



Saturday, November 8th  
University of Michigan

# Our Journeys Conference 2014

On **Saturday, November 8 2014**, **SAFAR: The Sikh Feminist Research Institute** will host a one-day conference, **Our Journeys 2014: To Know Is Not Enough**, at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Building on the tremendous success of past, this academic conference continues to explore a range of topics, relationships, disciplines and voices through a Sikh feminist lens. Our Journeys 2014: To Know Is Not Enough seeks to cultivate a spectrum of critical dialogue, engage in collective examining of the status quo and highlight a diverse range of research methodologies throughout the day. This conference is about the intersection of activism and academics, action and knowledge. Following the success of the conferences held at the University of Toronto (inaugural, 2011) and at the University of British Columbia (2012), SAFAR is proud to present Our Journeys 2014: To Know Is Not Enough with the continued goal of exploration into Sikh feminist agency and praxis.

## About The Sikh Feminist Research Institute ([www.sikhfeministresearchinstitute.org](http://www.sikhfeministresearchinstitute.org))

**Vision:** A world where the Sikh Gurus' principles of egalitarianism and empowerment are realized for all, regardless of ability, caste, class, ethnicity, gender, race, sex, and sexual orientation, by bringing expansive revival, attention, voice and praxis to the feminist values and egalitarian politics inherent within Sikhi.

**Mission:** SAFAR is comprised of academics, educators, activists, community organizers and independent researchers, committed to promoting and sustaining Sikh feminist research, praxis and activism. SAFAR will achieve this by: promoting and cultivating research; creating discourse and spaces that will help develop these values and politics; building alliances and partnerships with academic and non-academic organizations as well as communities and spaces committed to these ideals; and by supporting local and global Sikh institutions and communities.

Recognizing the emancipatory nature of Sikhi, SAFAR defines the Sikh feminist initiative as that which uncovers and understands what causes and sustains oppression in all its forms and strives to create social equity through individual and collective efforts.

## Keynote Panelists

**Dr. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh**, Crawford Family Professor, Dept. of Religious Studies, Colby College

**Dr. Inderpal Grewal**, Chair, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Yale University

**Palbinder Shergill**, Lawyer, Queen's Counsel, World Sikh Organization General Counsel

SAFAR is a volunteer-run registered charity. Your presence, support and donation will help support our conference and other related projects that will strengthen our individual and collective efforts in field of Sikh Feminism.

## Call for Abstracts

November 2014 marks 30 years since the 1984 atrocities waged against Sikhs in India and is the month of the birth of Guru Nanak, who challenged the status quo and deeply rooted paternalistic values of the times; sowing seeds of Sikh feminism as we know it today. Holding the conference in this month of this year allows us to highlight the relationship and often disconnect between knowledge and its application. Our Journeys 2014: To Know Is Not Enough will seek to unpack “knowledge” in its multiple natures from its: current status, production, dissemination, axis of interpretation, political agency, interconnectedness to community and finally, translation into action. Our Journeys 2014: To Know Is Not Enough asserts that to simply know is not enough and endeavour to go beyond the acknowledgement of anniversaries and Wikipedia facts. This conference aims to breathe in new possibilities with the potential to combine the wisdom of the past and possibilities for the future.

SAFAR seeks interdisciplinary and original papers from academics, educators, students, activists, community-organizers, independent researchers, and emerging scholars. The conference seeks to bring together diverse voices that encompass an array of foci, disciplines, and methods of inquiry. Although abstracts are accepted from a wide range of topics and fields related to Sikh Feminism, Our Journeys 2014: To Know Is Not Enough strongly encourages submissions related to one of the following three core conference themes:

### (1) Constructing Sikh Feminism: What Do We Know?

ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਜੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਅਖਾਏ ਸੁ ਭਲਕੇ ਉਠਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

One that calls oneself a Sikh of the true Guru, wakes every day committed to living Naam.

Guru Ram Daas - Guru Granth Sahib - page 305

“Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. This was a definition of feminism I offered in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* more than 10 years ago. It was my hope at the time that it would become a common definition everyone would use. I liked this definition because it did not imply that men were the enemy. By naming sexism as the problem it went directly to the heart of the matter. Practically, it is a definition which implies that all sexist thinking and action is the problem, whether those who perpetuate it are female or male, child or adult. It is also broad enough to include an understanding of systemic institutionalized sexism. As a definition it is open-ended. To understand feminism it implies one has to necessarily understand sexism.”

Bell Hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*

While there is an inclusive definition of a Sikh, what else do we know about the Sikh faith and its prescriptions for human relations, responses to oppression, and world order?

While the definition of ‘feminism’ varies widely, what do we know about the waves of the feminist movement(s), its crucial developments, and contributions to society?

By exploring what knowledge exists from various sources, in this panel we will dive into an exploration of the intersectionality of Sikhi, feminism and discourse on Sikh Feminism.

## ② Unheard Voices: What Don't We Know?

"Who writes? For whom is the writing being done? In what circumstances? These, it seems to me, are the questions whose answers provide us with the ingredients making for a politics of interpretation. But if one does not wish to ask and answer the questions in a dishonest and abstract way, some attempt must be made to show why they are questions of some relevance to the present time."

Edward Said, 1982

This panel will explore erasures of experiences and voices in dominant narratives: How does our dominant narrative about spirituality, history, and society overlook essential voices and experiences? Whether the experiences of women in Punjab in 1984, or Mata Sahib Kaur whose birthday coincides with the week of the Conference, or women in post-9/11 North America, the writing is often by men and/or without the participation of the subjects of concern. What kind of a disconnect might this create? What knowledge is being overlooked?

## ③ Praxis: Knowledge Into Action

"The concept of service is not confined to fanning the congregation, service to and in the common kitchen-cum-eating house, etc. A Sikh's entire life is a life of benevolent exertion. The most fruitful service is the service that secures the optimum good by minimal endeavor. That can be achieved through organized collective action."

Sikh Rehat Maryada (Code of Conduct)

This panel will explore the various responses to the knowledge we hold, as well as that which we seek to hold, in order to understand and practice Sikh Feminism. How do we make room for uncomfortability in the process of new knowledge production, while building new paradigms and ways of thinking and acting?

How will we take theory and research from various perspectives and translate into practice? For example, how do we use what we know to strengthen the challenge to patriarchy, gendered oppression, domestic violence, and other overt and subversive manifestations of marginalization?

Topics include, but are not limited to: Sikh female leadership, agency in knowledge-formation, non-profit service organizations, civic engagement initiatives, grassroots organizing, and participation in media and the arts.

It will highlight research as a form of resistance, providing emancipatory possibilities.

"While such explorations can be exciting, violating research and academic norms is also difficult and challenging given the extent to which we have all internalized dominant ideas about what constitutes 'good' research and 'acceptable' research principles."

Research as Resistance: Critical Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches,  
Leslie Brown & Susan Strega

## Submission Guidelines

Deadline for submission of a **750 word limit** abstract (including citations) is **June 1, 2014**. Abstract submissions should include title, author(s), affiliation(s), key words and citations. Authors are requested to follow APA style guidelines. Authors shall be informed of the outcome of double-blind review of abstracts by **July 15, 2014**. Deadline for submission for paper outlines **September 30, 2014**. Authors will have the opportunity to collaboratively discuss publication opportunity with SAFAR. If you have any questions, please contact SAFAR at [abstracts@sikhfeministresearch.org](mailto:abstracts@sikhfeministresearch.org)