



## NOT IN OUR TOWN

NORTHERN  
CALIFORNIA

**When Hate Happens Here** Premieres April 8 at 9pm **KQED 9**

Following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, there was a dramatic increase in California in hate crimes against Arabs and Arab Americans, other Middle Eastern ethnicities, and Muslims. Responding to a query from the California attorney general's office, the six largest law-enforcement agencies in the state reported a shocking 236 alleged incidents of such hate crimes in the 20 days following 9/11. In the Bay Area alone, the San Francisco and San Jose police departments reported 43 and 41 incidents, respectively (Los Angeles reported the highest number, at 79). Clearly, even here in the Bay Area we are not immune to hate-motivated violence—anti-Arab and antifemale graffiti was sprayed on murals at the Women's Building in San Francisco; in Reedley, near Fresno, a Yemeni shopkeeper was shot and killed after having received threatening telephone calls the previous day.

The 9/11 backlash was not limited to California. Hate crimes against this segment of the population occurred nationwide in almost every state. Three years later, the Anti-Defamation League and numerous other organizations across the country continue to document reported attacks against Arab Americans, other Middle Easterners and Muslims.

And the attacks are not confined to members of these ethnic and religious groups. People perceived to be Arab or Muslim also have been targeted—Sikhs, Latinos, Filipinos and South Asians have been victims of these hate crimes. One of the more widely publicized incidents was the murder of Balbir Singh Sodhi, a gas station owner from the Phoenix suburb of Mesa. He was shot and killed outside his gas station by a man who later told police that he shot him "because he was dark-skinned, bearded and wore a turban" and that "all Arabs should be shot." But Sodhi was neither Arab nor a Muslim; he was a Sikh. News of Sodhi's death even reached his native India, where Prime Minister Vajpayee urged President Bush "to prevent any such crime against persons of Indian origin on the basis of mistaken identity."

As a country, we are still dealing with the effects of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Security is a major concern for many Americans; racial profiling and civil rights violations are considered legal under the Patriot Act; we have a military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq; and in some cases, Americans have become violent against other Americans because of racism and xenophobia.

### LESSON PLAN

How do we maintain the balance between preserving the constitutional rights of all Americans and doing everything possible to defend our national security? Find a newspaper article that helps you defend your position.

Reference: [www.asianweek.com/061397/feature.html](http://www.asianweek.com/061397/feature.html)

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