A TEACHING RESOURCE FOR

PATRIOT ACTS

NARRATIVES OF POST-9/11 INJUSTICE

ORAL HISTORIES COMPILED AND EDITED BY ALIA MALEK

WITH A FOREWORD BY KAREN KOREMATSU

VOICE OF WITNESS

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WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

According to the Oral History Association of America, "Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events."

WHY STUDY ORAL HISTORY?

Oral history can deepen students' understanding of how history is written, why it matters and how storytelling can illuminate issues and events in a profoundly personal way. By participating in oral history, students can improve their skills as critical readers and thinkers as they interact with a "text" on many levels.

The following lesson plans will allow **middle** and **high school** students to experience several of these levels as they respond to the oral history narratives in this booklet. It is an opportunity to "humanize history" and for students to develop an empathic relationship with the historical events that are happening around them.

FOREWORD

ONE STORY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

by Karen Korematsu, co-founder of the Korematsu Institute

Almost a year after 9/11, an article appeared in the Los Angeles Times by Jonathan Turley about Attorney General John Ashcroft's plan to establish camps for U.S. citizens deemed to be "enemy combatants." Turley, a professor of Public Interest Law at George Washington University, wrote, "[Attorney General] Ashcroft's plan… would allow him to order the indefinite incarceration of U.S. citizens and summarily strip them of their constitutional rights and access to the courts by declaring them enemy combatants."

I remember standing in my parents' kitchen at the time, talking to my father about this. I asked him, "Daddy, how do you feel about this latest news?" and he replied, "Why did I bother to reopen my case if the U.S. government is going to do this again?"

For those of you who do not know the story, my father was Fred T. Korematsu, a second-generation Japanese American who defied U.S. military orders to be incarcerated along with 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast. On February 19, 1942, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. This order gave the military authority to send Japanese

Americans to ten concentration camps throughout the U.S. during World War II. At that time, my father was twenty-three years old. He had tried to enlist in the U.S. National Guard and the U.S. Coast Guard, but was turned away by military officers who discriminated against him due to his Japanese ancestry. However, he still wanted to contribute to the defense effort, so he worked as a welder in the Oakland shipyards.

My father knew what his rights were as an American, and believed that the mass forced removal was unconstitutional. The incarcerated Japanese Americans were never charged with any crimes, had no public hearings, and were deprived of due process of the law. For those reasons and more, my father refused to obey the exclusion orders that led to his arrest on May 30, 1942.

He was convicted in federal court, and his case was appealed all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1944, the Supreme Court ruled against him, arguing that the incarceration was justified due to military necessity. My father carried the burden of that loss for almost forty years, not only for himself but also for all those others who were incarcerated, including his family.

Then, in 1982, Professor Peter Irons and Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, two seminal figures in the Japanese-American community's fight for redress and reparation, uncovered key documents that government intelligence agencies had hidden from the Supreme Court in 1944. These documents proved there was no military necessity for anyone of Japanese descent on the west coast to be forced into concentration camps in 1942. On that basis of government misconduct, my father's case was reopened in 1983 by a courageous group of young attorneys who worked for him pro bono. On November 10 of that year, my father's federal conviction was overturned in court. It was a pivotal moment in civil rights history. Judge Marilyn Hall Patel's comments that day about the lessons of Korematsu v. U.S. resonate to this day:

> It stands as a caution that, in times of distress, the shield of military necessity and national security must not be used to protect governmental actions from close scrutiny

> and accountability. It stands as a caution that, in times of international hostility and antagonisms, our institutions, legislative, executive and judicial, must be prepared to exercise their authority to protect all citizens from the petty fears and prejudices that are so easily aroused.

My father was right to stand up and fight. Certainly, he wanted to vindicate himself and other Japanese Americans, but he also hoped that this type of racial discrimination would not happen to any other ethnic groups in America. After his conviction was overturned, my father's focus and mission was advocacy and education. He traveled throughout the U.S. with my mother and members of his legal team to speak at universities, law schools and organizations to tell his story and convey the lessons of civil rights history.

On January 15, 1998, my father was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, this nation's highest civilian honor, from President Clinton. Over the years, my father, a humble and quiet man, was continually honored and recognized for his achievements—his courageous stand during World War II, his work for the 1988 redress and reparations movement, and his dedication to civil rights education—but he always accepted those awards on behalf of all Japanese Americans who had been placed in U.S. concentration camps.

After 9/11, my father and the Japanese-American community were quick to speak out against the dangers of racial profiling and scapegoating that targeted Arab, Middle-Eastern, Muslim and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities. They witnessed the backlash that was building against these communities, and could see all too well the parallels between the Pearl Harbor bombings and the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

The narratives in Patriot Acts are compelling and diverse examples of the human and civil rights violations that the AMEMSA community has suffered in the wake of 9/11. Prejudice stems from ignorance, and the most effective nonviolent response we have is education; this is why these stories need to be read and shared.

One of the narratives in *Patriot Acts* that struck a personal chord is that of Rana Sodhi, whose brother Balbir was shot to death outside the gas station where he worked, simply because he wore a turban and "looked like the enemy." His death was the first reported hate murder in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Then, in August 2002, his brother Sukhpal, a cab driver in San Francisco, was shot and killed in his taxi. In his narrative, Rana recalls meeting a Japanese-American man who told him stories of living in a concentration camp during World War II. This prompts Rana to reflect, "This is what happens in times of crisis." Later in the narrative, Rana responds to the passing of the Arizona law S.B. 1070—a law which gives police the power to stop and detain anyone they suspect of being in the country illegally—by raising the question, "How many times can a person be stopped before they feel like they are not seen as American? What does an American look like?" This sentiment is echoed throughout the book by other narrators, and it reminds me of what my father had felt all those years before reopening his case: Am I an American or am I not?

Rana honored the loss of his brothers by becoming a community leader and educator, and his message is clear: "If no one stands up, then it will happen again and again."

I believe that stories like these are the best form of education. It took almost forty years before the Japanese-American community started telling theirs, and only in recent years have their oral histories been recorded. My father's experience is a reminder of the impact one story can make, and an example of how one person standing up for what is right can make a difference for all people. He passed away in 2005, and remains an inspiration to me.

In April of 2009, I co-founded the Fred T. Korematsu Institute for Civil Rights and Education, a nonprofit program of the Asian Law Caucus in San Francisco. Our mission advances pan-ethnic civil and human rights through education.

In September 2010, California Governor Schwarzenegger signed Assembly Bill 1775 to establish the Fred Korematsu Day of Civil Liberties and the Constitution, making my father the first Asian American in

U.S. history to be recognized statewide. January 30, my father's birthday, will now mark Fred Korematsu Day, and will be celebrated on this date in perpetuity. The significance of this special day is education about my father's story, the Japanese American internment, and the implications and relevancy of the discussions of our civil liberties and the U.S. Constitution today. To this end, a key focus of the Korematsu Institute has been to develop K-12 curriculum for teachers throughout California, and to make these resources available to teachers in other states. We look forward to continuing to work with Voice of Witness on creating curriculum elements that illuminate parallels between post-9/11 discrimination and the Japanese American internment.

Since the announcement of Osama Bin Laden's death on May 2, 2011, we have all been warned that the War on Terror is not over, and that we must be prepared for any fallout. In my mind, we must remain vigilant in speaking out against any injustices that we witness, and, in remembrance of my father's words, "Protest, but not with violence, otherwise they won't listen to you. Don't be afraid to speak up!" I'm glad to see that, in the face of the ten-year anniversary of 9/11, the stories in *Patriot Acts* are coming to light. I hope they will serve as examples of courage in the face of adversity, and encourage others to tell their own stories, so that the lessons of civil liberties will continue.

Karen Korematsu is the co-founder of the Fred T. Korematsu Institute for Civil Rights and Education and a National Advisory board member of the Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality at the Seattle School of Law. She also serves on the boards of the Asian Law Caucus of San Francisco, the Institute's parent organization, and the Asian American Justice Center.

ADAMA BAH

AGE: *23*
OCCUPATION: *Student*
INTERVIEWED IN: *East Harlem, New York City*

On March 24, 2005, Adama Bah, a sixteen-year-old Muslim girl, awoke at dawn to discover nearly a dozen armed FBI agents inside her family's apartment in East Harlem. They arrested her and her father, Mamadou Bah, and transported them to separate detention facilities. A government document leaked to the press claimed that Adama was a potential suicide bomber but failed to provide any evidence to support this claim. Released after six weeks in detention, Adama was forced to live under partial house arrest with an ankle bracelet, a government-enforced curfew, and a court-issued gag order that prohibited her from speaking about her case. In August of 2006, Adama's father was deported back to Guinea, Africa. Adama, who had traveled to the United States with her parents from Guinea as a child, also found herself facing deportation. She would spend the next few years fighting for asylum and struggling to support her family in the United States and Guinea.

The morning of March 24, 2005, my family and I were in the house sleeping.

Someone knocked on the door, and my mom went and opened it. These men barged in, waking us up. I always sleep with the blanket over

my head. They pull the blanket off my head, I look up, I see a man. He said, "You've got to get out!" I'm like, *What the hell? What's going on?*

I saw about ten to fifteen people in our apartment and right outside our door in the hallway. They were mostly men, but there were two women. Some had FBI jackets, and others were from the police department and the DHS.[1] We were all forced out of bed and told to sit in the living room. They were going through papers, throwing stuff around, yelling and talking to each other, then whispering. I heard them yelling at my mother in the background, and my mom can't speak much English, and they were pulling her into the kitchen, yelling at her, "We're going to deport you and your whole family!"

This whole time, I was thinking, *What's going on? What are they talking about?* I knew my dad had an issue with his papers, but I didn't think that my mom did. They kept saying, "We're going to send all of you back to your country."

Then I saw my dad walking in, in handcuffs. They had gone to the mosque to get him. It was the scariest thing you could ever see; I had just never seen my father so powerless. He was always this guy you didn't mess with. If he said do it, you did it. He was just someone you didn't cross paths with.

They took him to the kitchen, whispered something to him.

He sat down, looked at us. He said, "Everything's going to be fine, don't worry."

And then I knew nothing was fine, I knew something was wrong. They told him to tell us what was going on. He told us that they were going to arrest him and they were going to take him away.

The FBI agents told me to get up and get my sneakers. I was thinking they wanted to see my sneaker collection. I have all types and colors of sneakers. I went and grabbed them. I said, "I have this one, I have this one, I have this one, I have this one."

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[1] DHS: Department of Homeland Security, created in the wake of 9/11 to protect the territory of the United States from terrorist attacks.

One of the agents said, “Choose one.”

My favorite color is blue, so I picked up a blue pair and said, “This one.”

He said, “Put them on.”

I said, “Okay, but I know they fit me.”

He said, “Put them on!” He was very nasty. Then he said, “All those earrings have to go out.” I have eight piercings on each side, a nose ring, and a tongue ring. I went to the kitchen to take them off, and they followed me in there.

My breath was stinking. I asked, “Can I at least brush my teeth? My breath stinks really bad. Can I use the bathroom?”

They said, “No. We have to go. You’re coming with us.”

I said, “Where am I going to go? Am I going with my dad?” I put on my jacket. They let me put my headscarf and abaya on. Then one of the women took out handcuffs. I panicked so badly, I was stuttering, “What did I do? Where are we going?”

First time in my life, I’m sixteen years old, in handcuffs. I looked at my dad, and he said, “Just do what they say.”

My mom didn’t know I was going. When we got out the door, she said, “Where she go? Where she go?” The agents said, “We’re taking her,” and they held my mom back. The man who seemed to be in charge put his hands on my mother to stop her.

They took me and my dad and put us in the same car. I was scared. I said to him, “What’s going on? What’s going to happen?” My dad said, “Don’t say anything, we’re going to get a lawyer. It’s okay, everything is going to be fine.”

There were two Escalades driving with us. I was looking around, paying attention. I recognized the Brooklyn Bridge, I recognized a lot of landmarks, but I didn’t recognize the building where my father and I were taken. We got out of the car and we walked past a security booth where the cars drive up to, before taking a ramp beneath the building to the parking lot. Once we were inside the building, they put me in my own cell. It was white, with a bench. No bars. No windows. There was a door that had a tiny glass pane, and I could see who was out there. I just

saw a bunch of computers and tables, and people walking back and forth and talking. I kept seeing them talk to my dad.

I don't know how long I was in there.

I was nervous, I was panicking, I was crying, I was trying to figure out what was going on. And I was constantly using the bathroom.

The toilet was an open toilet, though. There was a camera on the ceiling in the middle of the room. I was wondering, *Can they see me peeing?* I just wrapped blankets around me as I was peeing.

Hours later, Adama was removed from her cell for questioning, during which she learned that she was not, in fact, a U.S. citizen. While being fingerprinted, she saw that another teen from her mosque, named Tashnuba, had also been detained. Here, she recounts her final interrogation before being transported to a detention facility in Pennsylvania.

Finally I was brought to another room. This room had a table, a chair on one side, and two chairs on the other side. A federal agent walked in. She said, "I need to talk to you about something." The questions she was asking had nothing to do with immigration. They were terrorism questions. She asked me about people from London, about people from all over the world. I thought, *What's going on?*

The male interrogator told me that the religious study group Tashnuba was part of had been started by a guy who was wanted by the FBI. I had no idea if that was true or not.

The study group at the mosque was all women. So it was women learning about religion, women's empowerment, why we cover, how we do the prayer, when to pray, things like that. It was more for converts and new people who had just come into Islam. There was nothing about jihad or anything like that.

I wasn't part of the group, but Tashnuba was. We were the same age, sixteen. So, they asked me about this group and they told me they'd taken my computer and my diary. My diary was a black-and-white notebook. I had phone numbers, I had notes, I had stories in it, I had everything.

Basically, they asked me about every contact in there, they asked me about every little thing. But, there's nothing in there about jihad, there's nothing in there about anything that's suspicious. There was nothing in there at all. So I wasn't worried.

They said, "We have your computer, we can find whatever you're hiding."

I said, "Go ahead, look in my computer. I have nothing to hide."

They kept making a scene, like there was something big there. They said, "Don't lie to us. If you lie to us, we'll have proof, we'll catch you in your lie."

I knew there was nothing in my computer, but at the end of the day, I started to doubt myself. I thought, *Okay, what's going on now? Is there something there?* Their technique is to make you doubt yourself. But then I thought, *Wait a minute, I'm not this person. What are they talking about?*

The interrogation lasted a long time. This Secret Service guy came in. He asked me how I felt about Bush. I said, "I don't like him." I was being very honest with them. There was nothing to hide.

The Secret Service guy was just too aggressive. He said, "I don't understand—why do you choose to cover when women choose to wear less and less every day?"

I said, "It's freedom of choice. Some people want to show some stuff, some people want to hide things. Some people want to preserve their bodies, some people don't want to. They want to show it to the whole world."

He said, "I don't understand. You're young, why are you doing this?"

Then they asked me about Tashnuba. They asked me about her name, they asked me about her family, but I told them, "I don't know her."

They said, "Tashnuba wrote you on this list."

I said, "What list?"

They said, "She signed you up to be a suicide bomber."

I said, "Are you serious? Why would she do that? She doesn't seem like that type of person."

They were trying to make me seem like I was wrong about who I knew and who I didn't know.

GURWINDER SINGH

AGE: *18*
OCCUPATION: *College Student*
INTERVIEWED IN: *Queens, New York*

An integral part of the Sikh religion involves never cutting one's hair and wearing a turban. For Sikh children in school, this exterior appearance of their religion, along with their ethnicity, makes them targets for bullying. After 9/11, harassment towards Sikh students has additionally reflected the misidentification of Sikhs as terrorists, and has been manifested through physical abuse, verbal threats of violence, and derogatory name-calling such as "terrorist" and "bin Laden." In 2006, the Sikh Coalition conducted a survey that involved 439 Sikh students under eighteen years old in New York City. Over half said they had been bullied. For every three out of five students who wear a turban, harassment occurs daily. Additional surveys conducted by the Sikh Coalition in New York (2006) and the Bay Area (2010) have reflected a lack of response from teachers and school administration regarding these incidents. In New York in 2008, a policy called Respect for All *was implemented in an attempt to address the school system's inadequate handling of bias-based bullying. A 2009/'10 report compiled by the New York Civil Liberties Union, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, and the Sikh Coalition showed that only 14.3% of teachers surveyed believed the* Respect for All *program was effective, with others citing a lack of information about the program and no training or resources at their disposal.*

Gurwinder has experienced bias-based bullying first-hand. In February 2011, he met with us at his family home in Queens. He spoke slowly and thoughtfully, mining his memory of his encounters with harassment and bullying during his childhood. Our interview was the first time Gurwinder had spoken about many of these experiences. A few weeks after our meeting, he spoke at the White House Conference on Bullying Prevention.

I haven't told anyone some of these stories until now. I feel relieved, because I think it's good to share what I've kept in the dark. People should know how Sikh kids are bullied. I went through a lot, and now I want my life to be peaceful.

*

I was born on October 21, 1992. When I was two, my parents moved from Hoshiarpur in Punjab, India to New York. I grew up in Richmond Hill in Queens, and I have lived in New York my whole life.

Ever since I can remember, I've gone through so much. It started when I was really young. It wasn't exactly bullying—that started in elementary school. But the other kids didn't like me very much. I couldn't get along with them, because my joora[2] made me look different. They used to walk away from me, or if I said something to them, they wouldn't reply.

When I got to elementary school, other students would call me Egg Head. Or they would ask me stupid questions, like, "What's inside there? Is it a potato?" I was really slow in the way I spoke, and I'm still kind of slow, so they would make fun of me when I tried to say something back. This would happen in class, but the teachers wouldn't do much.

Sometimes my mom would come to school to defend me, but she had trouble helping me because she couldn't speak English properly. I felt really lonely, but it just became part of my life.

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[2] The name for the bun of hair tied at the top of a male Sikh's head, often covered with a turban.

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When 9/11 happened, I was eight years old. I was in the cafeteria, and I saw the mother of a student run in, looking really frightened. She said, "Come with me! We have to get out of this place!" I said, "What is going on?"

I was confused. I just stood there. A few minutes later, the teachers and school security guards escorted all the kids out of the cafeteria and told us to go home.

When I got home, I saw a plane going through buildings on TV, and then I saw them collapsing. I thought, *What's going to happen?* I was scared that they would bomb again, or attack my area. They were showing pictures of bin Laden, which made me even more scared. I thought he was a monster.

After 9/11, things got worse. Kids called me names, and they would ask me questions like, "Are you related to Osama bin Laden?" "Is Osama bin Laden your uncle?"

They called me a terrorist, or a terrorist's son. The kids on the bus looked at me with fear, so I tried to avoid looking at them as much as I could. I would just hide myself.

One time on the bus ride home, an African-American kid pulled my patka[3] off my hair. I couldn't do anything; I was helpless. No one was there to stand up for me. I didn't know how to stand up for myself either. I had to walk home with my patka off, and my joora open, and it was very embarrassing. I was crying, wondering what I could do. My mom used to be the one who did my joora, so I didn't know how to do it myself.

Every time I got on the bus after that, I wondered, *Will it happen again?* Anytime I saw someone who might pick a fight, I got anxious. I wouldn't look at them at all. I just tried to disappear.

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[3] A small head covering wrapped around a young Sikh's joora, or bun.

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My school was very diverse. There were Latino, African American, Asian American and South Asian American kids. It was also pretty dangerous. There were gangs, and I saw cops in our neighborhood a lot.

Sometimes I saw other Sikh kids getting picked on at school. I felt really bad, because I wanted to help them, but usually I didn't do anything. I had to look after myself. Whenever I could help, the kids I helped would avoid me. They would tell me, "Just stay away." I think it's probably because they were going through problems too. All of us were going through it.

Another time, a kid in class came up from behind me and started hitting me. I fell down and I was surrounded. There were six other kids with him, and they got me on the floor and started stomping on my arms and my back. They hit me in the head too. It really hurt. I wasn't able to defend myself, because there were so many of them. The whole time they were cursing at me, using vulgar language.

I never told my parents any of this. My dad drives a taxi, and my mom is a housewife. They weren't educated much. My dad went up to fourth grade, and my mom went up to tenth grade in India, and that's all.

I don't know why I didn't tell them anything. I wanted to keep it to myself. I just thought, *Tomorrow will be a new day*. But every day would be the same day for me.

Half the time, they picked on me for the way I looked. The rest of the time, they picked on me because of my religion. It really hurt. When I was attacked, I was angry. But when they called me names, I felt lonely. They would just get away with things, and I felt so helpless. They were very clever. I wasn't.

*

Now I'm eighteen, in college, and I have good friends. These days, I travel to Long Island to get to college every day. People at the train station stare

at me, and sometimes they say things about 9/11, like, "That guy has a bomb." I always think, *What? Still? You still don't know what it's like to be us!?* But now I have tricks. I breathe deeply. I walk away. I keep myself away from the situation. I wait for the train.

If 9/11 hadn't happened, people wouldn't call me these names. They wouldn't think of me as a dangerous person. People would see a Sikh standing in front of them as just an ordinary person. They wouldn't be afraid and have bad thoughts pop up in their mind. They would respect our religion and respect the way we look. They would respect us.

Now that I'm older, I want to help Sikh kids. I don't want them to go through what I went through. I want to tell other kids that they shouldn't be afraid. If they are afraid, they should tell people. Now we have all of these organizations, like the Sikh Coalition, that are here to help them. I want to tell them: Don't give up. Look back in our Sikh history, how much we've been through, and gain strength from that.

I want to use my life to help end discrimination. Everyone should live in peace, whether they are Sikh or Muslim or Hindu. I want bullying to end.

HANI KHAN

AGE: *20*
OCCUPATION: *Student*
INTERVIEWED IN: *Foster City, California*

Hani was born in New York to Indian and Pakistani parents. She grew up in Foster City, California. Hani spoke to us about being fired from Hollister (a clothing store chain owned by Abercrombie & Fitch) after refusing to remove her hijab, a head covering traditionally worn by Muslim females. After taking her story public, Hani received hostile comments and death threats, and found it difficult to secure another job.

I am an American-born Muslim. I am the typical American girl. I hang out with my friends, I have fun, I listen to Taylor Swift. It's just a piece of fabric that sets me apart.

There comes a point where you can't be a flip-flop any more. I'd been wearing the hijab since kindergarten, but I didn't start wearing it full-time till I was in high school. For me, the hijab represents modesty, and it represents how women in Islam want to be viewed—for what they have to say, for their personality, for their intelligence. I had to find that conviction inside of me.

In October 2009, I applied for a job at the Hollister store at the local mall. A lot of my friends had after-school jobs at the mall. If you

work there you get to see your friends, and they come and visit and kick it with you.

At the interview, the manager asked me about my hijab. He said the store had a beachy, laid-back vibe and told me what the dress code was: the colors were navy, grey, and white. I said, “It’s fine. I have those three colors.”

He said, “Then it won’t be a problem.”

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I’d been working there for just over four months, when one day, on February 9, 2010, the district manager came into the store. He didn’t acknowledge me. *Pretty standard,* I thought, since he’s district manager and he has to oversee a lot of things. All day I was going in and out of the stockroom to the floor, so I wasn’t really paying attention to him. It was pretty much a normal day.

Six days later, the next time I was in for work, the district manager was there again. He said he would like to put me on the phone with human resources (HR). I spoke with a woman from HR, who said, “We recently became aware of the fact that you wear a headscarf.”

I said, “Yeah, it’s part of my religion. I’ve been wearing it since I was hired.”

Then she told me that my hijab didn’t conform to their store policy, that no headgear is allowed—no caps, scarves, anything like that.

It was frustrating. Because I was put on the phone with her, she didn’t get a chance to see me. I wanted her to see that I was wearing jeans, I was wearing company colors, and that the only thing different you’d notice about me was that I was wearing a scarf.

She said, “Well, will you be able to conform to our store policy?”

I told her that wasn’t acceptable. I said I was not going to take off my scarf for work. Then she let me know that they had to talk to their lawyers, and that I would be taken off the schedule until further notice. She was trying to be cheery, but it sounded like she really wanted me to understand what was happening.

I went to clock out. I was crying, because I'd never had a negative experience regarding my hijab before, even after 9/11. The store managers could see that I was upset, and I let them know what had occurred. One of the managers was studying to become a lawyer, and he said that this was unjust.

I called CAIR[4] the next day and went to talk to a lawyer there. She gave me handouts about civil rights and the Constitution, and about religious gear being accommodated at the workplace. She said, "When they call you in for the next meeting, take that with you."

The week after the first incident, I went in and I gave the district manager the handouts. He glanced at them but he didn't say anything. I guess he realized I was talking to someone at that point.

He put me on the phone with the woman from HR again, and again she let me know about their "beachy vibe" dress code. She asked me explicitly, "Would you be able to take your headscarf off when you come to work?"

I said, "That's not acceptable. It's a part of my religion, and it's a part of who I am. I've been wearing it for so long, I'm not going to take it off for you." Then she told me I was no longer working for their company. I think they were prepared for what was going to happen, because the district manager already had my last paycheck ready with my name on it.

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The lawyer at CAIR told me we could file a complaint with the EEOC[5] and let the public know the injustice that had occurred. I said okay. I thought, *We can either let this injustice slide by and it's going to happen to the next person, or we can take action about it.*

So CAIR sent out a press release about my situation, and the next day

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[4] CAIR: Council on American–Islamic Relations.

[5] EEOC: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

I was interviewed by all the local TV stations, including CBS, KTVU, and ABC. It was really fast—one station would come, and then I would get a call that another one was on their way. My face was blurred out. I wanted to remain anonymous because of personal safety, but also because I was going to try to find another job. I didn't want people to recognize me and be like, "Oh, that's the Hollister girl, that's the girl who's stirring up trouble."

The day after the TV interviews, a hate letter was sent to the CAIR office saying I should go back to my country. It said someone should behead me and wrap me in a pig carcass and bury it in a mosque.

Some people wrote comments online saying I was sent in to be a spy. They said I wasn't wearing the hijab at my job interview and that I started wearing it after. I don't know who at nineteen would go, "I'm gonna infiltrate a company and I'm gonna take them down."

There were also people who wrote, "Go back to your country." But this *is* my country. I was born here, you were born here, so this is *our* country. How are you going to tell me, just because I wear a scarf, to go back to my country? I don't have anywhere else to go back to.

*

Hollister and Abercrombie & Fitch declined to release a statement. A friend from work let me know that nobody at work was allowed to talk about the situation and that, funnily enough, they had to sign a new policy stating that no headgear was allowed.

After the story went public, they offered me my job back, but they said that I would be working exclusively in the stockroom. I refused, because that's like you're not good enough to stay in the front, you're going to stay in the back. I thought that was segregation at best.

I've tried hard to find another job, especially in retail. But since Hollister is the last thing on my résumé, people want to know why I'm no longer with the company. Although nobody's mentioned it to me, I feel like they're aware of the situation. I went in for two interviews at the

mall, and when I called them, there would always be an excuse, like, "Oh, I'll have the store manager get back to you," and then the store manager never got back to me.

I'm worried, especially in this economy when it's hard enough to find a job.

*

I don't want to be known as "that Hollister girl." I'm not ashamed of it, but it's not something that I'm publicizing. But I do feel proud of myself that I actually took the step. I just didn't want to be a quiet bystander. I know a lot of people are letting cases slide because they don't want the attention. I think my generation and the next generation are not going to be afraid of the hijab. I'm studying Political Science at UC Davis, and I'm hoping after I'm done with undergrad I can go to law school. I don't want to work for a corporation. I want to be helping people, so that's where I'm hoping to go with my future.

What happened made my identity stronger. It made me realize how important the hijab really is to me, and why I need to continue to wear it.

LESSON ONE

PERSONALIZING HISTORY: THE GRAFFITI WALL EXERCISE

TIME NEEDED: *One class period.*
MATERIALS: *Narrative excerpt of Gurwinder Singh, poster-sized Post-it notes or large pieces of butcher paper, and large felt-tip markers.*
OBJECTIVE: *To make personal connections through the interpretation and analysis of oral history/primary sources.*
RELATED CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS: *RH.9-10.2; RH.9-10.3; RH.9-10.4.*

Step 1: Read aloud the narrative excerpt of Gurwinder Singh *(5-7 minutes).*

Step 2: The Graffiti Wall Exercise

A. Hang large pieces of butcher paper or poster-sized Post-it notes to the wall.

B. Using individual **words, quotations, questions, drawings** and **symbols**, encourage students to post their **feelings, responses** and **questions** related to the narrative on the "Graffiti Wall." If it's a large class, you can split it into two or more groups for this part of the activity (*10 minutes*).

C. Have the class silently "examine" the wall(s) (*5 minutes*).

Step 3: Have a class discussion based on what the wall "communicates" to students and how it reflects their personal responses and interpretations of the narrative *(15-20 minutes).*

Sample Discussion Questions:

- Does the wall "capture" the narrator's personal experience? How?

- What kinds of issues are expressed in Gurwinder's narrative (civil rights, education, religious expression, etc)?
- How does oral history help to personalize the issues presented in the narrative?

LESSON TWO

CIVIL RIGHTS AND SECURITY

TIME NEEDED: *One class period.*
MATERIALS: *Narrative excerpt of Adama Bah, list of civil rights (see below).*
OBJECTIVE: *To analyze U.S. civil rights and security issues through the lens of personal narrative.*
RELATED CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS:
RH.9-10.3; RH.9-10.4; RH.9-10.9.

Step 1: Examine and discuss the list of civil rights. Teacher should address any clarifying questions about the list before moving on to Step 2. You may find it helpful to refer to specific examples of these rights (*10-12 minutes*).

A. The following is a list of basic civil rights in the United States:

- Your **First Amendment rights**—freedom of speech, association and assembly; freedom of the press, and freedom of religion.
- Your right to **equal protection under the law**—protection against unlawful discrimination.
- Your right to **due process**—fair treatment by the government whenever the loss of your liberty or property is at stake.
- Your right to **privacy**—freedom from unwarranted government intrusion into your personal and private affairs.

Step 2: Read aloud the narrative excerpt of Adama Bah *(7-10 minutes).*

Step 3: Compare the list of civil rights with Adama Bah's narrative. Discuss the following questions (*20-25 minutes*):

- Were the civil rights of Adama Bah violated? If so, which ones?
- If these rights were violated, was it justified for the sake of security?
- Adama Bah's experience was related to the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act in 2001. Can you think of other related examples from U.S. history?
- In times of upheaval or crisis, is it necessary to suspend some of our civil rights in order to maintain security? Why or why not?

Additional Discussion Question:

- What is your opinion of heightened airport security (body scans, searches, etc)? Is it a necessary precaution or a violation of individuals' right to privacy?

LESSON THREE

CRITICAL READING LOG

TIME NEEDED: *One–two class periods or homework assignments.*
MATERIALS: *Narrative of Hani Khan, Critical Reading Log format (see below).*
OBJECTIVE: *To build reading comprehension and critical thinking skills through personal student reflection on first-person narratives.*
RELATED CORE CURRICULUM STANDARDS: *RH.9-10.2; RH.9-10.4; RH.9-10.10.*

Step 1: Read Hani Khan's narrative *(10 minutes).*

Step 2: Write a 150-word **summary** of the people and/or events that occurred in your reading *(20 minutes).*

Step 3: Select two **quotations** from your reading that you feel are important or interesting. Write the quotation on your Critical Reading Log sheet. Briefly explain why you chose each quotation *(10 minutes).*

Step 4: Make a **connection/reflection** between what you have read and something you have seen, experienced, heard about, or read about in another book, film, newspaper, etc. What did it remind you of? Why is this story/account important? Be sure to write about *both* parts of the connection—something specific from the oral history narrative, and something specific from outside the narrative *(20 minutes).*

Step 5: Create 3-5 **oral history questions** you would ask Hani Khan if you were to conduct an oral history interview with her. Strive to "find the holes" of the story and ask questions that could help you better understand her story/experience *(15 minutes).*

Critical Reading Log Format

Name:

Class/Period:

Date:

Title of book/story:

Author:

Summary:

Quotation:

Explanation of Quotation:

Connection/Reflections:

Oral History Questions:

ABOUT VOICE OF WITNESS

Founded by author Dave Eggers and physician/human rights scholar Lola Vollen, Voice of Witness is a nonprofit book series that depicts human rights crises through the stories of the men and women who experience them. The Voice of Witness education program fosters youth engagement with contemporary social justice issues by bringing socially relevant, oral history-based curricula into U.S. schools. For more information about Voice of Witness, visit www.voiceofwitness.org.

ABOUT THE KOREMATSU INSTITUTE

The mission of the Fred T. Korematsu Institute for Civil Rights and Education is to advance pan-ethnic civil rights and human rights through education. The Korematsu Institute develops and distributes K-12 curriculum for teachers throughout California, the first state to pass Fred Korematsu Day, as well as teachers around the U.S. For more information about the Korematsu Institute, visit www.korematsuinstitute.org.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

ALIA MALEK is an author (*A Country Called Amreeka*, Free Press, 2009) and a civil rights lawyer. Born in Baltimore to Syrian immigrant parents, she began her legal career as a trial attorney at the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division. After 9/11, in addition to her regular duties at the Department of Justice, which focused on Americans' civil rights in educational contexts, Alia's responsibilities came to also include reaching out to and serving the needs of vulnerable groups targeted by backlash discrimination and hate crimes.

After working in the legal field in the U.S., Lebanon, and the West Bank, Malek, who has degrees from Johns Hopkins and Georgetown Universities, earned her master's degree in journalism from Columbia University. Her reportage has appeared in *Salon*, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, the *Nation*, and the *New York Times*.

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A TEACHING RESOURCE FOR

PATRIOT ACTS

NARRATIVES OF POST-9/11 INJUSTICE

ORAL HISTORIES COMPILED AND EDITED BY ALIA MALEK
WITH A FOREWORD BY KAREN KOREMATSU

Patriot Acts tells the powerful stories of men and women who have been needlessly swept up in the War on Terror. In their own words, narrators recount personal experiences of the post-9/11 backlash—from rendition and torture, to workplace discrimination and bullying—that have deeply altered their lives and communities.

Voice of Witness is a nonprofit book series that empowers those most closely affected by contemporary social injustice. Using oral history as a foundation, the series depicts human rights crises around the world through the stories of the men and women who experience them. Voice of Witness was founded by author Dave Eggers and physician/human rights scholar Lola Vollen, and is the nonprofit division of McSweeney's Books.

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