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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AGPA CONFERENCE TO OFFER COURSE ON “ISLAMOPHOBIA” MARCH 3, 2011 IN NYC

NEW YORK, January 28, 2011 - On September 15, 2001 Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh American of Indian origin was consulting with landscapers in front of the gas station and convenience store he owned in Mesa Arizona. A pick-up truck drew up to them. Frank Roque, the driver of the truck, opened fire, shooting and killing Sodhi. When he was arrested shortly afterward Roque offered the statement “I am a patriot!!” Less than a year later, Sodhi’s brother was shot and killed in an unrelated though eerily parallel crime. As if that weren’t enough tragedy to befall one family, still another brother who continues to work at the convenience store at which Balbir was gunned down, is routinely targeted for such hate speech as: “Go back to Iraq.”

Attacks on Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim have increased exponentially after 9/11 (the FBI reports a 17 fold increase immediately after the 9/11 attacks) not only in the United States but around the world. Such hate and bias crimes are the focus of a course being offered by the American Group Psychotherapy Association during its Annual Training, February 28 - March 5, 2011 in New York City at the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers. *Islamophobia in a Post 9/11 World: Addressing General Insecurity and Mitigating Harm to “Anyone Appearing Muslim”* will be presented on Thursday, March 3rd from 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM. This course will identify the issues that underlie bias crimes such as those against Muslims and anyone perceived to be Muslim. The course will highlight group interventions that can transform the general insecurity that manifests as “Islamophobia” and bolster the resiliency of communities that are victim to it.

“This course is a significant and relevant offering as we approach the anniversary of 9/11 and hold our Meeting in New York in partnership with the International Association of Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes (IAGP),” said Jeffrey Kleinberg, Ph.D., CGP, FAGPA, AGPA President. “The challenging social issues that arise in complicated times inevitably present themselves in groups and this training will help group leaders address them in ways which benefit their clients and their communities.”

Islamophobia in a Post 9/11 World will be taught by four distinguished clinician-educators with long experience in working with minority groups. They are:

Siddharth Ashvin Shah, M.D., M.P.H. specializes in preventive/behavioral medicine and is medical director of Greenleaf Integrative Strategies. Since 9/11, he has provided group interventions and trauma consultation to vulnerable ethnic groups, including a school serving Muslim youth in New York City. Over the past ten years, Dr. Shah has designed and led seminars on psychosocial prevention and intervention for post-disaster bias

intended to assist community leaders, mental health professionals and emergency managers.

Razia F. Kosi, LCSW-C is the founder of the nonprofit organization, Counselors Helping (South) Asians/Indians, Inc. (CHAI) which addresses mental health and wellness issues in the South Asian community. On 9/11 and its aftermath, Ms. Kosi worked in a public high school in a Washington DC suburb. She immediately worked to address harassment against students who were Muslim or perceived to be Muslim. In addition, she conducts cultural proficiency workshops with mental health professionals and educators in the Howard County Public Schools and volunteers at the Muslim Community Center providing therapeutic services and workshops for the community.

Cindy Miller Aron, LCSW, CGP is a mental health specialist at Samaritan Mental Health in Corvallis Oregon. She is an educator on the phenomenon of scapegoating, its destructive properties and the opportunity it presents for understanding and working with differences. She has consulted to organizations, primary, secondary schools and universities on systemic discrimination.

Nina K. Thomas, Ph.D., CGP, ABPP is a psychologist-psychoanalyst with over 20 years experience working in the area of trauma and with ethnic minority communities. After 9/11 she Co-Chaired the AGPA Disaster Outreach Task Force which designed and implemented over 300 groups providing mental health services to affected populations. She regularly teaches and presents on issues relating to trauma and has directly consulted to ethnic minority communities both within the United States and internationally in Bosnia, Azerbaijan, and the West Bank, among other places.

This training course is a highlight of AGPA's 2011 Annual Training in New York City. Entitled "Group as a Source of Resilience and Change," this meeting attracts more than 1,000 group therapists, researchers and scientists from around the world. Group therapists of all disciplines will gather to learn the most effective techniques in working with a variety of populations in groups, an increasingly utilized modality due to its effectiveness and cost-effectiveness, particularly in today's economic climate. The theme reflects the meeting's emphasis on the power of groups to effect change that contributes to societal strength and well-being. [Online registration](#) is available for this course and other events at the Meeting.

For more information, contact AGPA at (877) 668-AGPA (2472) or visit www.agpa.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Media are invited to attend select public sessions of the AGPA 2011 Annual Training. To register, please send an e-mail request to dfeirman@agpa.org or call 877.668.2472.

About AGPA

The American Group Psychotherapy Association is the foremost professional association dedicated to the field of group psychotherapy, operating through a tri-partite structure: AGPA, a professional and educational organization; the Group Psychotherapy Foundation, its philanthropic arm; and the National Registry of Certified Group Psychotherapists, a standard setting and certifying body. This multidisciplinary association has approximately 3,000 members, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, clinical mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, pastoral counselors and creative arts therapists, many of whom have been recognized as specialists through the Certified Group Psychotherapist credential. The association has 31 local and regional societies located across the country. Its members are experienced mental health professionals who lead psychotherapy groups and various non-clinical groups. Many are organizational specialists who work with businesses, not-for-profit organizations, communities and other "natural" groups to help them improve their functioning.