

## Maan Singh Khalsa Impact Statement

May 18, 2017

Your Honor, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak today.

My name is Maan Singh Khalsa. I immigrated to the United States from India in 2003, and I have worked hard to contribute to this country ever since. I am an observant Sikh, an IT specialist for the Social Security Administration, and father to an 8 year-old daughter. I am also a key volunteer and Treasurer with a Sikh non-profit charitable organization called Shri Guru Nanak Dev Seva Society International ([www.sgndssi.com](http://www.sgndssi.com)) that performs religious awareness, community service and environmental protection in the U.S., India and Nepal.

The actions of Mr. Little and Mr. Leblanc have greatly affected every facet of my life; they have transformed my day-to-day experiences and my very outlook on the world.

Before September 25, 2016, I was so carefree. I considered myself an American like everyone else. I had never worried about being a victim of prejudice. I enjoyed my life fully – working, volunteering across the country and globe, spending time with my family, horseback riding, working out in the Gym and rock-climbing with my daughter.

I always assumed the best in others, like when I tried to explain that, “there is a misunderstanding, I am your brother” as the defendants followed my car and cussed at me. Like when I didn’t think to roll up the window as the defendants came toward my car to punch me through my window.

My attackers hit me with their fists, knocked off my turban, and yelled, “cut his fucking hair.” They yanked my hair through the window and used a knife to saw parts of it off.

Observant Sikhs like me keep our hair unshorn in order to live with the harmony of the will of God. Cutting a Sikh’s hair is one of the most humiliating things anyone can do to a Sikh. By cutting my hair, the attackers did not just attack my body; they attacked my dignity, my spirit, my faith, my religion and my entire community.

In the course of the attack, as I tried to protect my hair and my head, my right pinky finger was stabbed, and eventually required amputation.

When the traffic light turned green, I was able to drive away from the attackers, but my life is forever changed.

Immediately after the attack, I had suffered damaged teeth, a black eye, and cuts and bruises, including a gash on my right pinky finger. Nearly eight months later, there are lasting impacts on my health – I have trouble with short-term memory, I have lost a body part (my pinky), I struggle with PTSD, anxiety and depression, and it is difficult for me to sleep at night.

At work, I have had to use much of my sick leave, and I cannot perform at the level I used to. Due to my memory issues, I have trouble remembering important protocols, and have made mistakes on the job. Due to the loss of my finger, I struggle to type – an essential part of my job as an IT specialist.

The loss of my finger has had major impacts on my life that I never expected. I knew the loss of a body part would have a psychological effect, but I never expected the physical effects. I have lost strength in my right hand, and cannot lift semi-heavy objects. I cannot

grip objects either. This means that I cannot lift weights like I used to, and I cannot rock climb with my daughter. In horseback riding, it's harder to clean the horse or saddle it up and pull the reins – my grip just isn't there. The other day, when trying to lift a jar, it fell on the floor and shattered because I lack the strength. And I have had to start learning how to type without my pinky, which makes my job harder.

I have suffered from severe depression, anxiety and PTSD since the attack. It is difficult for me to go outside now without having pepper spray with me. Now, when I interact with strangers, I am not as open as I used to be – I am more likely to view others not as my brothers, but as possible threats to my safety. I used to travel across the country raising funds for my charity, openly talking to strangers about Sikhs and Sikhism, but now I'm afraid of driving long distances on my own.

Beyond the physical and emotional toll, I have thousands of dollars in medical bills after insurance payments. I have had to quit my second job temporarily, and cut down on my fundraising activities with my non-profit organization, as I cannot travel as much. I've suffered financial harm, and now that I cannot fundraise for the charity, they are struggling, too.

It will take me many years, maybe the rest of my life to heal from this attack. But the recognition of the attack as a hate crime – as harm to my dignity and my entire community – is the first step in the process.

My Sikh faith is of utmost importance for me. As a Sikh, I believe that all of us are one human family, and that we must treat everyone as equals regardless of our many differences.

Mr. Little and Mr. Leblanc, I hope that one day you will come to share this view. I still consider you my brothers, and I hope that you will learn about me and my community, and one day consider me your brother, too.