

# SIKHS & THE U.S. CENSUS



UNITED  
SIKHS

*Recognize the Human Race as One*

4/15/2014

Efforts and Research Compilation

This comprehensive booklet contains all petitions, press releases, research, news clips, and articles written on the issue of including Sikhs as a separate category in the United States Census. Part One presents all previous petitions, press releases, and other information created by UNITED SIKHS. Part Two compiles other work done on this issue, news clips, and research articles.

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# Part One

# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: CENSUS REPRESENTATION



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*Recognize the Human Race as One*

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## Did You Know?

- The Census, mandated to be taken every ten years, is issued by the government for a variety of reasons, **including monitoring and enforcing the following: compliance with civil rights, voting, employment, housing, lending, education, and anti-discrimination laws.**
- UNITED SIKHS has been in detailed discussions with the U.S. Census Bureau and has been informed that, even if a Sikh marks "other" and writes in "Sikh," under the category of "Race," the write-in is automatically tabulated and coded as "Asian Indian."
- While many other communities are able to receive data specific to their community after the Census is completed, **data about Sikhs is not disaggregated separately so there is no way to obtain vital and accurate information about the community at large.**



- Although Sikhs meet the definition of "ethnic minority" under international law, and the United States government has agreed to recognize groups that self-identify as ethnic minorities, **the Census Bureau still refuses to count Sikhs as a distinct ethnic minority.**
- After the tragic events of 9/11, **the lack of awareness** about Sikhs proved **dangerous for the community** and Sikhs have since been targets of **hate crimes, bullying, racial profiling, discrimination** etc.. Hate crimes cannot be properly reported and categorized **unless Sikhs are recognized as a separate ethnic group** and counted by the Census because without an accurate number of the overall population, we cannot know what percentage of the community has been affected by hate crimes. Counting Sikhs separately will help the government to document, prosecute, and prevent hate crimes.
- The request by the Sikh community to be counted correctly is important **because the right to self-identify is a human right** and the need for correct tabulation is **vital in order to monitor and prove discrimination. Failing to allow Sikhs to self-identify exacerbates problems** that the community already faces because Census data is used "extensively in civil rights monitoring and enforcement covering areas such as employment, voting rights, housing and mortgage lending, health care services, and educational opportunities" and without such data, **advancing civil rights for Sikhs is made more difficult** because the vital information that can be gained from accurate counting during the Census is not available to Sikhs
- **UNITED SIKHS will continue to advocate for the Sikh's right to self-identify and be counted in the Census** until Sikhs are classified as a minority ethnic group and can claim the rights that other minority groups in America already possess.

Resources: <http://www.census.gov/> ; [www.unitedsikhs.org](http://www.unitedsikhs.org)

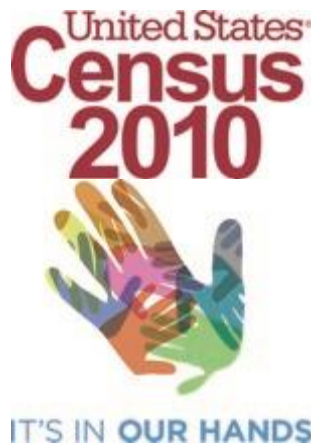
To view this article, [click here](#)

# COMMUNITY VOICE

Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> May 2009

## UNITED SIKHS Issues Call to Sikh Community to Actively Participate in 2010 Census

### Sikh Community Urged to "Be Counted" to Ensure Just Allocation of Resources



New York, NY, USA: Every 10 years, the United States government is required by the Constitution to conduct a Census count. The importance of the Census count cannot be stressed enough. Census data is used to determine how more than \$300 billion per year in federal and state funding is allocated to communities for neighborhood improvements, public health, new hospitals, services for the elderly, roads, schools, education funding, social services, and much more. That's more than \$3 trillion over a 10-year period. The Census also determines how many representatives your state will have in Congress. UNITED SIKHS has partnered with the US Census Bureau to ensure Sikhs are counted, so that much needed resources will be available to the Sikh community.

***How Can I Participate?*** Every household in the country will receive a Census questionnaire in 2010. To ensure an accurate and fair count of all populations at all geographic levels in the nation, the Census Bureau needs you or someone in your household to respond to the census questionnaire. By completing your questionnaire you are providing data that will help our nation, your state and your community make major decisions over the next 10 years.

Estimates of the Sikh population as of 2005 came to about 500,000 Sikhs living in the US. This is not an official total, and we will not have an accurate count if Sikhs do not participate, **and write in "SIKH" under the "Some Other Race" category.** The Sikh population in the US has grown exponentially in the past 10 - 20 years.

***Is the Census Safe?*** Your safety is assured when you participate in the Census. For those Sikhs who are in the United States illegally, this campaign is designated to include you as well. By law the Census Bureau cannot ask you if you are an illegal nor can they provide any information they gather to any other governmental agency for 72 years.

**The U.S Census defines who we are as a nation. Achieving a complete and accurate 2010 Census is in our hands. Give American Sikhs a fighting chance. We need your help with this enormous task.** UNITED SIKHS and the Census Bureau are doing presentations in your community; contact us at [law-usa@unitedsikhs.org](mailto:law-usa@unitedsikhs.org) if you are interested in setting up a "Be Counted Site" or a "Questionnaire Assistance Center" in partnership with the US Census Bureau.

Spending just a few minutes to fill out your census form will help ensure your community gets its fair share of federal and state funding. Under the question "What Is Person's Race," mark "Some Other Race" and **write "SIKH."** Help plant the seeds of OUR FUTURE!!!  
Census affects your voice in Congress: Mandated by U.S Constitution, the census is used to apportion seats in the U.S House of Representatives and to redistrict state legislatures.

- Census affects your representation in state and local government: Census data is used to define legislature districts, school district assignment areas and other important functional areas of government.
- Census informs your community's decisions: The census is like a snapshot that helps define who we are as a nation.
- Census data is used to determine how more than \$300 billion per year in federal and state funding is allocated to communities, like yours.



## Sikhs Advocate to be Counted Separately by the US Census Bureau

**Press Release:** 20<sup>th</sup> Aug 2009

**San Diego, CA, USA:** The Sikh community of San Diego and Imperial Counties joined hands with UNITED SIKHS to launch an effort to count Sikhs separately in the US Census on August 19th. Speaking at a Regional State Convening Event in San Diego that was organized by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's Office and co-sponsored by the Sikh Complete Count Committee of Southern California, Sikh community representatives expressed their concerns about how Sikhs have not been counted by the Census to date, and how Sikhs should be enumerated. UNITED SIKHS is filing a petition with the national US Census Bureau requesting proper tabulation of Sikhs when they mark "Other" and write in "Sikh," and is organizing Sikh Complete Count Committees in states with major Sikh populations around the country to ensure maximum write-ins to support the need to be counted.

**Spending just a few minutes to fill out your census form will help ensure your community gets its fair share of federal and state funding. Under the question "What Is Person's Race," mark "Some Other Race" and write "SIKH." Help plant the seeds of OUR FUTURE!!!**

The Census, Constitutionally mandated to be taken every ten years, is used by government for a variety of reasons, including how congressional seats are reapportioned, legislative districts are drawn, and how a large portion of federal funds are spent. It also is used, as most of the general public is not aware, by the federal government to monitor and enforce compliance with civil rights statutes, including voting, employment, housing, lending, education and anti-discrimination laws. The accuracy of the census directly affects the nation's ability to ensure equal representation and equal access to important governmental resources for all Americans. The request by the Sikh community to be counted correctly is based on similar public opinion expressed in public hearings on the Census to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) at the White House, where public opinion emphasized the importance of self identification along with the need for correct tabulation to monitor and prove discrimination in political or social access. Jaspreet Singh, Staff Attorney,

UNITED SIKHS, commented, "It is in the interest of the Government and the American people to correctly count all people that make up the diverse fabric of America. Public hearings on the Census previously showed that the public wants their specific communities to be counted, and the Sikh community is no different."



*Representatives of the Sikh Community of San Diego and Imperial Counties (from left to right) Rosey Kaur, Jaspreet Singh, Niranjn Singh, Jesse Singh, Harminder Singh, Arvinder Singh, Amritpal Singh, Nirmal Singh, Ranbir Singh, Paul Singh, and Baljit Singh*

UNITED SIKHS has been in detailed discussions with the U.S. Census Bureau and has been informed that, even if a Sikh marks "other" and writes in "Sikh," the write in is automatically tabulated and coded as "Asian Indian." While many other communities are able to ask for special disaggregation and receive data specific to their community after the Census is completed, data about Sikhs is not disaggregated separately. Sikhs have been in America for over 130 years, and have a rich history spanning the nation. Rough estimates place the Sikh population of California at 200,000, and the entire population of Sikhs in America between 400,000-1,000,000. While speaking about the effort, Niranjn Singh Khalsa, representing the California Sikh Council commented, "For the first time in America, the entire Sikh community is going to make a dedicated effort to engage in this very important effort, and have every Sikh counted in the 2010 Census."





*(From left) Jesse Singh, Niranjan Singh, Jaspreet Singh, Nampet Panichpant-Michelsen, and James Christy*

UNITED SIKHS has been in detailed discussions with the U.S. Census Bureau and has been informed that, even if a Sikh marks "other" and writes in "Sikh," the write in is automatically tabulated and coded as "Asian Indian." While many other communities are able to ask for special disaggregation and receive data specific to their community after the Census is completed, data about Sikhs is not disaggregated separately. Sikhs have been in America for over 130 years, and have a rich history spanning the nation. Rough estimates place the Sikh population of California at 200,000, and the entire population of Sikhs in America between 400,000-1,000,000. While speaking about the effort, Niranjan Singh Khalsa, representing the California Sikh Council commented, "For the first time in America, the entire Sikh community is going to make a dedicated effort to engage in this very important effort, and have every Sikh counted in the 2010 Census."



*Jaspreet Singh and Niranjjan Singh presenting the Sikh request to be counted separately*

According to Professor Bruce LaBrack, a professor who has written extensively on the Sikh community, Sikhs have been recognized as an ethnicity in more than 60 countries worldwide, and the Census should support self-identification of people. Sikhs have a common literature, language, faith, and a distinct identity, among many other qualifiers that make the Sikh community a distinct and recognizable community. Post 9/11, the lack of awareness about Sikhs proved dangerous for the community as Sikhs were wrongly identified as "terrorists," due to their unique identity and many Sikhs have been targets of hate crimes, bullying, racial profiling, and in some cases police brutality.



*Jaspreet Singh, James Christy, and Nampet Panichpant-Michelsen with representatives of the Laos community of Southern California*

At the event, James Christy, Regional Director, Los Angeles Regional Office for the U.S. Census Bureau expressed concern over the tabulation of Sikhs and said that he would investigate the matter at the national office. He also commented that this Census, being the first after 9/11, is a particularly important census for people to participate in.

The State Convening event for the Census was attended by a diverse cross section of communities in Southern California, including African American, Native American, Filipino, Sudanese, and Laos communities. Nampet Panichpant-Michelsen, Partnership Specialist for the Thai and Southeast Asian communities and Jesse Singh, Partnership Specialist for the Sikh community, were instrumental in coordinating the effort. Commenting on the effort, Harminder Singh, a local Sikh leader in San Diego stated, "It is our responsibility as community leaders to educate our community to participate in the 2010 Census so that we get counted to qualify for federal funds for future generations and to ensure a better future for our community."

**JANUARY 20, 2010**

## **Sign the Petition For Sikhs to be Counted by the US Census Bureau**



New York, NY, USA: In an effort to be correctly counted by the 2010 United States Census, UNITED SIKHS is urging organizations and individuals to sign a petition for Sikhs to be counted correctly. With a sizable presence spanning the country, the total number of Sikhs in United States is based on estimates as Sikhs are not properly disaggregated as part of the census count. When an individual writes in "Sikh," they are automatically coded as Asian Indian. Sign the [petition](#) to have Sikhs assigned a code to be counted correctly!

The Census Bureau will begin mailing questionnaires out shortly, so now is the time to ensure that Sikhs are recognized as a distinct community in the United States. UNITED SIKHS is a national partner with the Census Bureau, and is urging you to participate actively in the count. We are also advocating for Sikhs to be counted separately in the upcoming census. By taking these few simple steps, you can help ensure that Sikhs are represented accurately in the census.

### **1) Sign an online petition**

UNITED SIKHS is filing a petition with the national US Census Bureau requesting proper tabulation of Sikhs when they mark "Other" and write in "Sikh," and is organizing Sikh Complete Count Committees in states with major Sikh populations around the country to ensure maximum write-ins to support the need to be counted. Read the petition and supporting memorandum on why Sikhs should be given a separate code. The petition and memorandum are available at: <http://www.unitedsikhs.org/petitions/census.php>

Please sign the petition, and encourage friends and family to sign it as well.

### **2) Respond to the Census Questionnaire:**

All households in United States will receive a questionnaire that you or a member of the household will need to accurately answer. Sikhs need to actively participate in the survey by completing the information in the questionnaire.

### **3) Write-in "Sikh" appropriately**

Under the “Some other race” category, continue to mark “Sikh”. This is an important step toward accurate tabulation of all Sikhs in United States, particularly in follow-up to the petition.

Participation in the census defines us as a country, and Sikhs are an important part of the diverse fabric of America. Separate tabulation in the census is not only about accurate representation, but also about having equal and fair access to state and local resources allocated to communities.

To view this article, [click here](#)

**FEBRUARY 3, 2010**

**Petition to Disaggregate Sikhs Correctly in the 2010 Census To Be Submitted on Thursday – Sign on Today!**

**Washington, D.C.:** UNITED SIKHS will be submitting a petition on behalf of Sikh Americans to ask the US Census Bureau to disaggregate Sikhs correctly in the 2010 Census and on future Census products this Thursday. Supporters of the petition include Minority Rights Group International and a large number of Sikh organizations including the Sikh Coalition and SALDEF. When an individual writes in “Sikh,” they are automatically coded as Asian Indian. Sign the [petition](#) to have Sikhs assigned a code to be counted correctly!

On Thursday of this week, the petition will be submitted to Robert Groves, Director of Census Bureau; Peter Orszag, Director of Office of Management and Budget; Wm. Lacy Clay, Chairman of the House Sub Committee on Information Policy, Census and National Archives; and Sen. Thomas R. Carper, Chairman of the Senate Sub Committee on Federal Financial Management. Copies of the petition will also be sent to other members of the legislature, the Department of Justice, the White House, and civil rights organizations.

The Petition will be accompanied by a memorandum that was jointly prepared by Minority Rights Group International (MRG) and UNITED SIKHS legal team. MRG is an international NGO working primarily on minority rights issues and is in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The memorandum discusses in detail the recognition of Sikhs as a distinct ethnicity and legal justifications for the concept of self-identification.

We have received overwhelming support on the issue from the Sikh community around the United States, clearly establishing the solidarity of the community in its desire to be counted correctly by the Census Bureau.

To view this article, [click here](#)

MARCH 5, 2010

## Identify yourself as “SIKH” in census 2010

March 5, 2010, 1:05 pm by pushmeet



UNITED SIKHS, along with other organizations like Sikh Coalition and the South Asian Coalition of organizations, SAALT (South Asian Americans Leading Together) contacted Karem Humes last year to discuss the coding methodology for Census 2010. The letter sent by Ms. Humes in reply stated that even if a person writes in “Sikh” on the census form, the person would be automatically counted as “Asian Indian.”

However, after receipt of the letter, UNITED SIKHS did not drop the issue. It is important that the Sikh community together join hands to advocate for this cause. And dropping the issue does not help.

UNITED SIKHS legal team worked extensively for almost 3 months with Minority Rights Group International (MRG), an international NGO working primarily on minority rights issues which is in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This paper discusses why Sikhs are eligible for a separate code and why Sikhs must be considered for a separate count.

This paper, along with a petition discussing UNITED SIKHS’ position and signed by leading community members and many Sikh organizations (including Sikh Coalition and SALDEF), was submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Director of Census 2010, and the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committee overseeing the Census operations. UNITED SIKHS is yet to receive a response from either agencies though there is confirmation from 3 out of 4 offices that someone in their team is working on the request.

UNITED SIKHS does not claim that writing in “Sikh” will surely get us a count in 2010. However, as they are yet to receive a response to the petition, there is still

hope. The time might be short for 2010, but if we do not pick up the issue now, we will never be able to get the Census' attention to the matter. Communities that got a code this year did not start their advocacy recently but have been trying for many years to convince the Bureau to give them a separate code. The planning for census starts much earlier. Therefore, even if we want to get a code for 2020, we need to keep up the effort throughout these 10 years.

The reason why UNITED SIKHS is requesting the community to fill in "Sikh" on the Census form either ways is so that we can claim in one voice that we want a separate count. If the number of people writing in "Sikh" is high enough, attention will finally be brought to the issue.

No battle is won in the first attempt and just because the chances of winning in the first shot are low, we cannot drop the ball. We need a comprehensive effort involving all members of the Sikh community throughout the country to work together on this matter to ensure that our children can be identified correctly and receive the recognition that our community deserves for all its contribution to the American society.

Please visit <http://www.unitedsikhs.org/PressReleases/PRSRLS-03-02-2010-00.html> to read more about the petition and for a link to the petition and the position paper. The petition includes the detailed paper prepared by MRG and UNITED SIKHS. The said petition was submitted to the Director of OMB, Director of Census, and the Chairmen of House and Senate Committees. Please also visit [www.sikhamericancensus.org](http://www.sikhamericancensus.org) to read more about the census.



MARCH 10, 2010

## Census 2010 Sikh American Census Campaign FAQ



**Census 2010 Sikh American Census FAQ:** This FAQ has been drafted as a result of many questions and concerns that have been expressed by members of the Sikh community in relation to the Sikh American Census campaign. We hope that the questions and answers below will provide clarity to any confusion, and you are welcome to contact us at [law-usa@unitedsikhs.org](mailto:law-usa@unitedsikhs.org).

### **Q1: What happens if I mark “Other Race” and write in “Sikh” on the Census Form?**

A1: Currently, the Census bureau automatically codes all Sikh write-ins as “Asian-Indian.” This is a problem because it doesn’t allow Sikhs to be counted by the Census Bureau, even though many other nationalities and ethnic groups are coded and counted correctly. In conversation with Karen Humes, Assistant Division Chief for Special populations for the Census Bureau, members of the Sikh community asked how to get a code, and she responded that we should petition the Census Bureau. *UNITED SIKHS submitted a petition, with the support of SALDEF, the Sikh Coalition, World Sikh Council, and many other leading Sikh organizations and Gurdwaras to the Census Bureau and the Office of Management and Budget to ask for a separate code, and we will continue our effort to obtain a separate code. You can review the petition and supporting academic paper at: <http://www.unitedsikhs.org/petitions/census.php>*

### **Q2: The Census form asks for race. Sikhs are a religion, not a race. Why should I write-in Sikh?**

A2: The definition of “race” used by the Census is vague, and the Census form is not the best designed form. It only asks for “Race,” and this is a problem for many people. It should rather ask for “Ethnicity.” The Census counts many categories of people that are not “races” by any traditional definition. For example, if you write in “Bangladeshi,” you will be counted as Bangladeshi, even though Bangladeshi is a nationality, not a race. Another example are the “Hmong” people who are of the same ethnicity, but not necessarily the same

“race.” *Rather than only recognizing Sikhs as a religion, Sikhs are recognized as an ethnicity in many countries as we do have a very distinct identity and idea of the “kaum.” We have a distinct language (Gurmukhi script), religion, marriage, festivals, appearance, and other cultural variances; all of these additional factors qualify Sikhs as an ethnic group and a religion. We should be counted as Sikhs by the Census Bureau.* In the past, other ethnic groups have also been counted if they have many write-ins. The Census Bureau informed us that they will not assign Sikhs a code because of write-ins, Sikhs will be coded as Asian Indian. However, the write-in forms are not thrown away and the Census Bureau does review the data. It is important to show that Sikhs want to be counted; also the forms become a part of national historical data and are made public after 72 years. This campaign is for now, and our future generations.

**Q3: Why should we waste the Sikh Community’s time and money to be counted? Why now? Aren’t we too late? Are you being dishonest or misleading the community?**

A3: UNITED SIKHS and other members of the Sikh community have been working on this issue for more than a year, and we understand that this must be a sustained effort until we succeed in being coded correctly. Sikh Americans are tax-paying citizens just like everyone else and have been excluded from being counted. It is a difficult task to change the government’s opinion on an issue, and it will require the Sikh community in America to unite and take action by calling their Congressman and Senators and by having their voices heard in public forums to be successful on this issue. *If we do not succeed in getting a code in 2010, it is still important for the Annual American Community Survey, which also codes Sikhs as Asian Indian, for the Census 2020, all other Censuses to come.*

**Q4: Why not simply mark the box for ‘Asian Indian’?**

A4: If we want to be recognized as a group of people in the United States, and also if we (and the government) want to have accurate numbers of how many Sikhs there are in the United States, we must ask to be counted as Sikhs. If we want the government to pay attention to our community, they have to recognize how many Sikhs are in the United States. Also, not all Sikhs are of Asian Indian origin, and many Sikhs who are not of Indian origin have expressed that they would like to be counted as Sikhs.

**Q5: Why not fill in ‘Other Asian’ and then ‘Sikh’?**

A5: Not all Sikhs are of Asian Indian origin, and many Sikhs who are not of Indian origin have expressed that they would like to be counted as Sikhs. Also, it is important that for the purposes of showing our numbers, we all fill in the form the same way. Mark “Other Race” and write-in “Sikh.”

**Q6: What about Sikhs in other countries and Sikhs in India? Are you trying to separate Sikhs from India?**

A6: The United States Census Bureau is only concerned with counting all people within the United States, whether they are legal or illegal. This is an official count by the United States government and happens every ten years. This has nothing to do with Sikhs outside of the United States, nor does it have any effect on Sikhs outside of the United States. It is important for Sikhs in the United States to be counted by the Census Bureau because it is important to be properly recognized by the government for a variety of reasons; in elections, for resources, and for advocacy.

**Q7: What are some other minorities that have gotten themselves counted successfully in the past?**

A7: Minorities always have to speak-up and advocate for their rights. In the past during the founding of the United States Constitution, only three-fifths of the population of slaves were counted by the Census, changing the distribution of taxes and the amount of representatives into Congress by southern states. That means only three out of five slaves were counted as people. The Latino/Hispanic communities also had to advocate for their right to be counted separately, and some of them, such as people from the Dominican Republic are only being counted correctly for the first time, in Census 2010. Many communities are advocating around the Census because there are still many problems and solutions being proposed.

**Q8: Are other religions counted by the Census?**

A8: The Census Bureau is not allowed, by law, to ask a mandatory question on religion on the Census form. However, this does not stop the Census from accepting answers from those who self-identify, and the Census does count people of many different ethnicities. The only count the Census Bureau engages in where a question about religion is asked is in the American Community Survey, which is a much smaller annual survey that is done randomly around the country; Census 2010 aims to count every person in America.

**Q9: How will this affect the count of Asian Indians? Does it affect the “Asian Indian” category at all with the current computer coding versus with the new coding, if we successfully obtain a new code?**

A9: Currently, since writing in Sikh automatically codes a Sikh as “Asian Indian,” the number of Asian Indians increases, though Sikhs are not specially recognized in that increase. If we successfully obtain a new code, the numbers that would have increased the Asian Indian numbers will be counted as Sikhs, rather than as Asian Indian.

**Q10: How will the Sikh community be affected if we are counted separately versus not?**

A10: Census data is used by many parts of government for a variety of things from allocating resources, to drawing districts for political representation, to determining what areas require special assistance, to name a few uses. Even local governments often use Census data in making decisions that affect the local people. If we are counted separately, we will be able to lobby more effectively as a community when we approach our congressman and senators, and we will have recognition as a separate people. Many Sikhs express frustration that people in government and in the public do not know who we are. This is another step in creating the awareness that we need to be a successful community in the United States.

**Q11: How do we benefit at the state level to register a Sikh Complete Count Committee?**

A11: Forming a Sikh Complete Count Committee is another way to display to the Census Bureau that we want to be counted as Sikhs, that we are taking the Census seriously, and that we are willing to work with the government to be counted. We need your help with this campaign so that the Sikh community can be counted correctly.

MARCH 11, 2010

## CENSUS OFFICIAL CONFIRMS THAT SIKHS SHOULD WRITE “SIKH” IN OTHER CATEGORY ON THE CENSUS FORM



On March 3, 2010, the Atlanta area Sangat organized a Sikh Complete Count Committee (SCCC) meeting with the Census Bureau. Nigel Rajadurai answered the questions that every Sikh has been asking. Here is a transcript of the Q&A session with the Census Officer:

1 On question 9 – can we write in the word ‘SIKH’ in the “Some other race” category? Yes

2 Will the computer reject the form? No

3 Will someone eventually read what is filled in the “Some other category”? Yes, that is why we have that category.

4 Are there other minorities that are not an identified race have been counted in the past? Yes, there are several tribes, ethnic and ancestry groups that do not have a nation state or an identified race but are in significant numbers and have been able to be successfully counted as a people using this approach.

To see what kind of minorities have been successful in getting themselves counted in the 2000 Census, you can go to <http://factfinder.census.gov/> – highlight ‘Fact Sheet’ – click on ‘Fact Sheet for a Race, Ethnic or Ancestry Group’.

In the 2000 Census, groups with more than 20,000 counts were reported at the National level, and groups with more than a 500 count at the state level.

They further added that a lot of minority groups are not happy with the racial categories that are on the form. Hence, the Census Bureau has provided a place for them to be counted or represented using the ‘Some other race’ category.

To read more about this meeting, visit  
[http://www.sikhchic.com/columnists/stand\\_up\\_be\\_counted](http://www.sikhchic.com/columnists/stand_up_be_counted).

UNITED SIKHS again urges the Sikh population of USA, whether citizens, residents, aliens or visitors, to fill in the form by marking “Other” in Q9 and filling in “SIKH”.

Sikhs have been underrepresented in the US society for very long and we cannot ask for our rights from the Congress without an official count.

Join us in this mission to ensure a fair society for our children. Please sign the petition submitted to the Office of Management and Budget and Census Bureau at <http://www.unitedsikhs.org/petitions/census.php>.

To view this article, [click here](#)

MARCH 12, 2010

## CENSUS BUREAU RESPONDS TO THE SIKH PETITION



Washington DC, March 13th, 2010: Finally, after a month of waiting, UNITED SIKHS received the first response from the Census Bureau to the Petition submitted by them to the Office of Management and Budget and the Census Bureau.

In the response, the Bureau said, "With Census Day less than one month away, it is too late to change our procedure for classifying "Sikh" responses to the 2010 Census question on race, without extreme cost and risk to Census Bureau operations. Beyond the 2010 Census, we will consider changes to the processing of the term "Sikh" when it is provided in response to the question on race."

We need to keep up our efforts. Even if the Census does not provide an official count this year, we have to make a strong case for 2020. Census forms are official records and are maintained and stored as official archives. Let us fill in "Sikh" as a response to question 9 so that when we ask the Census next time to reconsider their decision, we can claim that our community wants to be identified as Sikhs.

This fight is very important for our future generations and for their rightful place in the American society. Please also read <http://www.unitedsikhs.org/blog/?p=789> to get answers to all your questions and to read more about why it is important to be counted as Sikhs.

To view this article, [click here](#)

MARCH 15, 2010

## Tri State Gurdwaras Meet at Singh Sabha Gurdwara NJ & Decide to Write Sikh in the Census Form



9. What is Person 1's race? Mark  one or more boxes.

White

Black, African Am., or Negro

American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.* ▾

Asian Indian     Japanese     Native Hawaiian

Chinese     Korean     Guamanian or Chamorro

Filipino     Vietnamese     Samoan

Other Asian — *Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.* ▾

Other Pacific Islander — *Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on.* ▾

Some other race — *Print race.* ▾

S I K H

Port Reading New Jersey, 13th March 2010: In a meeting convened by Joga Singh (member of Glenrock Gurdwara Saheb) the present members unanimously decided that the Sikhs should write “SIKH” in the census form for 2010 under the “Some other race” column.

It was decided that the Sikhs should:

1) Respond to the Census Questionnaire:

All households in United States will receive a questionnaire that you or a member of the household will need to accurately answer. Sikhs need to actively participate in the survey by completing the information in the questionnaire.





To see a sample form and to read more about the Census, visit [www.sikhamericancensus.org](http://www.sikhamericancensus.org).

Does America know who the Sikhs are? Sikhs first came to the United States in the 1800s. After more than 130 years, Sikhs are still virtually unknown to most Americans, and are not counted by the Census Bureau and hence this is our chance.

2) Write-in “Sikh” appropriately. Under the “Some other race” category, fill in “Sikh”. This is an important step toward accurate tabulation of all Sikhs in United States, particularly as a follow-up to the petition, to show by example that we want to be counted correctly.

Members of the following institutions participated or gave their consent over the phone:

**Gurdwara Saheb Name:**

- 1) Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Port Reading, New Jersey
- 2) Bridgewater Gurdwara Saheb
- 3) Glenrock Gurdwara Saheb (UNITED SIKHS)
- 4) Singh Sabha (UNITED SIKHS)
- 5) Sikh Cultural Society of New York Inc.
- 6) Dashmesh Darbar Gurdwara Saheb
- 7) Panjab Express Newspaper
- 8) Gurdwara Saheb, Blue Mountain PA
- 9) Glenrock (UNITED SIKHS)
- 10) Nanak Naam Jahaaz Gurdwara

- 11) CJSA Windsor NJ
- 12) wakeupkhalsa.com
- 13) Sikhs For Justice
- 14) Ramgharia Sikh Sangat of North America
- 15) The Sikh Cultural Society of New York, Richmond Hill, NY
- 16) Afghan Sikh Association
- 17) Pennsylvania Sadh Sangat
- 18) The Sikh Center of New York Inc, Flushing, Inc

MARCH 19, 2010

## Census Responds to Petition to Disaggregate Sikhs; Take Action and Make your Responses Count!

**Washington, D.C.:** The Office of Robert Groves, Director, Census Bureau responded to the petition to disaggregate Sikhs correctly in Census 2010 and future Census products. The petition was submitted in the first week of February by UNITED SIKHS cosigned by 60 Organizations and hundreds of community members.

Responding to the request, the Bureau said, "With Census Day less than one month away, it is too late to change our procedure for classifying "Sikh" responses to the 2010 Census question on race, without extreme cost and risk to Census Bureau operations. Beyond the 2010 Census, we will consider changes to the processing of the term "Sikh" when it is provided in response to the question on race."

The importance of American Sikhs filling the 2010 Census form and marking themselves correctly on the form is more important than ever. In previous counts, other ethnic groups have been counted separately if they have substantial write-ins. According to the Census Bureau's response, they will not assign Sikhs a code because of write-ins in 2010, Sikhs will still be coded as Asian Indian. However, **the write-in forms will be retained and the Census Bureau will review the data.** It is important to show that Sikhs want to be counted. Also, the forms become a part of national historical data and are made public after 72 years. Though we might not succeed in getting a code in time for the 2010 Census, it will impact other key demographic surveys administered by the government like the Annual American Community Survey, which also currently codes Sikhs as Asian Indian, in addition to being correctly disaggregated in future Census counts. This campaign is for now, and our future generations.

Currently, the Census Bureau automatically codes all "Sikh" responses to the "Race" question as "Asian-Indian." However, the definition of "race" used by the Census is vague. The Census counts many categories of people that are not "races" by traditional definition. For example, respondents who fill in "Bangladeshi," will be counted as Bangladeshi, even though Bangladeshi is technically a nationality, not a race. "Hmong" people who are of the same ethnicity, but not necessarily the same "race" are another example.

Beyond being recognized as followers of Sikhism, Sikhs are recognized as an ethnic group in many countries owing to their distinct identity and idea of the "kaum." They have a distinct language (Gurmukhi script), religion, marriage, festivals, appearance, and other cultural variances; important factors that qualify Sikhs as an ethnic group and a religion.

Census data is used by many parts of government for a variety of things from allocating resources, to drawing districts for political representation, to

determining what areas require special assistance. Census data is often used in making decisions by local governments that affect local constituents. This is another step in creating the awareness of Sikhs as an integral part of the United States as well as lobby effectively as a community when we approach our government representatives.

UNITED SIKHS submitted the petition, with the support of SALDEF, the Sikh Coalition, World Sikh Council, and many other leading Sikh organizations and Gurdwaras to the Census Bureau and the Office of Management and Budget to ask for a separate code. We will continue our ongoing efforts to obtain a separate code in time for the next Census count. Understanding what a difficult task it is to acquire government cooperation on any issue, it will require the Sikh community in America to unite and take action by calling their Congressman and Senators and by having their voices heard in public forums to be successful on this issue. You can review the petition and supporting academic paper at: <http://www.unitedsikhs.org/petitions/census.php>.

Please also read <http://www.unitedsikhs.org/blog/?tag=census> to get answers to all your questions and to read more about why it is important to be counted as Sikhs. If you would like to volunteer in assisting in this and other advocacy efforts, please visit [www.unitedsikhs.org/join](http://www.unitedsikhs.org/join). If you would like to request more information regarding this or other projects, please contact [law-usa@unitedsikhs.org](mailto:law-usa@unitedsikhs.org).

MARCH 21, 2010

## Gurdwara Census Count Pictures

Escondido and Poway Team San Diego makes the Push for Sikhs to get Counted in 2010 Census.



To view this article, [click here](#)

MARCH 23, 2010

## Write-In “Sikh” in the “Other Race” category for Question 9 on the 2010 Census Form

The campaign undertaken by UNITED SIKHS and other Sikh organizations to get Sikhs counted and disaggregated correctly has received overwhelming support from community leaders and members of the Sikh community. We urge all Sikhs, as an ethnic group in the United States, to make visible our presence as an integral part of the economic, social, civic and cultural fabric of the country by filling out the Census form, by marking “Some Other Race,” and writing in “Sikh.”

Many organizations and gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) around the country have lent their support to the campaign by organizing awareness meetings in the community, in addition to the formation of several Sikh Complete Count Committees. The government uses Census data to allocate resources, drawing districts for political representation, and determining what areas require special assistance. You can review the petition and supporting academic paper at: <http://www.unitedsikhs.org/petitions/census.php>. Have questions? Review the [FAQ](#) and feel free to [contact us](#).

### Isn't Sikhism a religion, not a race?

Beyond being recognized for our faith, Sikhs are recognized as an ethnic group in many countries owing to their distinct identity and idea of the “kaum.” We have a distinct language (Gurmukhi script), religion, marriage, festivals, appearance, and other cultural variances; important factors that qualify Sikhs as an ethnic group. There are Sikhs who are of different colors and races that would like to be coded as Sikhs, for if you ask them their identity, their response does not include Black, White, Indian or Chinese; rather they say “I am a Sikh.” When people see us, they don't think about our skin color first, they think about what we appear to be otherwise.

### You recently released a press release saying we are not getting a separate code for 2010 Census, but may in the future. Why bother now?

The Census Bureau informed us that they could not assign a code for this Census, but that, “Beyond the 2010 Census, we will consider changes to the processing of the term “Sikh” when it is provided in response to the question on race.” It is very important for Sikhs to write-in and identify themselves. In addition to increased visibility, it strengthens our case by sending a strong message that we want to be counted separately, and this is something we want as a community. Also, in previous counts, other ethnic groups have been counted separately if they have substantial write-ins. Even if we do not have a separate code, **the write-in forms will be retained and the Census Bureau will review the data**. Also, the forms become a part of national historical data and are made public after 72 years. Obtaining a code will impact other key demographic surveys administered by the government like the Annual American Community Survey, which also currently codes Sikhs as Asian Indian. This campaign is for now, and our future generations.

To view this article, [click here](#)

## CENSUS PETITION

To:

U.S. Census Bureau

4600 Silver Hill Road

Washington, DC 20233

Cc:

The Office of Management and Budget

725 17th Street, NW

Washington, DC 20503

### **PETITION TO DISAGGREGATE SIKHS CORRECTLY IN THE 2010 CENSUS AND FUTURE CENSUS DATA PRODUCTS**

The United States Census, mandated by the United States Constitution, is used to enumerate the population every 10 years. The results of the Census are the only uniform measure of population, socio-economic, and housing data for the United States. The results are used to apportion seats in the House of Representatives, draw district boundaries, the allocation of large portions of federal funds, and by local governments that use census data to determine many planning decisions. Furthermore, census data is used in a much more fundamental fashion; the data is used by government, leaders, businesses, and researchers to determine the issues of importance for the people. The data is also of prime importance for minority communities to study the trends and patterns of growth and to better understand the needs of the communities, based on numbers rather than estimations. The United States prides itself on its progressiveness and inclusivity, from its foundation of “We the People,” and it is important to have accurate counts of all the people in the country.

Currently, anyone who marks themselves as “Other Asian” and fills in the blank as “Sikh” is automatically coded by the Census Bureau as “Asian Indian.” As we have been informed by the Assistant Division Chief for Special Populations at the Census Bureau, there is no way to then disaggregate the data as to how many Sikhs there are. As a distinctly separate ethnicity, with anywhere between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Sikhs in the United States, this is firstly incorrect as many Sikhs are not “Asian Indian,” and furthermore, does not serve the function of Census, which is to provide valid data to support many decisions that are made on the basis of the Census. We, the undersigned, are simply asking that Sikhs be assigned a separate code, and disaggregated correctly by the Census Bureau.

Sikhs are a perfect example of a community that has suffered for a lack of recognition by government, and being correctly enumerated by the Census Bureau is one very important step resolving the lack of recognition. Since beginning their immigration into the United States over 130 years ago, Sikhs have faced many different forms of discrimination by both the general public and government. For example, in the early 20th century, Sikhs were unable to go to public establishments and restaurants, were ridiculed publicly, and often subjected to physical harassment. Post 9/11, Sikhs have been targets of hate crimes from the general public, and have been subjected to many instances of unlawful racial profiling and harassment by law enforcement agencies, solely on the basis of appearance. In fact, the first person killed in a

hate crime after 9/11 was Balbir Singh, a Sikh man in Arizona. Last year, in Orlando, a SWAT team was called out when a Sikh man visiting from India, Nirvair Singh, entered a bank asking for help, but not speaking English very well. It has been very difficult for the Sikh community to even engage political representatives, agencies, and law enforcement on these issues without being able to accurately state how many Sikhs there are. It is much more difficult to promote awareness of the Sikh community, or to address the problems of the community through assistance from government, without an official enumeration or recognition. Statistics speak for themselves and currently there is no correct enumeration of statistics for Sikhs in the United States. Furthermore, as Sikh Americans, we are concerned that our many economic and social contributions in the past century go unrecognized and will continue to be so if we can not be correctly enumerated, and we will be unable to trace our heritage in America without this disaggregation. Counting Sikhs as a people will only help in getting an accurate head count of a small population who has been undercounted and unrecognized for over 130 years of U.S. history.

The current method used by the US Census Bureau in order to decide whether to assign a separate tabulation code to a group of people is not one that is clearly defined. For example, if one currently marks "Other Asian," and writes in "Pakistani" they are disaggregated separately, despite Pakistani being a nationality, not a race or ethnicity. There are many other examples like this one. It has been expressed to the Sikh community by the Census Bureau that under Public Law 94-521, the Census cannot ask for religious affiliation on a mandatory basis. This should not be a problem in correctly disaggregating Sikhs. Firstly, a person writing in "Sikh" on the census form is choosing to declare their ethnicity as Sikh, without being asked to declare their religion. Secondly, many other countries, such as the UK, recognize Sikhs as a distinct ethnicity, and not simply a religious group; Sikhs meet all the tests laid down by the commonly accepted definitions of ethnicity. Please refer to the attached [memorandum](#) for a more detailed discussion on this point.

Many federal and state laws and international treaties that the United States is party to protect against discrimination. Being correctly identified, counted, and recognized are central to protection and equality. The Sikh American community supports the idea of self-identification for the Census. As exhibited in the attached [memorandum](#), self-identification is a crucial aspect of minority rights; in fact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission endorsed the adoption of self-identification to the Office of Management and Budget in 2005.

As exhibited in the attached [memorandum](#), Sikhs have a right, under international law and the United States' treaty obligations to be correctly identified. Furthermore, Sikhs, as Americans, are guaranteed equal protection under the law by the United States Constitution, and correct enumeration and recognition is inherently necessary in being protected. It is the duty of the United States Census Bureau to accurately enumerate all peoples, including minorities, in the United States.

In conclusion, we the undersigned hereby respectfully request that the United States Census Bureau introduce a separate code for those who write in "Sikh," to ensure that the Sikh community can be correctly and justly enumerated.

To view this petition, [click here](#)



## Minority Rights Group International: Memorandum Regarding the Tabulation of Sikh Ethnicity in the United States Census

### Brief

*“To persuade the US Census Bureau to override the laws barring them from counting people on the basis of religion, and have them count Sikhs because of their belief that they are more than simply a religion.”*

### Introduction

The United States Census Bureau (Census Bureau) officially recognises and quantifies the existence of minority groups within its territory. The American Sikh population is estimated to be at 1 million, but are denied their right to identity.

Question 9 of the 2010 US Census form allows for self-identification of “race.” Many American Sikhs self-identify as an “ethnic minority” and have attempted to enter “Sikh” in the space marked “some other race”. However these entries were tabulated as “Asian Indian” and the Census Bureau refused to provide desegregated data.

Such a regime for refusing to document the existence of minority populations is in contravention of the US’s treaty obligations and general standards of international human rights law pertaining to the rights of minorities. Protection and promotion of minority rights aims to guarantee the rights to non-discrimination and equality for minorities, their participation in public life, and inclusion of their concerns in the disparities in social indicators such as employment, health and housing. However redressing these inequalities is dependent on the granting of the most fundamental of minority rights: the right to an identity.

## American Sikhs are a Minority under International Law

### 1. THE US IS A STATE PARTY TO THE ICCPR AND IS THUS BOUND BY ARTICLE 27 WHICH VESTS RIGHTS IN MINORITIES:

*In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.*<sup>1</sup>

2. The central tenant of minority rights is to respect, preserve and develop ethnic, religious or linguistic identity “thus enriching the fabric of society as a whole”.<sup>2</sup> This is reiterated in the Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (UN Decl. Min.)<sup>3</sup> and Framework Convention on National Minorities (FCNM),<sup>4</sup> which both seek to “preserve and develop the group identity” of persons belonging to “ethnic, religious and linguistic” minorities.<sup>5</sup>

3. The most commonly relied on definition for which groups *can* constitute minorities under international law states:

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1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted on 16 December 1966, entered into force on 23 March 1976, 999 UNTS 171, Art. 27.

2. General Comment 23, Human Rights Committee, Article 27 (Fiftieth session, 1994), Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies, U.N. Doc. RI/GEN/1/Rev.1 at 38 (1994), para. 9.

3. Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, adopted by the UN GA on 18 December 1992, GA Res. 47/135.

4. Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, adopted on 1 February 1995, entered into force on 1 February 1998, ETS No. 157, Preamble.

5. Asbjørn Eide, Commentary Of The Working Group On Minorities To The United Nations Declaration On The Rights Of Persons Belonging To National Or Ethnic, Religious And Linguistic Minorities, Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Fifty-seventh session Working Group on Minorities Eleventh session 30 May-3 June 2005, para. 4.

*A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population, in a non-dominant position, consisting of nationals of the State, possessing distinct ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics and showing a sense of solidarity aimed at preserving those characteristics.*<sup>6</sup>

4. Persons belonging to the American Sikh minority have a distinct language: Gurumukhi script and Punjabi (spoken). They have a distinct religion: followers of Guru Nanak and his successors. In addition they have separate customs including marriage, festivals and appearance not to mention different music, dance and other cultural aspects. They share a common ancestry originating from particular parts of the Punjab in India and are largely endogamous.

5. In addition to their distinct cultural identity, their numerical inferiority or non-dominant position is not disputed. The vast majority are not only citizens but the result of immigration as early as the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> They have since contributed extensively towards political life<sup>8</sup> and the armed forces.<sup>9</sup>

6. The final and most crucial aspect of minority rights, replicated in other instruments,<sup>10</sup> is the principle of self-identification.<sup>11</sup> The right to an identity can only emanate from the self and cannot be imposed externally.<sup>12</sup> Thus right to identity can exist without persons belonging to minorities self-identifying as such.

7. The words “[i]n those States in which [...] minorities exist” implies such a principle. The “existence” of “minorities” indicates its inherence unaffected by State recognition and is expressed in Capotorti’s definition as “solidarity aimed at preserving those characteristics.”

8. Furthermore, given that minority rights are “distinct from, and additional to, all the other rights” and require the granting of specific rights<sup>13</sup> means that persons belonging to culturally distinct groups can opt out of such recognition and must self-identify as belonging to such a minority in order to access the relevant specific rights. The most basic of these are measures of non-discrimination attempting to achieve equality for vulnerable groups and even calling for the application of temporary “special measures.”<sup>14</sup>

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- 6 .Francesco Capotorti, Special Rapporteur of the Sub-commission on Prevention of Discriminating and Protection of Minorities, *Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* (Centre of Human Rights, Geneva, United Nations, New York, 1991). Also see Recommendations 1144 & 1201 of the Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe for attempted definitions of “national minority”.
  7. San Francisco Chronicle Documented Sikhs Landing San Francisco Chronicle April 6, 1899, p.10.
  8. U.S vs Bhagat Singh Thind 1923 (1920 Bhagat Singh Thind Veteran U.S Army fought for citizenship).  
Dalip Singh Saund - El Centro Imperial Valley was the first Sikh and three term Congressman, 1957-1963. In 1956, Dalip Singh Saund became the first East Indian born person to be elected to the US House of Representatives (until Governor Bobby Jindal).
  9. Uday Singh, a Sikh, was the First Indian in the US Army killed in Iraq; Lt. General James Campbell attended funeral in Chandigarh, 2003.
  10. E.g. Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, adopted on 1 February 1995, entered into force on 1 February 1998, ETS No. 157, Art. 3.
  11. The principle was first established by the Permanent Court of Justice in 1930 in Panayote Elias Dimitras, MRG Briefing: *‘Recognition of Minorities in Europe: Protecting Rights and Dignity.’*
  12. FCNM Explanatory Report, para. 34: “Paragraph 1 firstly guarantees to every person belonging to a national minority the freedom to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such. This provision leaves it to every such person to decide whether or not he or she wishes to come under the protection flowing from the principles of the framework Convention.”
  13. UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 23, para. 9.
  14. General Recommendation No. 32, *The meaning and scope of special measures in the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Seventy-fifth session, August 2009.

9.If a culturally distinct group fulfils all of the above objective criteria but lacks the motivation to preserve that distinct group identity; they cannot be classified as minorities under international law.<sup>15</sup>

10. Conversely it also implies that the “existence” of minorities, while dependent on self-identification, is not affected by States’ (non-)recognition of such existence and is a matter of fact. However the US is obliged under CCPR Article 27 to recognise minorities that self-identify as such as long as they fulfil the objective criteria set out above.<sup>16</sup> Without the full adherence to the principle of self- identification, minorities cannot benefit from rights of non-discrimination nor access cultural rights in relation to that identity.

11. Most American Sikhs identify as an “ethnic minority,” but the US construes the Sikh identity to be purely of a religious nature and thus denies them recognition as a “race.” The inference is that the US recognizes American Sikhs as religiously distinct and excludes the Sikh ethnicity from the scope of “race.”

### “Race” must include “ethnicity”

12. The US Census Bureau has stated that the data on “race” from Question. 9 will be used for “assessing fairness of employment practices, to monitor racial disparities in health, education and to plan and obtain funds for public services.”<sup>17</sup>

13. “Race” has historically alluded to a genetic or biological notion that could be objectively assessed on the basis of visual observation.

14. However such a formulation of “race” would be counterproductive to ensuring equality for minority groups on the basis of non-discrimination. The raising of grievances implies that the individual has self-identified as a particular “race” and seeks protection from discrimination. As such, minorities must be able to self- identify as to which “race” they belong to, in order for effective measures of non- discrimination to be implemented.

15. A note by the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission<sup>18</sup> strongly endorsed self-identification advising against visual identification<sup>19</sup> and is in line with a general trend away from “race” as visually observed to “race” as self- identified in the context of non-discrimination.

16. The ICERD, which binds the US, defines “racial discrimination” as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin.”<sup>20</sup>

17. Sikh ethnicity is recognized in the UK. Under English law, “racial groups” for the purposes of non-discrimination are understood to be any groups defined by “color, race, nationality or national or ethnic origins.” The English Courts have interpreted “ethnic origin” to include the Sikh identity.<sup>21</sup>

15. Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), Art. 3 and Explanatory

Report, para. 34.

16. See FCNM and Explanatory Report, para. 35: "This paragraph does not imply a right for an individual to choose arbitrarily to belong to any national minority. The individual's subjective choice is inseparably linked to objective criteria relevant to the person's identity."

17. <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/how/interactive-form.php>.

18. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Notice of Submission for OMB Review; Final Comment

Request, Federal Register (EEOC Note), Vol. 70, No. 227, Monday, November 28, 2005.

19. Id. p. 2.

20. International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), concluded on 7 March 1966, entered into force on 4 January 1969, 660 UNTS 195, Art. 1.

21. *Mandla v Dowell-Lee* [1983] 2 AC 548 (House of Lords). Lord Fraser of Tullybelton's leading opinion interpreted the Sikh minority as a "racial group": "For a group to constitute an ethnic group in the sense of the Act of 1976, it must in my opinion, regard itself, and be regarded by others, as a distinct community by virtue of certain characteristics. Some of these characteristics are essential others are not essential but one or more of them will commonly be found and will help to distinguish the group from the surrounding community. The conditions which appear to me to be essential are these:

1. a long shared history, of which the group is conscious as distinguishing it from other groups, and the memory of which it keeps alive.
2. a cultural tradition of its own, including family and social customs and manners, often but not necessarily associated with religious observance.

In addition to those two essential characteristics the following characteristics are in my opinion, relevant;

3. either a common geographical origin, or descent from a small number of common ancestors
4. a common language, not necessarily peculiar to the group
5. a common literature peculiar to the group
6. a common religion different from that of neighboring groups or from the general community surrounding it
7. being a minority or being oppressed or a dominant group within a larger community, for example a conquered people."

18. Thus "race" for the purposes of determining the existence of "racial disparity"<sup>22</sup> must involve the self-identification of persons belonging to "ethnic minorities".

19. The United States Census Bureau itself stated in 2000 that: "*The concept of race as used by the Census Bureau reflects self-identification by people according to the race or races with which they most closely identify. These categories are sociopolitical constructs and should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature.*"<sup>23</sup>

20. Therefore the Census Bureau has adhered to such developing standards, domestically and internationally, by allowing for self-identification to *any* "race". It has desisted from providing individuals with a finite list of permissible "race"

categories by allowing for the entry of “some other race”. Without this option, implementation of the principle of self-identification would be incomplete.<sup>24</sup>

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22 <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/how/interactive-form.php>.

23 [http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/meta/long\\_68178.htm](http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/meta/long_68178.htm).

24 UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 32, para. 6.2.

21. Allowing for a “some other race” category allows those whose “ethnicity” is not included in the list provided under Question 9 or those who belong to a subgroup which they have a closer affiliation to freely self-identify as they please.

22. Many members of the Sikh community self-identify as a distinct “ethnicity” due to their characteristics, which set them apart from other groups. The identity of a Sikh person is actually a combination of culture, ethnicity, race and religion. It does not fit neatly into religion.

23. Thus many American Sikhs self-identified in line with their “Sikh ethnicity” under “race” in the Census. The US Census Bureau however chose to disregard these expressions of identity, instead identifying them as ethnically “Asian Indian” even though they laid claim to no such identity.

24. As we have already established, “race” must be self-identified. However it seems that the US Census does not consider the Sikh ethnic identity to be within the scope of “race” or “ethnicity”. Such practice is in direct contravention of the principle of self-identification, and American Sikhs cannot be labeled as “Asian Indian” when they have ascribed to no such identity. If the US Census Bureau does not accept “Sikh” as an acceptable “race”, then it cannot impose an ethnic identity on individuals by reference to their presumed national origin.

25. Nonetheless, the refusal to recognize the Sikh identity in the Census is not compatible with the principle of self-identification and the definition of “ethnic” under international law.

## Defining Ethnicity

26. Denying American Sikhs the right to identify as “Sikh” in the US Census suggests that their identity is objectively considered not to be one which is an accepted “ethnicity” or “race”. However we can observe that under international law, “ethnic” identity is determined by two factors: self-identification and the presence of a “culture”:

*Persons who belong to groups defined as ethnic would have more extensive rights relating to the preservation and development of other aspects of their culture also, since ethnicity is generally defined by a broad conception of culture, including a way of life.*<sup>25</sup>

27. It is on this basis that minority rights are granted. CCPR Article 27 states that “ethnic minorities” shall not be denied the right to enjoy their culture. Given that linguistic and religious identity also have “cultures”; they constitute specific and explicit examples of “culture” while the term “ethnic minority” covers all *other* forms of culture.

28. Therefore for a group to be defined under international law as an “ethnic minority” they need only show the existence of a group culture that is separate from or in addition to their religious and linguistic identity.

29. Ethnicity has been defined as “the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States”.<sup>26</sup>

30. In the case of the American Sikh minority, they have many dimensions to their identity of which religion is clearly an important aspect. As has already been established, the Sikh identity has many dimensions, which collectively are perceived of by members as an “ethnicity”.

31. A reason advanced for refusal of the Sikh identity has hinged on the presumption that they constitute a religious minority and cannot be documented due to a policy barring documentation of religious affiliation.



32. There is nothing to suggest under international minority rights law that religious and ethnic identities are mutually exclusive and that one group cannot have access to both elements of identity. To deny recognition to the Sikh minority of their “ethnicity” or to define them by solely by their religion at the expense of their “ethnicity” constitutes discrimination.

33. Therefore, even if a group is recognized as a minority in line with its express desire to that effect, the recognition of minority status will be rendered illusory and an unacceptable observance of the principle of self-identification, if the group is not recognized as the particular type of minority that it claims to constitute. Just as a State may not deny a culturally distinct group within its territory recognition as a minority; it may also not deny the group to choose which type of minority it self- identifies as.

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25. UN Commission on Human Rights, Commentary on UN Declaration on Minorities,

E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.5/2005/2, 4 April 2005, paragraph 6.

26. American Anthropological Association’s Response to OMB Directive 15: Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting (Sept 1997).

34. In the case of American Sikhs, they are automatically classified with their assumed national origin but not their primary identity that of being Sikh.

35. Nonetheless the principle of self-identification while fundamental is not absolute.

There are objective criteria which set the boundaries of the space available for the principle of self-identification to be observed.<sup>27</sup> the objective criteria determine the scope of minority rights. Thus if the resultant identity resulting from the exercise of self-identification is within this scope, complete deference must be given to that choice.

36. Just as there is a finite scope in which “minorities” may lay claim to such a status, there is similarly a finite scope for each of the separate categories of minorities listed in Article 27: ethnic, linguistic and religious.

37. In addition, it has been argued that the use of subjective criteria, such as a will on the part of the members of the groups in question to preserve their own

characteristics and to be accepted as part of that group by the other members, combined with certain specific objective requirements, such as those listed in the Capotorti definition, should be taken into account. It is now commonly accepted that recognition of minority status is not solely for the State to decide, but should be based on both objective and subjective criteria.

38. If ethnicity denotes the wider concept of culture and the term religious minority refers to religious identity, it does not then mean that the two are mutually exclusive. It would also mean that any group which is recognized to have a culture which does not neatly fit the categories of religion or language can rely on “ethnic” head to access minority rights in relation to their culture and identity.

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27. Explanatory Report to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, adopted on 1 February 1995, entered into force on 1 February 1998, ETS No. 157, para. 34.

## Non-discrimination

39. The most immediate and essential adverse effect of non-recognition is that the American Sikh minority is unable to refer to any official population figures of their ethnic minority. They are denied the right to be counted. This affects their sense of identity. They cannot politically participate in the decisions which affect them. They will not be able to access group rights specific to their unique culture which extend beyond religious beliefs, such as educational institutions and other cultural considerations unconnected with their religious beliefs, identity. They cannot politically participate in the decisions which affect them. They will not be able to access group rights specific to their unique culture which extend beyond religious beliefs, such as educational institutions and other cultural considerations unconnected with their religious beliefs.

40. The CERD has stated that:

*States parties fail to collect data on the ethnic or national origin of their citizens or of other persons living on their territory, but decide at their own discretion which groups constitute ethnic groups...that are to be recognized and treated as such...the Committee draws to the attention of States parties that the application of different criteria in order to determine ethnic groups or indigenous peoples, leading to the recognition of some and refusal to recognize others, may give rise to differing treatment for various groups within a country's population.<sup>28</sup>*

41. The Census Bureau desegregates groups with significantly small populations. The American Sikh population is thought to be over 1 million. As a large group that has grown since settlement over 200 years ago, it has constantly voiced its desire to self-identify for many years.

42. Completely missing the autonomous existence of 1 million people in the USA means that their protection will critically be overlooked. This is a huge flaw in both the census and compliance of US with CERD. Trends of one of the most discriminated against Asian group cannot be obtained from this data without being flawed.

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28. General Recommendation No. 24: Reporting of persons belonging to different races, national/ethnic groups, or indigenous peoples (Art. 1) : 2708/99. Gen. Rec. No. 24. (General Comments).

## Hate Crimes

43. Sikhs have been the victims of hate crimes, racial profiling and discrimination, especially since the horrific terrorist attacks on 9/11. Hate crimes cannot be properly reported and categorized unless Sikhs are recognized as a separate ethnic group and counted by the Census. Counting Sikhs separately will help government to document, prosecute, and prevent hate crimes. Below are only a few illustrative examples:

- i. Balbir S Sodhi was the first hate crime victim post 9/11. He was shot and killed in Arizona outside his gas station.
- ii. Baljeet Chadha was punched and his nose and eye socket broken outside a gurdwara (Sikh place of worship after being called a f\*\*\*\* arab in late 2008.
- iii. In the state of NY, a Sikh boy was assaulted and his hair was cut in school forcibly, a guilty verdict was given in the case for a hate crime.
- iv. Nirvair Singh was visiting Orlando, Florida from India and didn't speak English very well. He became very ill while staying in a hotel, and after being deserted by the Uncle he was visiting, decided to leave and go back to India. While trying to get a taxi, he walked into a bank to get help getting a taxi and passed out from a high fever while waiting. The bank employees assumed he was a threat, possibly with a bomb, because he had luggage with him and had a beard and turban, and called the police. The police came in with a SWAT team and attacked him with police dogs, cut off his clothes, and blew up his suitcases without giving him a chance to explain anything.
- v. In New Jersey, a Sikh Boy's *patka* (head covering) and *kesh* (hair) were set on fire during a fire drill in school by a fellow student.
- vi. Sikhs are regularly subjected to special screening by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), by virtue of wearing the turban.

These examples demonstrate the dire need for measures needed to protect American Sikhs from persecution and violence on the basis of their distinct ethnicity. International law explicitly anticipates and prompts such treatment of minorities.<sup>29</sup> An accurate count of the population will better ensure protection and better inform authorities of the needs of a community that is being targeted.

## Conclusion

It has been shown in respecting, persevering and developing the identity of minority groups, it is essential to give prominence and defer to the principle of self-identification. However such a subjective principle must be bound by objective limits. The principle thus implemented will compel the recognition of groups as minorities if they satisfy these objective criteria. However it will also allow for those groups that fulfill such objective criteria but lack the desire to preserve their culture to choose not to be identified and treated as minorities.

Consequently the same principle must be applied to preserving and developing a particular type of minority identity through its recognition. Therefore we have established that under international law, the availability of an “ethnic” identity for a group need only be conditioned on evidence of a “culture” which is not solely<sup>30</sup> religious or linguistic and covers all cultural identities including race. This analysis has shown that American Sikhs have a right under international law to self- identify as “ethnic minorities” based on their cultural traits which cannot be isolated to those of a religious nature and reinforced by a strong sense of solidarity aimed at preserving their culture. The United States Census Bureau has a duty to correctly tabulate minorities, including Sikhs, and should provide desegregated data for Sikhs who write in “Sikh” under the “Some Other Race” category.

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29. UN Declaration on Minorities, Commentary, para. 32, FCNM Exp. Note, Art 6 para. 2, para. 50.

30. Commentary on UN Declaration on Minorities, para 6.

JUNE 16, 2012

## IMPORTANCE OF CENSUS DATA FOR SIKH AMERICAN ISSUES

As the vote in the Senate nears, the Census Project wanted us to prepare a report that shows how data from the American Community Survey (ACS) is used by the Sikh community. Here was our submission:

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a valuable tool used by UNITED SIKHS. The removal of this data from our organization would hinder our ability to see what our constituency entails and how it is growing. The results of the Census are the only uniform measure of population, socio-economic, and housing data for the United States. The data is used to determine the issues of importance for the people. Specifically, it is of special importance for minority communities to study the trends and patterns of growth and to better understand the needs of the communities, based on numbers rather than estimations.

As a distinctly separate ethnicity, with anywhere between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Sikhs in the United States, Sikhs are a minority community that relies on the Census to better understand the needs of its community. Particularly, in 2010, UNITED SIKHS petitioned to have the Census provide a code for Sikhs to be identified as its own ethnicity. This would further expand our knowledge of our constituents' size and needs. Until this code is provided, we have asked the Sikh community to write in "Sikh" under "Other Race" on Question No. 9 of the Census.

UNITED SIKHS has worked hard to advocate for Sikhs to be a separate race in the Census and the complete removal of ACS would reverse our efforts. After the suffering for a lack of recognition by government, being correctly enumerated by the Census Bureau is a very important step towards resolving the lack of recognition.

Since beginning our immigration into the United States over 130 years ago, Sikhs have faced many forms of discrimination by the general public and government. In the early 20th century, Sikhs were unable to go to public establishments and restaurants, were

ridiculed publicly, and often subjected to physical harassment. Post 9/11, Sikhs have been targets of hate crimes from the general public, and have been subjected to unlawful racial profiling and harassment by law enforcement due to our appearance. It is very difficult for the Sikh community to engage political representatives, agencies, and law enforcement on these issues when we are unable to correctly state how many Sikhs there are. It is also difficult to promote awareness of the Sikh community, or to tackle the problems of the community through assistance from government, without an official enumeration. With the ability to write in “Sikh” in the “other race” category, UNITED SIKHS has the ability to get some count. However, the complete removal of ACS data would make our efforts in these matters impossible to pursue.

The United States prides itself on its progressiveness and inclusivity, from its foundation of “We the People,” and it is important to continue to have accurate counts of all the people in the country.

To view this article, [click here](#)

NOVEMBER 13, 2013

## **PALLONE CALLS ON SECRETARY OF COMMERCE TO INCLUDE SIKH COMMUNITY IN CENSUS REPORTING**

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (NJ-06) sent a letter to the Honorable Penny Pritzker, Secretary of Commerce, to formally request that the U.S. Census Bureau act to include the American Sikh community in census reporting data. The Census Bureau, which falls under the Department of Commerce, currently does not collect information on Sikh population numbers in the United States.

Pallone asked that the Bureau introduce a separate code on official forms for those who write in “Sikh” as their ethnicity, which would allow the Bureau to develop a more accurate number as to how many Sikhs are living in the United States. Taking these steps to collect official population information would allow the federal government to better consider the needs of the Sikh community when allocating resources and facilitate proper recognition of the community’s contributions to the country.

Below is the full text of the letter:

November 15, 2013

The Honorable Penny Pritzker

Secretary of Commerce

U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, D.C. 20230



Dear Secretary Pritzker:

I am writing to request that the Department of Commerce and the U.S. Census Bureau take action to include the Sikh community in the census reporting data. I specifically ask that the Census Bureau introduce a separate code for those who write in “Sikh,” on census forms to ensure that the Sikh community can be correctly enumerated.

The census is used to make decisions about what community services to provide, to distribute more than \$400 billion in federal funds to local, state and tribal governments each year and to inform a great number of different government decisions. The information provided by the census is vital and can be particularly important for minority communities. The census data allows the government, businesses and researchers to study the trends and patterns of growth and to better understand the needs of the communities.

Currently, Sikhs in the United States need to mark themselves as “Other Asian” and fill in the blank as “Sikh” in order to provide accurate information. However, that response is automatically coded by the Census Bureau as “Asian Indian.” There is no way to then disaggregate the data and develop an accurate number as to how many Sikhs there are in the United States.

This leads to a host of problems. Unfortunately, Sikhs are a minority community that has faced a lack of recognition by the government which has contributed to a lack of understanding among the general public. Following 9/11, Sikhs were the target of hate crimes because of this lack of understanding. Today many Sikhs continue to face racial profiling and harassment solely based on their appearance. It is difficult to ensure that the government is promoting awareness, addressing discrimination and providing assistance when we do not have official population information about the community.

Lastly, I understand that federal law prohibits the Census Bureau from asking for religious affiliation on a mandatory basis. However, many Sikhs believe it is important that they are able to list “Sikh” as their ethnicity and would like to do so voluntarily while having it counted. There would not need to be any requirement that someone lists their religion.

Sikhs make many important contributions to the United States and to our local communities. It is time that the government acted to ensure that we have the information necessary to promote tolerance and fair treatment under the law.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

FRANK PALLONE, JR.  
Member of Congress

Cc. John H. Thompson, Director, U.S. Census Bureau

## Part Two

AUGUST 24, 2010

## Counting Every Sikh in Census 2010



[Click Here to read the form for Census 2010.](#)

Over the past few weeks, the Coalition has received varied requests for our involvement with [Census 2010](#) efforts across the United States. Next year's census count promises to be one of the largest mobilizing events of this administration. But the Sikh Coalition has decided not to play an active role in the Census next year for the reason described below.

Like most Sikhs, we would like for there to be an accurate count of Sikhs in the United States. If we had an accurate count of how many Sikhs live in the United States and where, we would gain many advantages – from being able to showcase voting blocks in certain areas to obtaining funding for our community's needs. Every time we walk into a legislator's office to ask them to do something for Sikhs, the first question is always "How many Sikhs are there in my district." Therefore, having an accurate count of our community is key to our progress in the United States.

However, after months of research into this matter, we have discovered that Census 2010 will not be able to provide us with any Sikh headcount at all. This is the primary reason why the Coalition has chosen not to play an active role in the census effort next year.

We recently spoke with Karen Humes, Assistant Division Chief for Special Populations at the Census Bureau in Washington, DC. Karen's job is to work alongside the Race and Ancestry branches to code the data that comes in on census forms from around the country. You can read a letter from Karen that confirms this information [by clicking here](#).

There are 4 options for how a Sikh could possibly fill out the 2010 census form to try and be counted as a Sikh. Each of these options involves Question 9 – The Race Question – on the census form. Here’s what Karen told us about each one:

**Option 1: Under the question “What is Person 1’s race?,” a Sikh could tick the box next to either “Other Asian” or “Some other race” and write in the word “Sikh” in the text space.**

Karen was very clear that any attempt to write in the word “Sikh” in any text box on the census form will result in the person being counted as “Asian Indian.” As she explained it, the census’ computers are coded so that any write-in of the word “Sikh” results in the person automatically being dropped into the “Asian Indian” category. There is no “Sikh” category.

**Option 2: Under the question “What is Person 1’s race?,” a Sikh could tick the box next to both “Asian Indian” and “Some other race” and write in the word “Sikh” in the text space.**

If more than one type of race box is ticked, the person will be counted as someone of mixed-race heritage. If the person ticks both and writes in “Sikh” under “Some other race” then the person will be counted as mixed-race of Asian heritage.

**Option 3: Under the question “What is Person 1’s race?,” a Sikh could simply tick the box next to “Some other race” or “Other Asian” and not write anything in the text space.**

In this case, the Sikh would simply be counted as “Other Asian” or “Other race,” which are both reported categories in the Census data.

**Option 4: A Sikh could leave the question “What is Person 1’s race?” unanswered on the census form.**

If the race question is left unanswered, the Census Bureau will attempt to impute a race based on other information. For example, they will check back to match your return from Census 2000, if possible, or will check the race of others in your household. If all else fails, they could impute your neighbor’s race to you with the help of a stratification algorithm.

In sum, the message from Census Bureau officials is clear: There is no Sikh category that it counts and writing in the word “Sikh” under the race questions will have Sikhs counted as “Asian Indian.”

The Census Bureau has also stated that it will not reconsider the decision not to include Sikhs in its census count because it does not traditionally include any religious categories in the census.

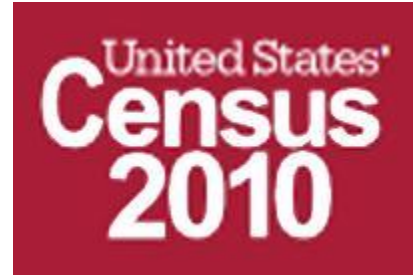
The Coalition will always support efforts to get Sikhs counted in the United States. That is partly why we are doing further research into the American Community Survey (ACS) – a yearly data collection process by the Census Bureau **that counts people by religious affiliation** across the country. Our understanding is that the ACS provides more accurate data than the census and focuses on more socio-economic categories than the census. We have been told that some versions of the ACS, unlike the Census, also have a specific question about religion, which we believe would more accurately reflect the number of Sikhs in our community. We will be looking into this over the next few months and will let the community know the results of our research.

In sum, while the census is a grand effort being put forth by the government next year, the Coalition believes it would be best for us to spend the Sikh community’s money on an initiative that benefits the Sikh community specifically. Because the census does not provide us with a headcount of Sikhs, we currently believe that the best way to spend our resources to try and get a Sikh headcount is to work with the ACS and not the census.

JANUARY 18, 2010

## SIKH AMERICAN CENSUS - AN APPEAL

Does America know who the Sikhs are? Sikhs first came to the United States in the 1800s but even after more than 130 years Sikhs are still invisible and virtually unknown to most Americans. We have a long-standing history in this country both good and bad but it's our own Sikh American history nonetheless. Our community has remained fragmented and failed to speak with a single strong voice.



The day we can pull together and get our true numbers in America we can obtain government funding for many programs that are relevant to our community, we can gain recognition and more importantly we will have the attention of our leaders in office both locally and nationally. Rough estimates are that we have surpassed the million-person mark nationwide.

Every 10 years the United States conducts a census of all Americans. It is time that Sikhs were finally counted. If we lose this opportunity to unite as a community for the 2010 Census, we will remain invisible for yet another decade. Will we organize this decade, the next decade, or decades later?

Sikh American Census is building a united Sikh community. Our goal is to facilitate communication among Sikh Americans, educate all Americans about Sikhs, to do a study to find out what our Sikh numbers are and empowering Sikhs across America.

Currently there is a National Campaign to have the government keep statistics for the Sikh community we have 80 days left, that's 11 weeks and 3 months for the actual Census day on April 1st. Yes on April Fools Day.

We need volunteers from the youth, as well as from our elderly and anyone else that has time that can help get the word out. An integral part of this project is to educate our

own community about the process.

On the Census Form: Question # 9 States what is the person's race: Please write-in "***Sikh***".

Please visit us at [Sikhamericancensus.org](http://Sikhamericancensus.org)



MARCH 8, 2010

## ARE YOU COUNTED AS SIKH IN THE 2010 US CENSUS?

By Sukhmandir Khalsa March 8, 2010

Are you counted as a Sikh in the March, 2010 US Census ?

It is estimated there are between five hundred thousand to one million Sikhs living in the United States, however there has been no method of determining the actual number of Sikhs who are residents of America. Without numbers it's difficult to get representation.

According to the Sikh Coalition in their blog entry, "Counting Every Sikh in Census 2010," the 2010 US Census has no code which exists for Sikh.

A letter from Karen Humes of the US Census Bureau, states that any response made by writing Sikh into the US Census under "some other race" will ultimately be counted as Asian Indian.

Gurmeet Kaur and Inni Kaur in their Sikhchic.com blog entry seem to feel it's worthwhile identifying yourself as a Sikh regardless of the fact that doing so will result only in being tabulated as an Asian Indian. If you happen to be Sikh of Asian Indian ancestry, while it may make no difference what so ever in 2010, writing in Sikh certainly isn't going to hurt.

The Sikh coalition has stated that there is a much better likelihood of Sikhs ultimately being recognized by the yearly ACS (American Community Survey) census which is much more detailed and contributes to the factors influencing the codes generated in a ten year census.

Not every one receives the ACS, so it is very important for those receiving the 2010 ACS to fill it out accurately and entirely. While it is not known what, if any, impact there may be in writing in Sikh under "some other race," again it certainly cannot hurt. The hope is that if enough entries are marked Sikh, eventually a code will be generated for Sikh in coming years.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted on 16 December 1966, entered into force on 23 March 1976

Part Iv Article 27

"In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language."

To view this article, [click here](#)

March 25, 2010

# Sikhs Lobby the Census

By Arun Venugopal

9. What is Person 1's race? Mark X one or more boxes.

White

Black, African Am., or Negro

American Indian or Alaska Native — Print name of enrolled or principal tribe

Asian Indian  Japanese  Native Hawaiian

Chinese  Korean  Guamanian or Chamorro

Filipino  Vietnamese  Samoan

Other Asian — Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.

Other Pacific Islander — Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on.

Some other race — Print race

SIKH

ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੱਖਰਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੱਖਰਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੱਖਰਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੱਖਰਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ

A leaflet aimed at the Sikh community

How many Sikhs live in New York City, or for that matter, in the entire country? No one really knows, not even Sikh community activists.

'It's really hard to say,' says **Jaspreet Singh**, a local staff attorney with United Sikhs, a group that formed in New York in the late 90s but now has offices around the world. 'Nationwide people estimate there are between 400,000 and 900,000 Sikhs. We contacted the Pew Survey and asked them some questions. Their estimate, based on some of their telephone analysis, was about 700,000. Half a million is a very common estimate – but that may be 200,000 off.'

Lots of communities want clearer figures, and are pushing people to send in their census forms. But Sikhs are also Lobbying the Census Bureau to give the community a separate code on census forms, so that Sikhs aren't lumped in with other Asian Indians. 'Sikhs in other countries as well as many people here see themselves as an ethnic group, rather than simply as a religion,' says Singh. 'Sikhs have the GURMUKI script and also many cultural and living traditions that separate them from others. And a sense of association or allegiance. Sikhs who grew up here or are converts in various parts of the world — all of the ones I've spoken to are happy to write in 'Sikhs.' We do have this distinct identity.'

That identity has become more sharply defined since 9/11, when Sikhs suffered from hate crimes all across the country. The dastar, or turban -- one of those traditions Singh referred to -- is among the most important articles of faith for Sikh males, but in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks it drew attention from bigots who thought they were going after Muslims. Sikh groups had a challenge: to

educate the American public about their faith without appearing to distance themselves from the Muslim community and in effect saying "It's them, not us."

Since those days, I've regularly gotten emails from a number of Sikh organizations and am consistently amazed at the level of political/community organizing, far more than in the broader Indian population. The Sikh community rallies around issues that don't gain much traction among other Indians, or simply aren't relevant: racial profiling at airports, harassment in schools, the right to wear a turban as a cop or soldier, or carry a kirpan, which is like a tiny dagger.

Some Sikh activists think census recognition would help advance work on those issues. From the petition:

It has been very difficult for the Sikh community to even engage political representatives, agencies, and law enforcement on these issues without being able to accurately state how many Sikhs there are. It is much more difficult to promote awareness of the Sikh community, or to address the problems of the community through assistance from government, without an official enumeration or recognition. Statistics speak for themselves and currently there is no correct enumeration of statistics for Sikhs in the United States.

Within New York City, Singh figures there are about 80,000 Sikhs -- "50 to 60,000 easily in Richmond Hill. Over 30,000 people can turn up for just [an important event at] a gurdwara," he says, referring to a Sikh house of worship. "If you don't have an accurate count and you have a district where there's a lot of Sikhs, you can never walk up to your Congressman and say there are this many Sikhs."

The United Sikhs petition has caught some flak, including from this [Sikh blogger](#) who sees himself as Indian:

This whole thing reeks of fanaticism. Of not being able to see beyond your religion. And you know what the fun part is? Their tag line: Recognize the Human Race as One.

Singh says he's also seeing Indian groups and newspaper articles "where people think, 'Why are you trying to divide us from India more?'" There's a subtext here: the separatist movement in India for a distinct Sikh homeland, that culminated in the assassination of Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi and violent retribution against innocent Sikhs.

But Singh thinks that is beside the point.

"This is really an American issue," he says. "We're happy to work with other South Asian groups. It's really so we can organize ourselves as a community, ask for more resources as a community."

To view this article, [click here](#)

MAY 13, 2010

## Sikh Summit on Capitol Hill: U.S. Lawmakers Apprised of Sikh-American Issues

PRESS RELEASE

*Washington, D.C.*

In a week-long series of meetings with lawmakers, Sikh organizations and community leaders engaged United States Senators and Members of Congress in a dialogue about issues that most affect Sikhs in the country.

***The 2010 Sikh Summit*** was organized by UNITED SIKHS as part of their ongoing advocacy projects to protect Sikh civil and human rights. Issues presented to legislators included Hate and Bias Crimes, Verbal Harassment, and General Xenophobia, Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, Misidentification and Watch-list Issues, Employment Discrimination, TSA and Photo-Identification Issues, a Separate Count of Sikhs in Census, the safety of Sikhs in Pakistan, and the Right to Turban in France and Belgium.

The Sikh Summit was a way for leaders of the Sikh community and Sikh organizations across the United States to gather on Capitol Hill and express issues of the Sikh community to Senators, Congress persons and members of government think-tanks.

Sikh delegations were warmly received by representatives who lent an attentive ear to the concerns of the Sikh-American community, and offered their support for issues such as discriminatory practices during air travel, injustices faced in the form of xenophobia like hate crimes, bullying in schools etc, and procuring a separate code for Sikhs in future Census and American Community Surveys.

Issues related to Transportation Security Administration (TSA) - like Sikhs being singled out for additional screening or incorrectly detained due to mistaken identity, watch list issues and lack of follow up on redress procedures gained considerable support among lawmakers. Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren sympathized with the plight of Sikhs discriminated at airports and detained during international travel. Congressman John Garamendi agreed that there is a training issue, and lack of consistency in how these concerns are handled across airports. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's office and Senator Joe Lieberman shared the concern about arbitrary targeting for Sikhs in airports and lack of due process on TRIP complaints, and have offered assistance in furthering dialogue with TSA and Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Another issue that garnered encouragement was the counting of Sikhs in the Census. United Sikhs is part of a nationwide campaign to receive a separate code to count Sikhs in national surveys. As of now, Sikhs who self-identify on the census form under "Some other Race" are automatically coded as Asian Indians with no way to disaggregate data, and therefore no substantial numbers on the number of Sikhs in the country.

Congressman Xavier Becerra agrees that having a disaggregated number is important to be able to provide adequate services to the population, and Congresswoman Judy Chu's office offered immediate assistance to get a separate code for Sikhs in upcoming American Community Surveys. Congresswoman Yvette Clark remarked she was "100% supportive of the issue."

Among delegates were representatives from California, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington DC and Washington (State) who brought their own viewpoints and concerns from their

respective communities to discussions with lawmakers from their own particular regions.

Sahib Kaur, a college student from Virginia, said, "Growing up in this country as an American, I would like to be part of the norm, than be the exception to the rule." Charanjit Kaur Chanana, an educator from Connecticut, stressed the importance of education and awareness to decrease bullying in schools and increase cultural diversity.

The Sikh Summit was innovative in the way it brought together law-makers, advocates and, most importantly, community members. Kuldip Singh, President of United Sikhs, particularly emphasized the role of the community in advocating for issues that affect them the most. He said: "It is now crucial for us to be our own advocates. Community members have an important say in policy-making as constituents and as Americans, and more Sikhs should give voice to specific matters that impact their community."

Delegates alluded to the long term impact of a multi-lateral effort like the Sikh Summit on future generations. Narinder Singh Malik of Georgia remarked, "We are an integral part of the American society, and we collectively presented our Sikh issues for the benefit of our youth."

Jasmeet Singh Jaspal from California echoed a similar sentiment and said, "It was a humbling sight to see Sikh Americans speaking out for the concern of the community, vocalizing local/ national issues to government leaders and taking action for ensuring a better future for generations to come."

United Sikhs Director Kashmir Singh is looking forward to working with lawmakers and implementing solutions to Sikh civil rights concerns. "Each lawmaker received a memorandum on Sikh issues, and we have made some recommendations on how

to address these issues. We are hoping to be able to continue our work with policymakers and community members on how to translate these thoughts into action and be part of the decision making process that affects our community."

The dialogue generated from the Summit and the support from lawmakers on Capitol Hill will form the foundation for proactively seeking and implementing resolutions to Sikh concerns at a policy level, and will be compiled in the 2010 Sikh Summit Report, which will be released shortly.

***2010 Sikh Summit Delegates met with the following lawmakers:***

Members of United States Congress

- Albio Sires (NJ-13)
- Brian Bilbray (CA-50)
- John Barrow (GA-12)
- John Garamendi (CA-10)
- John Lewis (GA-5)
- Judy Chu (CA)
- Loretta Sanchez (CA-47)
- Michael Honda (CA-15)
- Pete Stark (CA-13)
- Scott Garrett (NJ-5)
- Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18)
- Steve Rothman (NJ-9)
- Xavier Becerra (CA-31)
- Yvette Clarke (NY-11)
- Zoe Lofgren (CA-16)

United States Senators

- Arlen Specter (PA)
- Benjamin Cardin (MD)
- Dianne Feinstein (CA)
- Jim Webb (VA)
- John Cornyn (TX)
- Joseph Lieberman (CT)
- Kay Bailey Hutchison (TX)
- Kirtsen Gillibrand (NY)
- Patricia Murray (WA)
- Sherrod Brown (OH)

Additionally, the delegation also met with:

- House Committee on TSA
- USCIRF
- USDOJ Meeting
- White House Office of Public Engagement

**1: Balbir Singh Sodhi, JP (London, United Kingdom), May 13, 2010, 3:06 PM.**

I wish the United Sikhs and the other Sikh organizations involved in this worthy cause, a speedy success.

**2: Gurjender Singh (Maryland, U.S.A.), May 13, 2010, 9:32 PM.**

Dear United Sikhs Director Kashmir Singh ji: Congratulation for your wonderful effort to educate Congressmen and other lawmakers. Besides this, I would like to make a few suggestions: 1) We need to educate common people on the road about Sikhi. Starting with the significance of the Sikh turban. We do not have to teach full Sikhi. We can do it via advertisements in newspapers, Metro, TV, and main stream media, radio, various talk shows, etc. 2) Simple advertisement such as salute to the first Army Sikh with a turban



(with picture), or the first Sikh Prime Minister of India (with turban), will go a long way. 3) Bring the young generation in the front so that they can discuss the turban issue without going in loud; 4) Bring all young associations to work together to reduce overhead expenses.

MARCH 7, 2012

## HOW MANY HINDUS, SIKHS & MUSLIMS IN U.S.?

It's safe to assume that the majority of people of Indian origin living in the United States are either Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims. After all, these three religion are either Hindus, Sikhs or Muslims.

And most people of Indian origin in America have come primarily from India (along with small numbers from Uganda, UK, Surinam, Trinidad, Guyana etc).

### Few Indian Churches

Christians account for about 2.3% of India's population and their numbers in the U.S. also presumably reflects this low number.

There are far more Hindu temples, Sikh Gurdwara's and Mosques in the U.S. than Indian churches.

Not all Indian Christians in the U.S. visit Indian Churches. Some Indian Christians are keener on participating in activities of mainstream American Churches in hopes of finding better opportunities there.

### U.S. Census and Religion

Unlike censuses in other countries (India, Canada, UK etc, the U.S. Census is prohibited from asking questions on religion because of a 1976 law.

Now that's silly because that way we'd have known how many *schmucks* live in *Amreeka*. Readers of this fine blog well know *SI's* avowed *faith* in the non-existence of any such thing or creature called God, whatever be his, her or its supposed name. As a matter of curiosity, a little while back we embarked on a search on the numbers of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims living in our adopted homeland.

When it comes to religion, there's never unanimity. If you can be sure of anything in life, it's the lack of consensus on even the smallest thing when it comes to religion. Still, setting aside the disputes we arrived at some number concerning the population of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims in the United States.

### Hindus in U.S.

Hindus in America numbered 1.48 million, according to an oft-cited U.S. State Department Study United States Department of State's International Religious Freedom Report 2004. That worked out to about 0.5% of the then U.S. population.

Hindu temples are ubiquitous across the American landscape. From Washington state in the Northwest to Florida in the Southeast and in between, the American landscape is dotted with dozens of Hindi temples. Here is a prominent Hindu temple in California.



Malibu Hindu Temple, Los Angeles

### Sikhs in the U.S.

With their distinctive attire of turbands and beards, Sikhs are the most easily identifiable all of Indians. They're also the most easily confused by Americans because the 9/11 mastermind Osama Bin Laden was also given to wearing a turban.

Sikhs have been emigrating to the United States for nearly 100 years now. Some of the earliest Sikhs came to Central California in the 1900s where they worked on farms.

The first American Gurdwara is said to have come up in the 1906 in California.

Estimates of Sikhs in America range from 500,000 (Sikh Coalition) to as high as one million (United Sikhs). Sikh Gurdwaras, while not as ubiquitous as Hindu Temples, are also said to be seen across the breadth of America. Here's a picture of the Pittsburgh Gurdwara on a colder winter day.



Pittsburgh Gurdwara, Pittsburgh

### Muslims In America

Based on a study of attendance at Mosques, the 2001 Bagby et al Study of the Council of American-Islamic Relations estimated the number of Muslims in America at 6 million – 7 million.

However, the [other studies](#) have put the Muslim population in America between 2 million – 3 million. Unlike Hindus, the majority of whose origins are from India, Muslims have to come America from diverse places including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Turkey, Somalia, Albania and other European nations etc.

There's some concern that the Muslim numbers in America may be under-estimated in the post-2001 era. Given the horrific attacks of 9/11 by a bunch of Islamic terrorists (mostly from Saudi Arabia and Egypt) Muslims are less likely to disclose their religious affiliations in surveys.



Albanian Islamic Center, Staten Island, NY

It's our hypothesis that barring a fringe bunch of Christian whackos in the heartland obsessed about abortion and gay marriage most Americans are not that religious .

And that's a good sign.

A very good sign for that means less bigots in the world. The only good thing about a lot of Hindu temples in the U.S. is that many of them have canteens that serve delicious Indian food. We've also enjoyed fine meals during

langar at Sikh Gurdwaras. The great food is about the only good thing we can say about Indian religious establishments in the U.S.

To view this article, [click here](#)

AUGUST 6, 2012

# HOW MANY U.S. SIKHS?



The August 5 shootings at the Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wis., left six dead and many questions about the motives behind the tragedy. News coverage of the event has focused on why the alleged gunman targeted people at the Sikh Temple and has turned attention to the Sikh community, a religious group with a relatively small but growing population in the United States whose members are often mistakenly identified as Muslim.

The [Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life](#) has collected some information on varying estimates of the U.S. Sikh population.

**How many Sikhs are there in the United States?**

## **Conrad Hackett, Demographer, Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life:**

Because the U.S. Census Bureau does not ask Americans about their religious affiliation, there is no definitive answer to this question. Estimating the size of small religious groups based on survey data is difficult, and estimates of the Sikh population vary considerably. For example, the 2012 Statistical Abstract of the United States cites an estimate of about 78,000 Sikh adults in 2008, based on the [American Religious Identification Survey](#). The World Religion Database at Boston University estimates there are about 280,000 Sikhs in the U.S., based on estimates of the number of Punjabi immigrants from India and Pakistan and an assumption about the proportion of them who are Sikh. The [2010 Religious Congregations & Membership Study](#) does not include a count of individual Sikhs but finds there are 246 Sikh congregations (gurdwaras). The Sikh Coalition, an advocacy group, [says there are more than 500,000 Sikh Americans](#) but does not cite a source for that figure.

The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life's [2012 survey of Asian Americans](#), which was conducted in several Asian languages as well as in English and involved interviews with more than 3,500 Asian Americans, found that about 1% of Asian American adults identify themselves as Sikhs. In addition, U.S. census figures indicate that Asian Americans make up about 5.5% of the total

U.S. adult population. Combining the Asian American survey data (on Sikhs as a percentage of the U.S. Asian population) with the census data (on Asian Americans as a percentage of U.S. adults) yields an estimate that there are about 140,000 Sikh adults in the U.S. With the addition of children (based on the ratio of adults to children among Asian Americans as a whole), the estimate would rise to approximately 200,000 American Sikhs of all ages. This estimate is based on the assumption that the vast majority of Sikhs in the U.S. are of Asian origin – an assumption supported by various studies, including Princeton University’s New Immigrant Survey. However, given the difficulty of surveying both small religious groups and new immigrants, the 200,000 figure should be considered a rough estimate and more likely a floor than a ceiling.



AUGUST 23, 2012

## JUST HOW MANY SIKHS ARE IN THE UNITED STATES, ANYWAY?



Sikhs attending the 2011 “Sikh Day Parade” in New York (source: [New York Times](#))

Enumerating the number of Sikhs in America has been one of the more vexing issues for the Sikh American community. Because the US Census survey does not ask questions around religious affiliation, we have seen a wide range in estimates, as summarized by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life:

*For example, the 2012 Statistical Abstract of the United States cites an estimate of about 78,000 Sikh adults in 2008, based on the [American](#)*

*Religious Identification Survey. The World Religion Database at Boston University estimates there are about 280,000 Sikhs in the U.S., based on estimates of the number of Punjabi immigrants from India and Pakistan and an assumption about the proportion of them who are Sikh. The 2010 Religious Congregations & Membership Study does not include a count of individual Sikhs but finds there are 246 Sikh congregations (gurdwaras). The Sikh Coalition, an advocacy group, says there are more than 500,000 Sikh Americans but does not cite a source for that figure.*

Even recently, estimates of 700,000 Sikh Americans have been cited in the news. The Pew Forum goes on to extrapolate from its own telephone survey of Asian Americans, and estimates a much smaller number:

*The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life's 2012 survey of Asian Americans, which was conducted in several Asian languages as well as in English and involved interviews with more than 3,500 Asian Americans, found that about 1% of Asian American adults identify themselves as Sikhs. In addition, U.S. census figures indicate that Asian*

*Americans make up about 5.5% of the total U.S. adult population. Combining the Asian American survey data (on Sikhs as a percentage of the U.S. Asian population) with the census data (on Asian Americans as a percentage of U.S. adults) yields an estimate that there are about 140,000 Sikh adults in the U.S. With the addition of children (based on the ratio of adults to children among Asian Americans as a whole), the estimate would rise to approximately 200,000 American Sikhs of all ages. This estimate is based on the assumption that the vast majority of Sikhs in the U.S. are of Asian origin – an assumption supported by various studies, including Princeton University’s New Immigrant Survey. However, given the difficulty of surveying both small religious groups and new immigrants, the 200,000 figure should be considered a rough estimate and more likely a floor than a ceiling.*

The Pew Forum study on Asian Americans is based on a sample size of 580 Indian Americans, and from this small sample size, we are to estimate that there are 200,000 American Sikhs. Further, the Pew Forum estimate does not factor the number of Sikh Americans who are not of Asian

descent. An extrapolation of another Pew Forum study on religious migration also suggests that the number of Sikhs in the United States might be underestimated (or that Sikh migration from India to the United States is overestimated).

And, when a Sikh festival in northern California can draw well over 50,000 spectators, most of whom are Sikhs, one might reasonably agree that 200,000 number is certainly a lower limit.

When we are discussing issues such as civil rights and community resources in relation to Sikh Americans, we are missing a very fundamental piece of data, and this impairs our advocacy. We simply do not have a census study on Sikh Americans dedicated to establishing just how many of us there are.

DECEMBER 19, 2012

## THE IRONIC INVISIBILITY OF SIKHS

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In a recent CBS News documentary entitled “[Working for Religious Freedom](#)“, Rajdeep Singh, the Director of Law and Policy at the [Sikh Coalition](#), commented on how little Sikhs are known in the United States (at 19:45 in the [video](#)):

*Sikhs have been in the United States for more than 100 years, and ironically, despite being one of the most visible people in this country, in some respects, we’re invisible.*

I was reminded of this quote — and of our ironic invisibility — when perusing through the [Global Religious Landscape](#), an analysis released by the Pew Forum that attempts to report the size and distribution of the world’s major religions in 2010.

Unfortunately, as is usually the case with the reports from the Pew Forum (such as the [Faith on the Move](#) report on migration by religious group, [Rise of Asian Americans](#), [Asian Americans: A Mosaic of Faiths](#), and a [recent white paper on the Sikh American population](#)), the enumeration of followers of the Sikh faith was left wanting due to the lack of specific census

data available about Sikhs. In the **Global Religious**

**Landscape** report, [Sikhism was assigned to the “Other Religions”](#)

[category](#), a catch-all group of supposed smaller faith groups spread widely around the globe:

*Worldwide, there are an estimated 58 million members of other religions, accounting for nearly 1% of the global population. The “other religions” category is diverse and comprises groups not classified elsewhere. This category includes followers of religions that are not specifically measured in surveys and censuses in most countries: the Baha’i faith, Taoism, Jainism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Tenrikyo, Wicca, Zoroastrianism and many others. Because of the paucity of census and survey data, the Pew Forum has not estimated the size of individual religions within this category...*

About the Sikh faith, the Pew Forum states:

*Sikhism was founded at the turn of the 16th century by Guru Nanak in the Punjab, a region now split between India and Pakistan. More than nine-in-ten Sikhs are in India, but there are also sizable Sikh communities in the United Kingdom,*

*the United States and Canada. The World Religion Database estimates there are a total of about 25 million Sikhs worldwide.*

The [lack of statistics about the Sikh population in the US and around the world](#) is an issue that is mentioned frequently on this blog. A national [census completed in India in 2001 showed over 19 million Sikhs](#) in that country (about 1.9% of the population), and so the 25 million statistic cited by the Pew Forum may not be unreasonable. The Government of India also completed a census in 2011 as well, however, reports that show population by religion in India has not yet been made available. As such, in terms of demographic analysis, Sikhs continue to remain invisible despite our unique physical appearance. While the “Other Faiths” are explicitly identified and briefly discussed, for those interested in these faiths, the Pew Forum’s ***Global Religious Landscape*** study is not particularly useful.

## MUSLIMS AND THE CENSUS

ESPACE, POPULATIONS, SOCIÉTÉS, 2003-1

pp. 89-101

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# Estimating the Muslim Population in the United States Using Census 2000 Data

Acknowledgments: Jennifer Paluch provided valuable research assistance on this project.

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## INTRODUCTION

There has been a Muslim presence in the United States for centuries. It is virtually certain that many of the slaves brought to the Americas from Africa were Muslim because western Africa, from which most slaves came, has a long history of Muslim civilization (Nyang, 1992), dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries (Levtzion, 1968). For example, the northern part of Nigeria has been largely Muslim since at least the 1300s, and Nigeria was frequented by slave traders in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Haddad (1986a), there is evidence that as early as 1717 there were Arabic-speaking slaves in America who reportedly ate no pork and believed in Allah and Muhammad. There is some evidence that as many as ten percent of slaves brought to North America were Muslim (Austin, 1984), but Christianity was imposed upon the slave population, and slaves who refused to convert were persecuted or killed (Nyang, 1999).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Muslim (as well as Christian) migrants entered the United States from various middle eastern nations, including what are now Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq (Haddad, 1986b). Although these immigrants established a clear presence for Islam in American society (Haddad, 1986b; Rashid, 1999), it was not easy to be other than a Christian in the United States. The passage of the highly restrictive national origins quota system in the US in the 1920s effectively cut off immigration from all but northwestern European and Latin American countries, until that law was replaced by the less restrictive Immigration Act of 1965. The post-World War II partition of Palestine, and subsequent political and economic unrest in the region led to refugee migration to the United States, but the volume of migrants and refugees from a number of predominantly Muslim nations has increased



largely because of the liberalization of immigration laws in the mid-1960s.

Efforts began within the African-American population to build a community of Islam during the Reconstruction period following the American Civil War. Initially these activities were outside the mainstream of Islam (McCloud, 1995), but since the 1970s there appears to have been a steady (albeit largely unmeasured) increase in the number of African-Americans who adhere to mainstream Islam (American Muslim Council, 1991; Rashid, 1999).

Although the number of Muslims in the United States is almost certainly large and growing, it is not certain *how large* or at

*what rate* the population is increasing. For this reason, the geographic distribution of the Muslim population also is somewhat uncertain, although anecdotal evidence can be used to discern the basic patterns that exist. My purpose in this paper is to review estimates that have been made of the size of the Muslim population in the United States, and compare them with new estimates that I derive from proxy measures based on Census 2000 data. I then use the census-based measures to estimate the geographic distribution of the Muslim population in the United States in 1990 and 2000, and from this I am able to calculate rates of growth by different areas of the country.

## 1. ESTIMATING THE NUMBER OF MUSLIMS IN THE UNITED STATES

In the United States, unlike in Canada and several other countries in the world, religion has never been asked as part of the regular government-funded decennial censuses. The Census Bureau did collect information in its Census of Religious Bodies from 1906-1936, but Public Law 94-521 prohibits the Census Bureau from asking a question on religious affiliation on a mandatory basis and so it cannot be included as part of the decennial census. Questions on religion were asked as part of the March 1957 Current Population Survey, in anticipation that a question on religion might be included in the 1960 decennial census, but ultimately that plan was dropped by the Census Bureau.

Surveys can fill in gaps in census data, but only recently in the United States have surveys begun routinely to include "Islam" or "Muslim" as a category of response when a question about religion is asked. Since most residents of the U.S. are at least nominally Christian, even small samples are able to provide reasonable estimates of the number of such individuals and many Christian churches keep membership lists which are compiled by various groups to estimate the total population of Christians by branch of Christianity (see, for example, the website <http://www.adherents.com>). For less populous groups, estimation is more problematic even at the national level and, of course,

relatively small national surveys provide little information about the geographic distribution of a population. For these reasons, it is necessary to employ indirect methods in the estimation of the Muslim population.

People have been trying to figure out how many Muslims reside in the United States since at least 1973, when Lovell suggested that there might be 900,000 Muslims in the US and Canada, based on "preliminary tabulations from a religious census being conducted by a committee through the Islamic Center of Washington, D.C." (reprinted as Lovell, 1992:60). The "census" consisted of a questionnaire sent to Muslim community leaders throughout the US and Canada asking for their assessment of the local Muslim population. Since Canada has approximately one-tenth the population of the US, if we assume that Muslims were distributed proportionately between the two countries, it would imply that approximately 820,000 were in the US circa 1970. In 1980 Thomas Phillipp argued that "there are perhaps 200,000 to 300,000 Muslims in the United States today; it is impossible to obtain more accurate figures... This estimate however does not include 2 million Afro-Americans claimed by the Nation of Islam... Nor does this estimate include Muslim students in the United States" (Phillipp, 1980, p. 732). If we include those

persons, the number of Muslims in the US by his estimate would have been about 2.3 million in 1980. In a more systematic analysis, Ghayur (1981) estimated that there were 1.2 million Muslims in the United States in 1980. His method was to list the immigrant ethnic groups that were composed predominantly of Muslims and then to estimate the number of persons in each group using census data and immigration data. He then added his estimate of 75,000 African-Americans to reach his total of 1.2 million. A similar method was used by Weekes (1984) to estimate a total of 1.4 million Muslims in the United States as of approximately 1980. The principal difference between the estimates of Ghayur and Weekes is that Weekes estimated a larger number of African-Americans to be Muslim than did Ghayur.

Stone (1991) estimated that in 1980 the immigrant Muslim population in the U.S. was 2.3 million. To this she added, somewhat arbitrarily, one million African-American Muslims, for a total Muslim population in 1980 of 3.3 million. She began with the 1980 Census of Population and used place of birth and ancestry to estimate the number of people who were of probable Muslim origin. She then used Immigration and Naturalization Service data on immigrants by country of origin to estimate the number of immigrant Muslims added to the US population after the census, applying to each set of immigrants a fraction equal to the proportion of persons in each country of origin who were estimated to be Muslim. She then applied a birth rate of approximately 16 births per thousand per year, added in new immigrants since 1980 and produced an estimate of 4.0 million Muslims in 1986. Further updating using the same methodology generated a 4.6 million figure for 1988 which appeared in *Time* magazine and was widely quoted at the time (Oatling, 1988).

A much lower, and also highly publicized number was published by Kosmin and his associates as part of the 1989-90 National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI) (Goldstein and Kosmin, 1991; Kosmin, 1991; Kosmin and Lachman, 1993). These data were from a national probability sample of households designed especially, although

not exclusively, to provide estimates of the Jewish population in the United States. Based on telephone interviews with 113,000 households in the United States, the NSRI initially concluded that there were 527,000 Muslim adults in the US, representing 0.3 percent of the total US adult population. Applying that same percentage across all ages produced an estimate of 750,000 Muslims as of 1990. The researchers were subjected to considerable criticism for this finding and although they defended their results (see the Appendix of Kosmin and Lachman, 1993), they also acknowledged that the overall response rate to the telephone interviews was only 50 percent, even after four attempts to make contact. They also acknowledged problems with language and they acknowledged that immigrants from countries like Iran, "with their experience of persecution" (Kosmin and Lachman, 1993, p. 287) might have been reluctant to reveal their religion, even if they cooperated with the rest of the survey. Ultimately, the weighting for Muslim households was adjusted upward to increase their overall estimate of the US Muslim population to 1.2 million as of 1988 – a number well below Stone's estimate of 4.6 million.

Despite its shortcomings, the NSRI study demonstrated the potential utility of deriving estimates of the population of all religious groups, including Muslims, from survey data. From the mid-1990s through 2001 there were several surveys from which estimates can be drawn of the Muslim population, including an updated version of the NSRI called ARIS – the American Religious Identification Survey of 2001. This survey was based on a random digit-dialed telephone survey of 50,281 American residential households in the 48 states of the continental U.S. Among these responding households, 219 were identified as Muslim. This produced a weighted number of 1,104,000 Muslim adults. "Allowing for a sampling error of +/-0.5 percent, the ARIS-2001 figure maybe adjusted upwards to its maximum range of 1.0 percent of all 208 million American adults. With such an adjustment, the total national figure for US Muslims is 2.2 million, giving a total national population (including children) of just under 3 million" (Kosmin and Mayer, 2001, p. 1).

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Several other national surveys have collected information on religious identification of respondents and included the category of Muslim in the coded responses. These results are shown in Table 1, drawing upon data made available by the American Religious Data Archive (<http://www.thearda.com>). For each survey listed in the table, I have downloaded the data files and calculated the number of Muslim respondents. All of these surveys are of adults (people aged 18 and older) and so the assumption has to be made that the population under age 18 has the same representation of Muslims as does the adult population. Accepting this

assumption, I have calculated the percentage of respondents in each survey who indicated that they were Muslim and then applied that percentage to the total U.S. population for the year of the study, using the population estimates of the U.S. Census Bureau. It can be seen that all numbers hover close to one million. They are all within the same range as the ARIS, so if we accept the reasoning that each survey may somewhat underestimate Muslims, we can accept the Kosmin and Mayer suggestion of an upper limit of approximately 3 million Muslims as of the year 2000.

Table 1. Estimates of the Size of the Muslim Population in the United States Based on National Survey Data

Survey	Total	Muslims	Muslims as fraction of total	Implied Muslims in US population	Blacks Muslims	% of Black who are Muslim
Religion & Politics survey 1994-1995 (weighted)	26,726	88	0.003	872,723	59	2.2
Religion & Politics Survey 1996 (weighted)	4,150	21	0.005	1,357,764	13	3.0
God and Society in North America Survey, 1996	3,002	10	0.003	893,804	4	2.0
Civic Involvement Survey 1997 (run with weight 1)	3,267	11	0.003	914,444	1	0.2
GSS 1998	2,832	13	0.005	1,261,716	6	1.5
GSS 2000	2,817	12	0.004	1,198,722	8	1.9
American Religious Identification Survey 2001	50,281	219	0.004	1,239,886	59	1.4
AVERAGE						1.7

Source: Data courtesy of American Religious Data Archive (<http://www.thearda.com>).

Another study conducted in 2001 of the Muslim population was completed as part of a larger study of American congregations called "Faith Communities Today," which was coordinated by the Hartford Seminary's Institute for Religious Research. The project involved surveying a congregational leader at each of more than 30,000 congregations of all major religious groups across the country. In this process the study identified 1,209 mosques in the United States and 631 of these were randomly selected to be included in the survey. Responses were received from 416 (66 percent) of those 631 (Bagby, Perl, and Froehle, 2001). A leader from each responding mosque provided esti-

mates of the number of people attending each Friday's *Jum'ah* prayer. The average attendance was reported to be 292 people per mosque, which would imply that 353,000 Muslims pray at a mosque in the U.S. each Friday. A multiplier of 5.56 was then somewhat arbitrarily applied to this number to estimate the total number of people associated with a mosque (an average of 1,625). This implies that 2 million Muslims are associated with a mosque even if only 18 percent of those attend Friday prayer. Another somewhat arbitrary multiplier was applied to that number to estimate the total number of Muslims, whether or not associated with a mosque. This number was

estimated to be 6-7 million, which the authors called "reasonable" (Bagby, Perl, and Froehle, 2001, p. 3) although it is of course highly dependent upon the multipliers used.

Although the estimate from the mosque study was twice the highest value estimated from the ARIS, the mosque study found that about 30 percent of people associated with mosques were converts and that most of these individuals were African-American. The ARIS estimated that 27 percent of Muslims were black, so both of these studies imply that about 30 percent of Muslims are African-American. Table 1 shows that the nationwide surveys implied that an average of 1.7 percent of the African-American population was Muslim. If we round that to 2 percent and combine it with the estimate that 30 percent of the Muslim population is African-American, then once we know the number of African-Americans, we can solve the equation for the number of Muslims. Census 2000 counted 34.7 million African-Americans, and

2 percent of that number would be 694,000. If that number is 30 percent of the Muslim population, then the number of Muslims would have to be 2.3 million. In order for the Muslim population to be larger than this, then either African-Americans must account for a smaller fraction of all Muslims, or else a much larger fraction of African-Americans must be Muslim. The data currently available, as shown in Table 1, do not provide evidence of either one of those possibilities. The highest percent Muslim among blacks as shown in Table 1 is 3 percent. If that were the correct number, and 30 percent of Muslims are black, then the resulting Muslim population is 3.5 million. In order for the number of Muslims to be 7 million (the top estimate derived from the mosque study), if we assume that 30 percent are black, then 6 percent of blacks must be Muslim. Alternatively, if it is true that 2 percent of blacks are Muslim, then blacks could represent no more than 10 percent of a population of 7 million Muslims.

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## 2. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF THE MUSLIM POPULATION

The available survey data reviewed above (see also Smith, 2001) suggest that the Muslim population of the United States is probably around 3 million. None of these estimates, however, provides enough information to tell us about the spatial patterning of the Muslim population within the United States. We need a much bigger database to accomplish that task, and so I have turned to the census data to provide proxies for the Muslim population at sufficient geographic detail so that a spatial pattern can be discerned.

Although others have used census data for the purpose of estimating the number of Muslims in the U.S. (see, for example, Stone, 1991), my analysis builds on the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) from the 1990 census, which no one previously has utilized for this purpose. These data provide us with the opportunity to generate estimates of the spatial distribution of the Muslim population. The 1990 estimates at the state level then provide a way to use

regression analysis to estimate the Muslim population by state for 2000, using information that has just recently become available from Census 2000.

### 2.1. How can Census Data Be Used to Estimate the Muslim Population?

We are in a the midst of a brief historical window of opportunity when census data can be used to help identify the Muslim population in the United States because it is still true that most Muslims in the U.S. are either immigrants or are residing in households of immigrants. Thus, despite the lack of a question about religion, we can make inferences about the "possibly Muslim" population by using information that is derived about ancestry, country of birth, and language. In another generation, when most Muslims will have been born in the United States, it will become more difficult to identify them from these kinds of census questions.

Other researchers have used census data for this purpose, as I have already noted, and my

use involves the same caveats offered by previous researchers: Not all people from predominantly Muslim countries are Muslim; not all people who speak the language spoken in predominantly Muslim countries are Muslim; not all people who share the ancestry of those who are Muslim are themselves Muslim; and some people who are Muslim will not share any of the characteristics of ancestry, language, or place of birth that are being used as proxies for being Muslim. With respect to the concern that not all people who might seem to be Muslim are necessarily Muslim, the use of the census data works on the “where there is smoke there is probably fire” theory. That is to say, the existence of a large Arab community, for example, in a particular part of the United States probably signals the existence of a Muslim community even if we acknowledge that many Arabs in the United States are not Muslim. The presence in a region of people who are Arab, along with people who are Indonesian, along with people who are from Iran, probably increases the likelihood that there will be a substantial Muslim population, even if not all such people are Muslim.

With respect to the existence of Muslims who are not immigrants and do not share any of the language, place of birth or ancestry characteristics with other Muslims, it turns out that in the United States most such individuals are African-American, so the task becomes one of estimating the percentage of a local African-American population that might be Muslim. The estimating percentage comes from outside the census data and is based initially on a national average, but then is applied to the census data to derive a number that will be added to the “possibly Muslim” population identified through the combination of language, ancestry, and place of birth. The following sections describe the methodology in more detail.

## 2.2. The “Possibly Muslim” Population in 1990 Derived from the PUMS data

The estimating process begins with the 5 percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) from the 1990 census. This file contains all of the information collected for each member of the household from a 5 percent sample of all households enumerated in the 1990 census. These are responses to the “long-form” ques-

tionnaire which was administered to a one in six sample (17 percent) of all households, so the data represent nearly one in three of all long-form questionnaires from the 1990 census. The geographic scale goes down to the level of the Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA) which is smaller than a state, but larger than a census tract, and is designed to be sufficiently large in area so that privacy is maintained, but sufficiently small in area so as to provide the possibility of spatial analysis of the data. For this analysis, I have aggregated data at the state level and the data are weighted to reflect the total population from which they were drawn.

People were assigned to the “possibly Muslim” category based on ancestry if their answer to the first or second ancestry question indicated a category that is typically associated with Muslims. The 1990 census (long-form) asked “What is this person’s ancestry or ethnic origin?” I coded as having possible Muslim ancestry those persons whose ancestry (either Ancestry 1 or 2) was from a predominately Muslim country (as delimited in Weeks 1988; and updated in Belt 2002). The ancestries included as “possibly Muslim” included (in Census Bureau numbering order): Turkish Cypriot (019), Albanian (100), Azerbaijani (101), Turkestani (168), Bosnian (177), most North African and Southwest Asian ancestries (400 through 499, with the exception of Israelis, Chaldeans, Armenians, Coptics, and a few other non-Muslim ancestries), Nigerian Fulani (554), Nigerian Hausa (555), Somali (568), Afghani (600), Bangladeshi (603), Pakistani (680), Indonesian (730), and Malaysian (770). In some instances, people responded that their ancestry was “Muslim” or “Islam,” but the Census Bureau did not code those responses separately. Instead, they were given a code of “998” which we coded in conjunction with the language question.

Language was then examined as a potential index of Muslim identification, especially for the immigrant population. The census asked “Does this person speak a language other than English at home?” and if the answer was yes, a follow-up question asked “What is this language?” The languages coded as being typically spoken by immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries included (in Census

Bureau numbering order): Yugoslav (649), Persian (656), Afghan (657), Kurdish (658), Kirghiz (687), Uzbek (689), Azerbaijani (690), Turkish (691), Indonesian and Malay languages (732 through 741), Arabic (777), Hausa (782), Somali (783), Sudanese (784), Swahili (791) and Fulani (794).

The third characteristic that might identify a person who is potentially Muslim is place of birth outside the United States. We chose those countries estimated to have a Muslim majority (Weeks, 1988) for inclusion in this category. The countries are predominantly in the north of Africa, western Asia, and south-east Asia.

Overall, this process identified 1,891,959 people who might have been Muslim, based on their possession of one or more these characteristics according to the 1990 PUMS data. Of this number, only 23 percent fit all three categories of place of birth, ancestry, and language, while another 20 percent fit into two of the three categories, and 57 percent fit into only one of three categories, of which ancestry was the most common (38 percent of all of the "possibly Muslim"). In the interest of setting an upper bound on the number of Muslims, I have included all of these individuals in the category of "Possibly Muslim." To this group we must now add the estimated number of African-Americans who are Muslim.

### 2.3. Adding African-Americans to the Possibly Muslim Population

The only way to determine the likely number of African-Americans who are Muslim is to use survey results that cross-tabulate race by religion. As already shown in Table 1, the data suggest that approximately 2 percent of African-Americans are Muslim. If we assume that this percentage has remained steady over time, then in 1990 this would represent a total of 599,729 of the 29,986,060 blacks enumerated in the census that year. Only a small fraction of those people would have already been included in our estimate of the possibly Muslim population since in that group there were only 29,328 blacks who were born in the United States and, of these, only 16,572 indicated that their ancestry was "Afro-American." If we assume no overlap, then adding 599,729 African-Americans to the already estimated possibly Muslim popu-

lation yields a total of 2,491,680 Muslims in the United States in 1990. Given the methods of estimation that I have employed, this almost certainly represents an upper limit on the number of Muslims in that year.

While it may be relatively easy to estimate the total number of African-Americans who are Muslim, it is more complex to estimate the geographic distribution of those individuals. It is unlikely that in every community two percent of the African-American community is Muslim. It is more likely that the presence of a larger immigrant Muslim population will encourage conversion (or reversion as it is usually called within Islam), whereas a smaller immigrant population of Muslims will probably be associated with a smaller number of African-Americans who are Muslim, even in the presence of an otherwise large African-American community. I have used these two constraints – the size of the African-American community as enumerated in the census, and the number of possibly Muslim people as estimated by the PUMS data – to estimate the state-by-state distribution of African-Americans who are Muslim in 1990. If we assume that 2 percent of African Americans are Muslim and that the total Muslim population is 2,491,680, then African-Americans represented 24 percent of all Muslims in the United States in 1990. This percentage is on the low end of the estimates assembled by Smith (2001), but that is largely because Smith assumes that there are fewer Muslims than the above total would suggest. As the estimate of the total population of Muslims goes down, then the percentage of those people that are African-American obviously increases in the absence of any change in the assumption about the number of African-Americans who are Muslim.

Given the above percentages, the population of African-American Muslims was constrained initially to be the smaller of either 2 percent of the total state African-American population or 24 percent of the total Muslim population in the state (which involved multiplying the PUMS possibly Muslim total for that state by 0.317). However, we wanted the total African-American Muslim population to sum to 599,729, so the totals for each state are controlled to that value. These numbers are then added to the PUMS estimate of the

possibly Muslim population to produce the state-level estimate of the number of Muslims residing in that state in 1990. These

data, along with the implied percentage of the total population that is Muslim, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Estimates of the Muslim Population by State: United States, 1990 and 2000

State	Possibly Muslim from 1990 PUMS	African-American Muslims 1990	Total Muslims 1990	Possibly Muslim from regression equation applied to Census 2000	African-American Muslims 2000	Total Muslims 2000	Change from 1990 to 2000	Percent change	Percent of all Muslims	Location Quotient
New York	252,704	85,480	338,184	416,317	79,533	495,850	157,666	46.62	14.57%	2.161
California	407,590	66,039	473,629	403,122	59,731	462,853	-10,775	-2.28	13.60%	1.130
Texas	88,598	41,985	130,583	218,905	63,443	282,348	151,765	116.22	8.30%	1.120
Michigan	114,085	38,619	152,704	185,001	32,274	222,275	69,571	45.56	6.53%	1.850
Illinois	86,787	41,127	127,914	167,782	49,520	217,302	89,388	69.88	6.39%	1.447
Florida	88,362	41,873	130,235	149,790	61,621	211,411	81,176	62.33	6.21%	1.094
New Jersey	118,040	30,999	149,039	176,741	30,126	206,867	57,828	38.80	6.08%	2.033
Virginia	63,210	29,954	93,164	122,500	36,682	159,182	66,018	70.86	4.68%	1.860
Ohio	77,115	34,527	111,642	86,042	34,334	120,376	8,734	7.82	3.54%	0.877
Pennsylvania	64,840	30,727	95,567	86,906	32,311	119,217	23,650	24.75	3.50%	0.803
Massachusetts	70,076	8,973	79,049	89,969	9,062	99,031	19,982	25.28	2.91%	1.290
Maryland	42,473	20,127	62,600	62,664	28,603	91,267	28,667	45.79	2.68%	1.425
Georgia	24,822	11,763	36,585	52,551	23,987	76,538	39,953	109.21	2.25%	0.773
North Carolina	20,667	9,794	30,461	40,840	18,641	59,481	29,021	95.27	1.75%	0.611
Connecticut	47,539	8,200	55,739	36,196	8,175	44,371	-11,368	-20.40	1.30%	1.077
Missouri	16,016	7,590	23,606	25,006	11,414	36,420	12,814	54.28	1.07%	0.538
Louisiana	16,308	7,728	24,036	24,256	11,072	35,328	11,292	46.98	1.04%	0.654
Washington	24,804	4,479	29,283	29,851	5,020	34,871	5,588	19.08	1.02%	0.489
Arizona	21,551	3,304	24,855	29,255	4,192	33,447	8,591	34.57	0.98%	0.539
Indiana	18,887	8,950	27,837	21,876	9,985	31,861	4,024	14.46	0.94%	0.433
Tennessee	13,422	6,360	19,782	21,862	9,979	31,841	12,058	60.96	0.94%	0.463
Minnesota	17,326	2,839	20,165	26,607	4,531	31,138	10,973	54.42	0.92%	0.523
Wisconsin	15,972	7,311	23,283	18,323	8,033	26,356	3,073	13.20	0.77%	0.406
Colorado	16,290	3,981	20,271	21,685	4,355	26,040	5,769	28.46	0.77%	0.501
Oklahoma	13,288	6,297	19,585	16,382	6,885	23,267	3,683	18.80	0.68%	0.558
Nevada	7,810	2,355	10,165	14,805	3,574	18,379	8,214	80.81	0.54%	0.761
Kentucky	8,340	3,952	12,292	12,256	5,594	17,850	5,558	45.22	0.52%	0.368
Kansas	8,900	4,218	13,118	13,752	4,068	17,820	4,703	35.85	0.52%	0.548
Oregon	14,496	1,381	15,877	15,796	1,469	17,265	1,388	8.74	0.51%	0.417
Alabama	10,647	5,045	15,692	11,318	5,166	16,484	792	5.04	0.48%	0.307
South Carolina	9,054	4,291	13,345	10,465	4,777	15,242	1,897	14.22	0.45%	0.314
Rhode Island	8,610	1,162	9,772	10,605	1,238	11,843	2,071	21.19	0.35%	0.934
New Hampshire	6,811	215	7,026	10,474	238	10,712	3,686	52.46	0.31%	0.717
West Virginia	7,499	1,683	9,182	8,873	1,510	10,383	1,201	13.08	0.31%	0.475
Utah	4,966	346	5,312	9,565	466	10,031	4,719	88.83	0.29%	0.371
Mississippi	5,799	2,748	8,547	6,836	3,120	9,956	1,409	16.49	0.29%	0.289
Iowa	7,258	1,438	8,696	7,895	1,632	9,527	831	9.56	0.28%	0.269
District of Co	7,518	3,563	11,081	6,380	2,912	9,292	-1,788	-16.14	0.27%	1.343
Nebraska	7,878	1,716	9,594	6,859	1,808	8,667	-927	-9.66	0.25%	0.419
New Mexico	6,279	903	7,182	6,808	906	7,714	532	7.41	0.23%	0.351
Delaware	3,304	1,566	4,870	4,922	2,269	7,241	2,372	48.70	0.21%	0.764
Arkansas	4,146	1,965	6,111	4,270	1,949	6,219	108	1.77	0.18%	0.392
Maine	4,343	154	4,497	4,505	178	4,683	187	4.15	0.14%	0.304
Hawaii	4,880	813	5,693	2,408	581	2,989	-2,705	-47.51	0.09%	0.204
Vermont	3,920	58	3,978	2,701	81	2,782	1,197	30.08	0.08%	0.378
Idaho	2,096	101	2,197	1,805	144	1,949	248	11.28	0.06%	0.125
Alaska	1,354	642	1,996	1,357	575	1,932	-64	-3.20	0.06%	0.255
South Dakota	1,076	97	1,173	1,737	124	1,861	687	58.56	0.05%	0.204
North Dakota	1,275	105	1,380	1,405	103	1,506	126	9.13	0.04%	0.194
Montana	2,022	71	2,093	1,331	73	1,402	691	33.02	0.04%	0.129
Wyoming	906	108	1,014	247	98	345	-669	-65.95	0.03%	0.058
	1,891,959	599,724	2,491,680	2,709,852	693,164	3,403,016	911,336	36.58	100.00%	

#### 2.4. Estimating the Muslim Population by State for 2000

The PUMS data for Census 2000 were not available at the time of this writing, but we can use the SF3 (detailed long-form) data to derive estimates consistent with the 1990 derivation. We do that by generating an ordinary least-squares regression model from the 1990 census data in which we predict the 1990 state estimates of the Muslim population from 1990 census variables on ancestry, language, and place of birth measured at the state level. We then apply that regression model to the Census 2000 variables on ancestry, language, and place of birth measured at the state level in order to generate estimates of the “possibly Muslim” population in each state in the year 2000. To accomplish this task, we need comparable variables available from both Census 2000 and the 1990 at the state level. We also must use only a small number of predictor variables because the relatively small number of states (48 continental states) means that the regression model has to be parsimonious in its choice of variables. We also seek to have at least one variable from each of the three categories of characteristics – ancestry, language, and place of birth. Finally, we seek a set of variables that captures some of the regional diversity in the origin of Muslim immigrants to the United States.

Given the above considerations, three dependent variables were chosen as the variables used to predict the number of possibly Muslim people in each state in 1990:

- (1) the number of people who indicated that they were of Arab ancestry (meaning that they responded ‘Arab’ or indicated that their ancestry was an Arab country) (ARAB\_ANC);
- (2) the number of people who indicated that they spoke the Persian language at home (PERS); and
- (3) the number of people born in Pakistan (PAKI\_POB).

These three variables combined to predict the number of possibly Muslim people in each state with considerable precision. Actually, only two of the three variables remained in the model. Because of the high collinearity between the number of people of Arab ancestry and the number of persons

speaking Persian ( $r = .897$ ), the latter variable dropped out of the model, leaving the two variables of people of Arab ancestry and the number of people born in Pakistan as the two predictors of the number of “possibly Muslim” people.

The overall  $R^2$  was .996, and there was only one outlier beyond 3 standard deviation units in terms of the standard residuals – the possibly Muslim population of Texas was overpredicted by the regression model. Two states, New York and Ohio, were slightly underpredicted, and each had a standard residual that was greater than 2, but less than 3. It was not clear from the data why these states were not more accurately predicted. The regression model that was then used to predict the number of possibly Muslim people in each state in 2000 was as follows:

$$N_{2000} = -339,849 + (ARAB\_ANC * 1.35) + (PAKI\_POB * 4.94).$$

Applying this regression to the same predictor variables drawn from Census 2000 generated an estimate of the number of possibly Muslim persons by state for the year 2000, and these results are shown in Table 2. The total number of “possibly Muslim” (exclusive of African-Americans) for 2000 was 2,709,852. The estimates by state then provide input for the calculation of the number of African-American Muslims in 2000 and ultimately the estimate of the total Muslim population by state in 2000.

African-American Muslims in 2000 were estimated in the same way as they had been for the year 1990. In 2000 the total U.S. African-American population was enumerated in the census to be 34,658,190. The population of African-American Muslims was constrained initially to be the smaller of either 2 percent of the total state African-American population or 20 percent of the total Muslim population in the state (which involved multiplying the PUMS possibly Muslim total for that state by 0.256). However, we want the total African-American Muslim population to sum to 693,164, so the totals for each state were controlled to that value. These numbers were then added to the regression-based estimate of the possibly Muslim population in 2000 to produce the state-level estimate of the number of Muslims residing in that state in 2000. These



data, are shown in Table 2 where it can be seen that the total Muslim population in 2000 was estimated by this method to be 3,403,016, which is higher than, but still generally in line with most other estimates

of the Muslim population in the United States. Once again, given the methodology that I employed, this number almost certainly represents the upper bound of the number of Muslims.

### 3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

New York had more Muslims than any other state as of 2000, reversing places with California which had been the home of more Muslims than New York in 1990, but which slipped to second in 2000. Nearly half a million Muslims were estimated to be living in New York state, accounting for almost 15 percent of the nation's Muslim population. The ARIS survey also found that New York was the state with the greatest number of Muslims (Kosmin and Mayer, 2001), although in that study 24 percent of all Muslims were estimated to be in New York. That number seems anecdotally to be too high, and the estimates shown in Table 1 seem more reasonable in terms of geographic distribution. On the other hand, if we combine the states of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, we have accounted for 22 percent of the Muslim population in the United States.

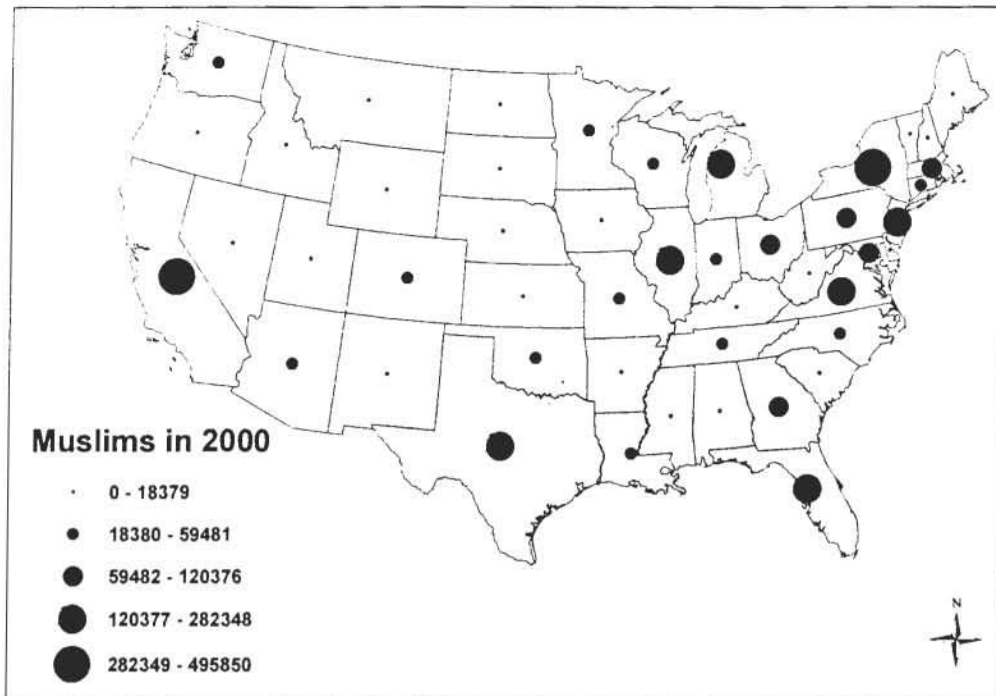
New York's increase between 1990 and 2000 could have come at California's expense, since the estimates show a slightly smaller population in California in 2000 than in 1990, whereas New York's population increased more than any other state. Nonetheless, California is estimated to have 463,000 Muslims, nearly as many as in New York. Texas was a close second in terms of the growth in the Muslim population between 1990 and 2000 and that increase of more than 150,000 pushed it from fifth place in 1990 to third place in 2000, ahead of Michigan and New Jersey, which had been third and fourth, respectively, in 1990. These results have to be tempered by the caution that Texas was the only state for which in 1990 the regression model significantly overstated the estimated Muslim population, so it is possible that growth in Texas was not quite as rapid as these numbers show. However, if we control for that effect by comparing the predicted number of Muslims in 1990 in Texas with the

predicted number in 2000, the difference is still an increase of 130,000 and Texas is still the second fastest growing state with respect to the number of Muslims.

Michigan and Illinois round out the top five most populous Muslim states which when combined account for 49 percent of Muslims in the United States. The states that comprise the remainder of the top ten are, in order, Florida, New Jersey, Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania. These ten states combine to account for 73 percent of Muslims. Notably, however, there are four states – Massachusetts, Maryland, Georgia, and North Carolina – that experienced significant absolute increases in the number of Muslims between 1990 and 2000 even though they are not (yet) among the top ten in terms of the total population of Muslims. The latter of these two states, Georgia and North Carolina, were in the top five in terms of the percentage change in population between 1990 and 2000. Along with Texas, Utah and Nevada the Muslim population also increased by more than 80 percent in that intercensal period. This was substantially above the 37 percent increase in the entire Muslim population, which in turn was substantially higher than the 13 percent increase in population size of the whole U.S. population during that period of time.

The Muslim population was thus growing almost three times as fast as the U.S. population, and that growth was geographically uneven. Figure 1 maps the population of Muslims by state in 2000, showing proportionately the numbers by each state. Muslims are concentrated especially along the east coast (42 percent are in states that are bordered by the Atlantic ocean), and in the Great Lakes region, with Texas and California looking somewhat like geographic outliers on the map.

Figure 1. Number of Muslims by State : 2000



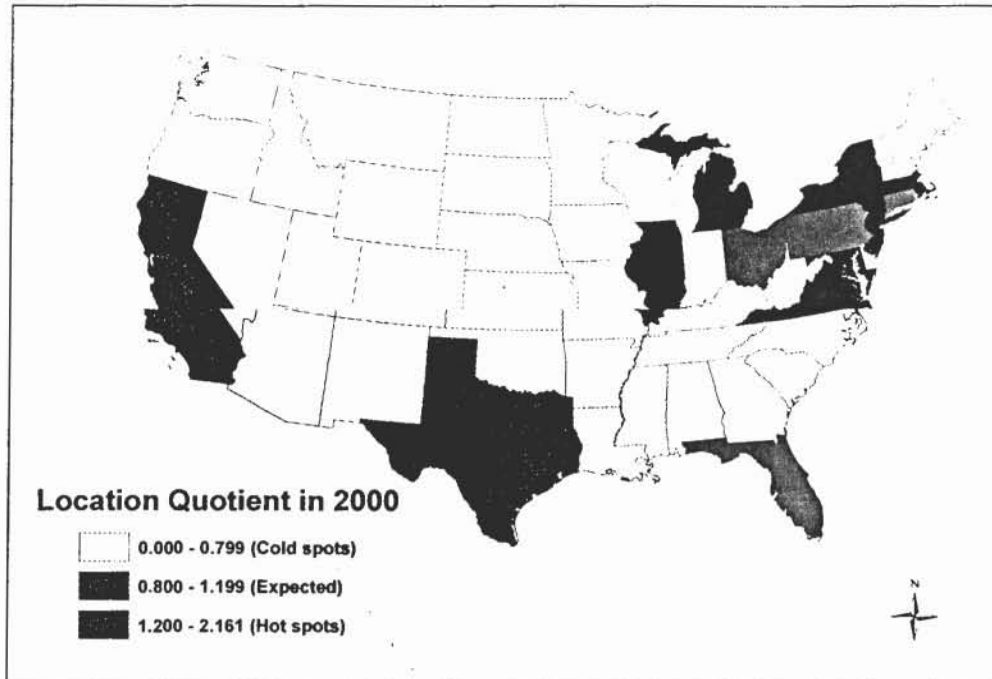
The clustering of Muslims in specific areas cannot be discerned from this map, of course, because it doesn't take into account the size of the total state population. Location quotients provide us with a quick and easy way to assess the state-by-state clustering of Muslims. This measure calculates the ratio of the percentage of all Muslims that are in a state to the percentage of the total population in that state. A value greater than 1 indicates that there are more Muslims than would be expected if Muslims were distributed geographically in the same way that the entire population is distributed. A value less than one indicates that there are fewer Muslims than would be expected. The far right column in Table 2 shows the location quotient, and these values are mapped in Figure 2. In that map, the "hot spots" are those states with a location quotient that is at least 1.2. New York and New Jersey both have location quotients higher than 2, indicating that both states have more than twice as many Muslims as you would expect given the total populations of those states. There is another concentration in the Washington, D.C. area, where the District of Columbia and its surrounding states of Maryland and

Virginia all have location quotients well above 1. A third cluster is in the upper Midwest-Great Lakes region where both Michigan and Illinois have location quotients clearly higher than 1.

Of some interest is the fact that neither California nor Texas has a location quotient that is very far above 1. They are in the "expected" group of states with location quotients between 0.8 and 1.2, indicating that the number of Muslims is roughly proportionate to the state's share of total population. Both California and Texas have attracted Muslims probably because they were, in the 1990s, centers of the information technology boom, and the rapid increase in the Muslim population in Texas was actually just bringing that state's Muslim population up to the number that might be expected given the total population size in Texas. I mentioned that New York's gain in Muslims might have been California's loss, but it is more realistic to think that in the 1990s the higher educated immigrant Muslim population was being attracted away from high-tech firms in California toward those kinds of firms in Texas. California was hit by a recession in

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Figure 2. Location Quotients of Muslims by State: 2000



the first part of the decade of the 1990s that did not affect Texas, and housing prices in Texas have been consistently lower than in California, making Texas a more attractive location if salaries are otherwise commensu-

rate. Finally, the map shows that most states, especially those in the middle of the country, were "cold spots," indicating that there were fewer Muslims than would be expected on the basis of total population.

## CONCLUSION

No one can know for certain how many Muslims there are in the United States, but all but one recent study suggest that the number is not currently very far above 3 million. None of the previous studies was able to provide estimates of the population of Muslims at the state level, but I have done so in this paper by combining results from the 1990 Public Use Microdata Sample with detailed (SF3) data released in late 2002 by the U.S. Census Bureau. I have combined data on ancestry, language, and place of birth to estimate the "possibly Muslim" population, which is largely exclusive of the African-American Muslim population. The latter group has been estimated from census data, but based on survey data from which

one can derive the percentage of the black population that is Muslim, constrained by survey data suggesting the percentage of the Muslim population that is estimated to be African-American. The overall numbers of Muslims estimated by this method – 2.5 million in 1990 and 3.4 million in 2000 – are slightly higher than the results from survey data, and suggest that the numbers for each state are reasonable, albeit probably maximum, representations of the actual numbers of Muslims in those states.

These estimates provide the most quantifiable data thus far produced of the geographic distribution of the Muslim population. Those researchers familiar with the U.S. Muslim population may not be sur-

prised to see the clusters of Muslims in the New York-New Jersey area, the Washington, D.C., area and the upper Midwest-Great Lakes. Nor will they be surprised by the large numbers of Muslims in California and Texas. However, the numbers and details are of considerable interest. In particular, these data suggest that California has a very large Muslim population, but it is probably

declining in size rather than growing. Issues of interfaith relations can perhaps be projected from the fact that the Muslim population is growing in percentage terms most quickly in parts of the "Bible Belt" (especially the states of Texas, Georgia, and North Carolina) and in the western mountain states that are increasingly dominated by Mormons, including Utah and Nevada.

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