

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
From *YouthWorker Journal* and YouthWorker.com

Big Hairy Deal: Woman Responds to Insults with Class

By Paul Asay

What Happened:

Several days ago, someone secretly took a picture of Balpreet Kaur—a female student of Ohio State University who sported some facial hair. The photographer posted the photo on Reddit under the site’s “Funny” section.

The post sparked a slew of mean, derogatory comments; and it wasn’t long before Balpreet, 20, saw the post herself. She quickly responded—but simply said she wished the photographer would’ve told her that he was taking the photo. If so, she would’ve smiled.

“Yes, I’m a baptized Sikh woman with facial hair,” she wrote, according to the *New York Daily News*. “Yes, I realize that my gender is often confused and I look different than most women. However, baptized Sikhs believe in the sacredness of this body—it is a gift that has been given to us by the Divine Being...and I must keep it intact as a submission to the divine will.”

“To me, the face isn’t important, but the smile and the happiness that lie behind the face are,” Balpreet continued. “So, if anyone sees me at OSU, please come up and say hello.”

Balpreet’s response has inspired a wave of supporters, and the original picture taker (who asked to remain anonymous) has since apologized and reached out to her. “She was glad in a sense that I posted it so more people could see, and so much positivity came out of what started as a negative thing...I never even thought about how she felt or what she was going through. I really admire her faith.”

Talk About It

Balpreet’s story is an important reminder to treat people with respect—even if they look, act or believe differently than we do. Have you ever been the victim of a mean-spirited jab? How did you handle it? Are you guilty of making fun of someone—to the point of encouraging others to join? Did you make amends?

Very few people would’ve responded as graciously as Balpreet did; frankly, not many of us would’ve. It’s hard to respond kindly when we’ve been hurt, but sometimes being nice can make a far bigger impact than lashing out and seeking revenge. Can you think of other people who responded to insult and injury with love and grace?

In her response, Balpreet not only diffused a bad situation, but she taught others something about her faith. Can we learn something from Balpreet about how to talk to

people about our own beliefs? How can we best reflect the heart of Jesus when we discuss our beliefs openly with others?

What the Bible Says:

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Col. 3:13).

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:37).

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8).