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*Recognise the Human Race as One*

*To transform underprivileged and minority communities and individuals into informed and vibrant members of society through civic, educational and personal development programmes.*

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February 2, 2015

Jennifer Jessup  
Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer  
Department of Commerce  
Room 6616, 14th and Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20230  
[jjessup@doc.gov](mailto:jjessup@doc.gov)

Submitted via e-mail

Re: Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; 2015 National Content Test

Dear Ms. Jessup:

We appreciate this opportunity to provide comments in response to the Department of Commerce's Request for Public Comment. UNITED SIKHS is a U.N. affiliated, international, non-profit, humanitarian relief, human development and advocacy organization, aimed at empowering those in need, especially disadvantaged and minority communities across the world.

Since September 11, 2001, our organization has seen a rise in the need for policy advocacy and legal representation for Sikh American community members in the areas of hate crimes, bullying, discrimination, and profiling. With the media images of Bin Laden and Al Qaeda embedded in society, the Sikh community in the United States has suffered from unprecedented misconceptions and hate.

Sikhism stands as the fifth largest religion in the world and has transformed into a racial and ethnic group as time has progressed due to the unique and distinct articles of faith, such as: the turban, beard, and uncut hair. It is these articles of faith that make the religion a unique target for hate.

We strive to advocate for the safety of our community through our work on Capitol Hill and in conjunction with the Administration and its various agencies. However, one of the biggest setbacks for the Sikh community and our advocacy work is the lack of consistent numbers of Sikhs residing in the United States.

We write to you today about the dire need for Sikhs to be counted as a separate category within the U.S. Census. In order for us to adequately advocate for the Sikh community, we need to know how many Sikhs reside in the United States so we know the percentages and ratios important for such advocacy work. As it stands, we don't have those numbers. Some Sikh groups will say 500,000 Sikhs live in this country, while others say one million. We have no way of knowing for sure until we are counted in the Census.

UNITED SIKHS worked tirelessly on this issue in previous years, in hopes of change for the 2010 Census. We successfully began [a campaign to inform Sikhs to check "OTHER" and write in "Sikh" on their Census forms.](#) This proved unsuccessful as we struggled to reach out to every Sikh family.

With the 2020 Census in mind, we now are hoping to see one of two things happen:

- 1.) A form that allows everyone to write in what they are underneath the five main categories. This way a Sikh could right "Sikh" underneath "Asian." The accompanying package with how to fill out the form would explain this clearly and provide examples, one being to write "Sikh" under "Asian." OR
- 2.) We maintain the option to check "OTHER" and write in "Sikh" but an additional pamphlet in English and Punjabi would explain "If you are a Sikh American, please check off "OTHER" and write in "Sikh." This would assure every self-identified Sikh would have this option.

While a small addition to the already existent pamphlets, such a step would provide numbers for the Sikh community and advocacy groups that are vital for the safety and progression of the community.

In addition, we would like to raise some concerns about the objectives listed for your test:

- 1.) We request that the option for mail-in still be given to every household in America. Many low income families consist of non-English speaking elderly individuals who do not even possess e-mail addresses and will not be able to fill out their forms on line. An entire sub-group of every race, ethnicity, and religion will be left out.
- 2.) As you explore the options for non-English materials, we hope you will consider Punjabi as one of those alternative languages. As stands, the Department of Justice, Department of Education, Department of Homeland Security, the White House, and others all have started including Punjabi in their non-English materials. As an emerging group with strong ties to the civil and human rights movement in this country, Punjabi has become a vital language for community services.
- 3.) Similar to the options of various Native American tribal affiliations, we hope an option to list "Sikh" under Asian or under South Asian can be included. We emphasize the dire need for the numbers and the powerful impact those numbers will have on a major community in the United States.

Finally, we agree with and share the concerns raised by the Leadership Conference in their letter to you regarding race and ethnicity concerns for the enforcement of civil rights protections.

We hope you will keep the ongoing civil and human rights for the Sikh community in mind as you proceed with your work on the Census. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Anisha Singh, Policy Attorney, at 954-294-3489 or [law-usa@unitedsikhs.org](mailto:law-usa@unitedsikhs.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anisha Singh". The script is cursive and elegant, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Anisha Singh, Esq.  
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