

WE COMMEMORATE, WE COMMIT

Resources and tools to mobilize your own religious, civic, and educational institutions and communities to continue to build an Interfaith America.

September 11, 2021 commemorates the 20th anniversary of a profound moment in US life – the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC. As we continue to mourn the nearly 3,000 people who died, 6,000 who were injured, and those first responders and families with long-lasting effects, we also redouble our commitment to define our own story and future.

“Faith can be a bridge of cooperation, bringing people from all identities together to help and heal. But bridges do not fall from the sky or rise from the ground – people build them. Let us commit ourselves to be builders of bridges and pray that those bridges define our future.”

EBOO PATEL

Founder and President, Interfaith Youth Core

The devastation of September 11th brought with it an increase in hate crimes against members of religious minorities and others who looked different enough to be told by the instigators of such hate, “You do not belong.” Anti-Muslim hate crimes [increased by more than 1600%](#) and have never decreased to their pre-9/11 levels. These crimes and their attendant bullying and harassment often targeted Sikh-Americans, who [continue to face attacks](#), as in the horrific mass

shooting at a gurudwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin in 2012 or the recent murder of four Sikh employees at a FedEx warehouse in Indianapolis.

Today, we see another version of this othering in the rise of anti-Asian hate since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic. While [anti-Asian discrimination has a long history](#) in the U.S., attacks on Asian-Americans have [risen steeply since 2020](#) due, at least in part, to rhetoric that blames Asians for the spread of COVID-19. This trend came into shocking focus in March of this year, when [six Asian-American women were killed](#) (along with two others) in a mass-shooting in Atlanta.

Fortunately, on the anniversary of September 11th, these questions of belonging are ones we can answer. We can act to show that Muslim-Americans, Sikh-Americans, Asian-Americans, Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other marginalized Americans all belong. We can demonstrate that we all belong, not just as invited guests, but as beloved co-creators of this great American experiment.

“In order for our country to heal from the tragedy of 9/11 and those that have occurred since, we must all do our part to become a nation where all members of AAPI [Asian American and Pacific Islander] and other communities are treated with dignity and respect.”

SONAL SHAH

President, The Asian American Foundation

This can be the legacy of September 11th: Healing that comes from work to ensure that we all belong. Work to bring “the other” in. Work to reach across difference to discover how we belong together. As [Valarie Kaur](#) says, it’s not that we are strangers; it’s that “you are a part of me I do not yet know.”

As we mark this solemn anniversary, join us in committing to action that cultivates belonging and healing across the U.S. We invite you to watch our 9/11 town hall discussion, [We Commemorate. We Commit.](#) Then, consider how you’ll take action to promote belonging and healing in your community, starting with this toolkit. Need help with your plans? Contact us at info@ifyc.org.

This toolkit is made possible by the generous support of The Asian American Foundation.

LEARN

The following resources may be helpful as you consider your plans to promote healing and belonging in your community.

- [What Two 9/11 Anniversaries Can Teach Us About The Role Of Religion](#), September 2021, Eboo Patel, Religion News Service
- [Cubs and Muslim Leader Nurture Grace, Understanding at Crosstown Series](#), August 2021, Eboo Patel, Chicago Tribune
- Valarie Kaur's [Revolutionary Love Project's 9/11 Learning Hub](#)
- [This is What No One Tells You About Being Asian in America in 2021](#), February 2021, Sharon Kwon, Huffington Post
- [How Vincent Chin's Death Gave Others A Voice](#), March 2021, Karen Grigsby Bates, NPR
- [A Call for Solidarity](#), March 2021, Asian American Christian leaders
- [A Kaur | Singh Story](#), a short film from the Sikh Coalition
- [Being Muslim in America](#), April 2020, from the Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign
- [The Sikh-American Tradition of Resilience](#), April 2021, Seema Sohi, Washington Post
- [Forging New Communities: The Necessity of Proximity for Healing and Belonging](#), September 2021, Amar D. Peterman, Interfaith America
- [Same, But Different: Notes on Black Christian Solidarity Against Anti-Asian Racism](#), March 2021, Esau McCaulley, Interfaith America
- [Bystander Training and Anti-Asian Harassment Training](#) from Hollaback! and Asian Americans Advancing Justice
- Ask Big Questions conversation guides: [Where Do You Feel At Home? | Who Is In Your Community | For Whom Are We Responsible](#)
- Look for the most up-to-date resources around these and other issues at IFYC's digital publication, [Interfaith America](#)

"True understanding is not possible unless we risk changing our worldview. Otherwise we think we have built bridges to one another, but the bridges are rooted in sands that can shift with the tide."

VALARIE KAUR

Sikh Activist, Filmmaker, and Civil Rights Attorney

"In the midst of deep disagreements with our neighbors, we still find creative partnerships in unexpected places. These examples of our modest unity are important reminders that we can live together across deep differences."

JOHN INAZU

Professor of Law and Religion, Washington University in St. Louis and Executive Director, The Carver Project

ACT

Here are a few ways you can promote healing and belonging in your community. You may find these [tips for hosting interfaith-friendly events](#) helpful.

Host an interfaith community service event*

1. Look around for organizations that are already doing service, and ask how you can help. Or, plan something on your own. Maybe clean up a local park, pack meals for a relief organization, or help at a soup kitchen.
2. Gather a group of volunteers from different religious and non-religious backgrounds.
3. Kick off the event with a brief welcome and an acknowledgement of the solemnity of your event. Consider sharing what “belonging” and “healing” mean to you.
4. Warm up and start building relationships with a quick round of [Talk Better Together](#).
5. Get to work.

Host an interfaith dinner dialogue*

1. Decide whether to host a [potluck](#), cook for your guests, or have your event catered. You can ask your guests to pitch in for the cost of the food.
2. Invite a group of guests from different religious and non-religious backgrounds.
3. Kick off the event with a brief welcome and an acknowledgement of the solemnity of your event. Consider sharing what “belonging” and “healing” mean to you.
4. Before you sit down to eat, start building relationships with a quick round of [Talk Better Together](#).
5. Invite folks to eat.
6. You might consider providing your guests with [additional prompts](#) for discussion during the meal. Or, share these [texts on the shared value of hospitality](#). (Consider having guests take turns reading them aloud). Ask the group questions about what resonated with them or how they think about hospitality in their own traditions.

SAMPLE TALK BETTER TOGETHER QUESTIONS

What from your tradition or worldview calls you to hospitality or welcoming others?

Can you think of a time when you felt a deep sense of belonging?

Is there anything from your tradition or worldview that you find helpful for healing?

What are concrete ways you can promote healing and belonging in your communities?

Virtual version: Invite your guests to dine and discuss together via Zoom. You might invite them to cook (or buy) and [share about a special dish](#). If you’re a whiz with breakout rooms, you could even run a series of pair breakouts to start with a round of [Talk Better Together](#). If your group is small, you may stay in one room together for the meal. If the group is bigger, consider several smaller breakout rooms for discussion as you eat.

*We recommend that you consult [CDC](#) and [local](#) COVID-19 guidelines when planning your event.

SHARE

There are lots of ways you can share what you're learning with those around you. You can:

- Share any of the links above on your social media platforms. Be sure to tag IFYC when you do: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#).
- Watch [We Commemorate. We Commit.](#) with a group (in person or virtually) and lead a discussion following the screening.
- Share your own story of healing or belonging with us on social media or at info@ifyc.org, with your networks on and offline, or write about it via a local news op-ed piece.

"There needs to be kind of this movement toward solidarity... We're all in this together."

KEVIN PARK

Associate Pastor at Korean Central Presbyterian Church of Atlanta