note:** This reflection should be completed **prior** to reading Chapter 7 of *See No Stranger*. You may choose to ask students to write individual responses and then share these responses in pairs or small groups.

**Reflect** on the following questions:

- What are the things that everyone needs to be healthy, safe, and well:
  - in mind
  - in body
  - in soul or spirit?

List or illustrate your response to these questions. Share and discuss your responses with a group or pair. Discuss:

- What do you notice about your responses?
- What responses did your group have in common? What were some notable differences? How do these collective responses help define how we understand what “health”, “safety”, and “wellness” mean in our society?
- Which of the items on your lists are the most difficult to attain or secure? Why?
- Are some of these items more accessible for some communities over others? In what ways?

Explore further as a large group:

- What barriers make it difficult for us to obtain what we all need to breathe and thrive? In what ways do issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc. influence a community’s ability to access these requirements to be healthy and well?
- Consider communities who have experienced historical and on-going violence and trauma. Are there additional things that these communities need to be healthy and well?
- What are our responsibilities as a community and as a nation to ensure that all of us are safe, healthy, and well?

## The story: Sikh Americans in Oak Creek

Before assigning pages 217-246 of *See No Stranger*, introduce students to the definition of revolutionary love and the following practices using the attached handout. These definitions and practices provide the foundation for the reading and the lesson plan.

Be sure to preface this reading and discussion with a content warning that this chapter contains descriptions of gun violence and mass shooting, and you may choose to offer to students the option to skip pages 217-226 of the chapter, which include eyewitness accounts of the shooting at Oak Creek.

You may ask students also to highlight specific passages to discuss in class. The questions below may also be offered to students as questions to accompany the reading, and/or used as dialogue prompts in class.

## Engagement and dialogue

The following section focuses on the stories in this chapter through 5 practices of revolutionary love: *wonder*, *grieve*, *fight*, *breathe* and *reimagine*. These prompts may be utilized for in-class discussion (in small or large groups), reflective journal writing, or some combination of these activities. For each set of prompts, remind students of the definition of these practices and ask them to consider this practice as they respond to the questions.

Feel free to select/adapt the prompts that are most useful and appropriate to your course and your students. You may also ask students to work in groups and assign a different set of prompts to each group, or to teach this lesson over the course of multiple days, focusing on one practice and set of questions at a time.

\*See the “Revolutionary Love Guiding Principles” below to guide class dialogue.

## **Wonder**

### ***Sample questions for reflection and dialogue***

- Consider Kaur's definition of "*wonder*" as a practice of revolutionary love. In what ways, if any, did you experience the practice of wonder and "seeing no stranger" as you read the chapter?
- What did you learn from this chapter? How did you feel when reading this chapter? What most impacted you, and why?
- Were you aware of the mass shooting at Oak Creek prior to reading this chapter? How did this chapter add to your knowledge of this event?
- What does Kaur achieve by telling the stories of Sikh Americans at Oak Creek in this way?
- Why did the Oak Creek community also pray for Wade Michael Page? How did Kaur respond to this? How did you feel as you read this?
- Kaur (2020) writes:
  - We had not succeeded in helping Americans as a whole imagine the gurdwara as a house of worship like their own, or to see the people with turbans and headscarves as fellow Americans worthy of their attention, let alone their solidarity. As scholar Naunihal Singh reflects, had the shooter been Muslim and the victims white churchgoers, it's hard to imagine that anyone today would not know Oak Creek. (p. 229)
    - Do you agree with this quotation? Why/why not? Why do you think this act of violence did not gain or hold the attention of most Americans?
    - What does this passage suggest about the continuing patterns of racism and violence that we witness today?
    - How might sharing the stories of Sikhs in this chapter change the ways that people view and understand Sikh communities?
- Kaur (2020) names the resurgence of anti-Muslim propaganda that accompanied the 2012 Presidential election, and the millions of dollars spent by a few foundations to that funded an "anti-Islam industry" (p. 236).
  - What connections is Kaur drawing between hate violence and these larger acts of promoting Islamophobia? In what ways do we see these dynamics in our present time?
- In the present time, how might the practice of wonder help us to "see no stranger" and to build a world where all are safe and loved?

## **Grieve**

### ***Sample questions for reflection and dialogue***

- Consider Kaur's definition of "*grieve*" as a practice of revolutionary love. In what ways did Sikhs grieve collectively after the shootings at Oak Creek?
- How are the stories in this chapter different from mainstream reporting after acts of hate violence?

- After the shootings at Oak Creek, Kaur writes, “I wondered how many more of us had to die before the nation ‘knew’ who we were. We didn’t need simply to be known. We needed to be loved” (233).
  - Consider Kaur’s (2020) definition of revolutionary love as “the choice to enter into labor for others, for our opponents, and for ourselves in order to transform the world around us” (p. 310).
  - What kinds of actions (from others, from policy makers) would have shown the Sikh community that they were loved by the nation, particularly after these acts of violence?
- What lessons do you think we as a nation can learn from the experiences and actions of Sikh Americans after the Oak Creek shootings?
- Reflect upon Kaur’s definition of “grieve” as a practice of revolutionary love.
  - What can these stories of Sikhs in Oak Creek teach us about the power of collective grieving? How can collective grieving with Sikhs and others who have experienced violence be a practice of solidarity and a revolutionary act?
- What connections, if any, can you make between the events from the chapter and what we are experiencing in our nation in the present time?

## **Fight**

### **Sample questions for reflection and dialogue**

- Consider Kaur’s definition of “fight” as a practice of revolutionary love as you consider the following passage. Kaur (2020) writes:
 

“I had always called the victims of hate crimes just that—*victims*. We as Sikhs were *invisible* victims, and so I thought that our role as advocates was to call the nation’s attention to our suffering—to jump up and down and wave our hands in the air and ask America to see us. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Muslim, Arab, and South Asian American (MASA) advocates jumped into action to respond to the onslaught of discriminatory policies by the state and hate crimes in the street. The threats never ceased, so we became masters of crisis management...Crisis management protects victims from immediate harm. It does not easily make space for those victims to be seen as survivors who have something to teach the rest of the nation.” (p. 215)

  - Identify the ways that the Sikh community fought against injustice and responded to the mass killings, in Oak Creek and beyond.
  - In what ways does Kaur’s chapter illustrate Sikhs as more than victims of violence?
  - What kinds of policy change and legislation were the Sikh community able to achieve? How did they accomplish this? What were the limitations of their actions?
- How did politicians respond to Sikh Americans and to the nation after Oak Creek?
  - What did you think about these responses? Were they sufficient? Why or why not?

- How are these responses by politicians similar or different to those that follow present day mass shootings and acts of hate violence?
- What do these stories of Sikhs in Oak Creek teach us about how to fight against violence and act in solidarity with others in the present time?

## **Breathe**

### ***Sample questions for reflection and dialogue***

- What did you notice about your own responses and reactions as you were reading this chapter? What emotions or sensations did you notice in your body as you read this chapter? When reading became difficult, how did you return to the reading?
- Consider Kaur's definition of "breathe" as a practice of revolutionary love. How did the Sikh community practice breathing and caring for themselves and others after Oak Creek?
- In what ways does Kaur describe the Sikh concept of *chardi kala* in this chapter?
  - How do you understand the concept of chardi kala? In what ways is chardi kala related to breathing as a practice of revolutionary love?
- Kaur (2020) writes:
 

"Loving ourselves happens in community...Instead of self-care, Melissa [Harris-Perry] calls for 'squad care'—a way to be in relationship with people committed to caring for one another: 'Squad care reminds us there is no shame in reaching for each other and insists the imperative rests not with the individual, but with the community. Our job is to have each other's back'." (p. 248-249)

  - In what ways did the Sikh community practice breathing and collective "squad care" after the shootings at Oak Creek?
  - How can practices of collective or "squad care" help us to sustain ourselves and our communities, particularly in the wake of violence and on-going trauma?
- What do the stories of Sikh Americans have to teach us, and our nation, about the practice of "breathing", healing, and resilience in the wake of the mass violence we are witnessing in present time?

## **Reimagine**

### ***Sample questions for reflection and dialogue are included below in the closing reflection***

## Closing reflection

Kaur (2020) describes how we, as a nation, could have reimagined and enacted different forms of accountability and justice after Oak Creek. She writes, “It did not have to be this way” (p. 245).

“After Oak Creek in 2012, our nation could have named white nationalist violence a national and global threat and poured resources into fighting to protect our communities. We could have held tech companies accountable for the rapid spread of hate and misinformation on social media platforms. We could have passed strong laws that prohibited racial profiling and created task forces modeled after the National Church Arson Task Force of the 1990s. We could have modeled for the world how to respond to tribal nationalism and initiated local and national dialogues on ending white supremacy. We certainly could have limited the free flow of guns.

As it was, our tiny community had to fight with all our might just to add a box to a federal form. We are not helpless in the wake of this violence. But it will take all of us to remake the culture and institutions that authorize hate—and to reimagine a society where no human being is disposable.” (p. 245-246)

Consider this passage, reflecting on the years since Oak Creek, and the continued racialized and gendered violence we witness in present time. Consider also the discussion from the opening reflection. Respond to the following questions.

Imagine a world where no human being is disposable.

- What would our homes and neighborhoods look like?
- What would our schools and hospitals and government systems look like?
- What would we need to transform in order to make this happen, and to ensure that everyone has what they need to be healthy and well?
- How would we *feel* in this world? How could we spend our time, energy, and creativity in this kind of world?
- What is **one step** that we could commit to practicing in order to create this world? How can the practices of *wonder, grieve, fight, breathe, and reimagine* help us to identify and enact that step?

## Revolutionary love guiding principles

Draw from these principles to guide discussion of the chapter and the prompts above.

- **Wonder** is the first practice of revolutionary love for others. Wonder is the practice of cultivating an awe-filled openness and reflection about others’ thoughts and experiences, their pain and joy, their wants and needs. Wonder involves seeing the world and other people as part of me I do not yet know—vast, complex, and deserving of love. When we wonder about other people, we acknowledge that their lives are as vast and complex as our own. We can begin to expand our circles of care when we understand others as part of us (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 1). When we are able to wonder about others, we are able to grieve

with them and to fight for and with them. These are the practices of revolutionary love for others (Kaur, 2020).

- **Grieving** is both a personal and political act, and is necessary to solidarity. We do not need to know people in order to grieve with them. Grieving is how we come to know people. Grieving is a practice rooted in wonder. (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 2)
- **Grieving** in community can be transformative (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 2). Everyone will grieve in our lives, but not all of us will grieve for acts of violence in our communities. Communities who are targeted by violence (due to racism, anti-Blackness, sexism, xenophobia, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, or a combination of these and other factors) experience grief and trauma that is historical, intergenerational, and continuing in the present time. These forms of violence are not only the acts of individual hate violence, but rooted in policies and practices embedded in our structures and systems.
- **Grieving** shows us what we need to fight against, and fight for. In order to transform our nation, we must grieve for the violence that our nation has committed: against Indigenous people, against Black people, and others. Grieving collectively and truthfully as a nation opens the possibilities of accountability, healing, justice, and even shared joy (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 2).
- **Fighting** is necessary in the work of justice and the labor of revolutionary love. What matters is how we fight and the values that guide us. When we fight with revolutionary love, we know that we are not fighting only to remove individual bad actors, but to transform institutions, cultures, and systems of inequality (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 3).
- **Fighting** is not based on a logic of exchange. Transformative, deep solidarity is rooted in recognition: “I show up for you, because I see you as part of me. Your liberation is bound up in my own” (Kaur, 2020, p. 82, Chapter 3). When we **fight** with revolutionary love, we work to embody the world we are fighting for.
- **Fighting** is not always the direct action of protest in the streets, but also the slow and steady presence of building relationships, caring for one another, investing time and presence in our communities. When we fight with revolutionary love, we ask ourselves what are we able to create with and for one another? (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 3)
- **Breathing** is the first step to loving ourselves. For those involved in justice work, we breathe because the work is important, and we want to maintain the capacity to do the work over the long haul. We breathe to soothe trauma. We breathe so we can create spaces for joy and be fully present to experience the revelations and results of our labor. (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 7)
- **Breathing** is a practice of love for ourselves (note: not love for self), intentionally emphasizes the need to love ourselves collectively, to love ourselves interdependently (rather than independently), to participate in community care, and to advocate for the health and well-being of all in the community (Kaur, 2020). There will be times when we feel hopeless and overwhelmed. At those times, we breathe, rest, and nourish our joy so that we can return to the labor and last (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 7).

- **Breathing** and loving ourselves is an ongoing, collective, and shared process. We must act as midwives to one another and help one another breathe. (Kaur, 2020) Loving ourselves is also a call to our allies/accomplices. To those who are not directly in harm's way: How will you make space for us to breathe? How can you share the labor of justice, so that those most harmed can focus on loving and caring for ourselves? (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 7)
- **Reimagining** our world is not a futile or frivolous exercise. Rather, as poet Lucille Clifton writes, "We cannot create what we can't imagine." Reimagining systems that *seem* to be enduring and unchangeable is a necessary practice in birthing a world through revolutionary love (Kaur, 2020). Reimagining requires us to work in community, nourish our collective imagination, breathe, and nurture our joy (Kaur, 2020, Chapter 6). See also Lesson 10: Joy in the [See No Stranger Educator's Guide](#)

### **For additional exploration**

- Go deeper into the practices of revolutionary love with the [See No Stranger Educator's Guide](#).
- Explore materials from the Revolutionary Love Learning Hub:
  - [Guide to Revolutionary Love Compass](#)
  - [See No Stranger Educator's Guide](#)
- [Reader's Guide to See No Stranger](#); particularly Chapter 7 (Breathe)
- View the short films: "[Oak Creek: In Memoriam](#)", "[Oak Creek: 5 Years Later](#)", and "[Oak Creek: Ten Years Later](#)"
- Visit [The Solidarity Vigil](#), a multiracial interfaith vigil convened to grieve and stand in solidarity with the Sikh community one week after the mass shooting in Indianapolis, April 15, 2021. Read the section "Why We Came Together" and watch the [7 minute video](#) from the event.
- Read "[Young Sikhs still struggle with post-Sept. 11 discrimination](#)" (Snow and Nasir, 2021), which includes a short video including Baba Punjab Singh and Kaur.
- See Endnotes for Chapter 7 from *See No Stranger* (not included here) for additional materials on Oak Creek
- For additional resources and introduction to Sikh stories of resilience in the face of violence, see the [9/11 Learning Hub](#) and [Educator's Guide: Teaching the Impact of 9/11 Through See No Stranger](#)
- For additional information about how to take action now for the Sikh Community, visit [Sikh Coalition: Call to Action](#).

# HANDOUT

## Sikh Americans in Oak Creek

In *See No Stranger*, Kaur tells the story of the mass shooting at a gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin on August 5, 2012, the most violent hate crime against Sikh Americans in history. She writes of her experiences grieving with the Sikh communities in Oak Creek, working collectively to offer support, speaking to the media, and pursuing policy change.

**Content warning:** This chapter contains descriptions of gun violence and mass shooting. Please feel free to skip pages 217-226 of the chapter, which include eyewitness accounts of the shooting at Oak Creek.

This story lesson is based on Kaur's framework of revolutionary love. Kaur's definition of revolutionary love and some of its practices are below.

***"Revolutionary love is the choice to enter into labor for others, for our opponents, and for ourselves in order to transform the world around us. It is not a formal code or prescription but an orientation to life that is personal and political, rooted in joy" (Kaur, 2020, p. 310).***

In the chapter, Kaur invites the reader to listen to the stories of Sikhs in Oak Creek as an act of revolutionary love. She writes:

"Most people don't remember the Oak Creek mass shooting, if they even heard of it in the first place. Oak Creek did not receive nearly the same media coverage as other mass shootings...But I invite you to hear this story. I invite you to grieve with us [Sikhs] and, in doing so, to love us. Listening to a story about mass violence is labor. But labor is bearable when we breathe together." (p. 217)

The revolutionary love framework has 10 core practices and this lesson includes a focus on the following five practices. See below for definitions and questions to consider as you read the assigned chapter.

### **Wonder**

Wonder is the first practice of revolutionary love for others. To wonder is to cultivate a sense of awe and openness to others' thoughts and experiences, their pain, their wants and needs. It is to look upon the face of anyone or anything and say: You are a part of me I do not yet know.

- How can the practice of wonder help us to "see no stranger" and to build a world where all are safe and loved?

### **Grieve**

To grieve with others is to share their pain, without trying to minimize or erase it. Grieving with others requires a willingness to be transformed by their experiences, especially those who have suffered trauma and violence. Grieving collectively and in community gives us the information to build solidarity, to fight for justice, and even to share in one another's joy.

- How can collective grieving with Sikhs and others who have experienced violence be a practice of solidarity and a revolutionary act?

### ***Fight***

To fight is to choose to protect those in harm's way. To fight with revolutionary love is to fight against injustice alongside those most impacted by harm, in a way that preserves our opponents' humanity as well as our own. When we fight for those outside our immediate circle, our love becomes revolutionary.

- What do these stories of Sikhs in Oak Creek teach us about how to fight against violence and act in solidarity with others?

### ***Breathe***

To breathe is both literal and metaphorical. It is the practice of taking conscious deep breaths. It is also the act of creating space in our lives to slow down and care for our bodies, minds, and spirits, even in the face of violence. Breathing as a practice of revolutionary love is to nurture one another in community, sustain ourselves and our labors for justice, and cultivate and create space for joy.

- How do Sikhs in Oak Creek teach us about how to breathe and care for ourselves and others in the face of violence?

### ***Reimagine***

To reimagine is to explore a vision of a relationship, community, and world where we all flourish. Reimagining requires more than resistance and replacing people who hold power in unjust systems. Reimagining requires the courage to create systems of justice that represent what we are fighting for, not only what we are fighting against.

- How can we reimagine a world that honors the humanity and dignity of us all?

From: Educator's Guide: Teaching About Oak Creek with *See No Stranger*. Revolutionary Love Project.