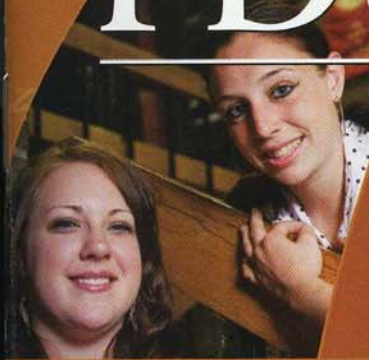


# FDU MAGAZINE

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## Building Our Global Mission

A Decade of Distinction Under President Adams





Sometimes it takes just one person, or one book, to transform a life. That's how it happened to Khyati Joshi, associate professor in the Peter Sammartino School of Education.

Joshi's family immigrated to the United States from India when she was 2. They settled into a suburb of Atlanta, Ga., where Joshi — the child of observant Hindus and one of a tiny minority of students who were neither white nor black — felt alienated and misunderstood at her school. She didn't like her high school English classes much and got by on CliffsNotes. That is, until her junior year, when she was assigned to read *Night* by Elie Wiesel.

Wiesel's firsthand account of the Holocaust stirred Joshi's simmering interest in issues of fairness and inequality. "I couldn't put it down," she says of the book. "*Night* started my fascination with the Holocaust. How could something like the Holocaust happen? How could people look the other way?"

Joshi dove into her studies of Nazi Germany's genocidal campaign with a vengeance, pestering her world history teacher with so many questions that "I drove her absolutely nuts." She continued her Holocaust focus through a master's degree in theology from Emory University, traveling to Israel twice, including a year of post-graduate study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Her further intellectual evolution — prompted in graduate school by William E. Cross' work on black identity development — led her to examine how religion and religious identity affect second-generation Asian Americans. An EdD (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) followed, and her 2006 book, *New Roots in America's Sacred Ground: Religion, Race and Ethnicity in Indian America*, summarized her findings about the ways race, religion and ethnicity interact in the lives of second-generation Indian Americans who are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian.

In interviews with 41 Indian American young adults, she found that many recalled school experiences where their religious identity was "ignored, marginalized or actively discriminated against. The turmoil caused by these experiences had a negative impact on their ethnic identity development, their relationships with peers and family members and their academic outcomes," she says.

Joshi developed a course for education students called "Multicultural Classroom," which she has taught every semester since she arrived at Fairleigh Dickinson University in 2003. Joshi leads workshops and institutes for non-FDU educators on the subject as well, and she presented her suggestions in a variety of public venues, including a 2007 article in the Southern Poverty Law Center's *Teaching Tolerance* magazine. Among her recommenda-

tions are that teachers familiarize themselves with the different religions present in their classrooms, recognize religion as part of students' social identities and include religion in curricula when it's appropriate.

Joshi is a sought-after speaker for conferences and meetings nationwide. In March 2009, she discussed the racialization of religion at an international meeting in Vienna, Austria, sponsored by the human rights unit of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the world's largest regional security organization. She was the only American scholar to present at the event, which was designed to assist member nations in developing and implementing hate-crimes policies.

She has written chapters in six books about religion, diversity and social justice and publishes regularly in peer-reviewed journals and collections. *New Roots* won a 2007 Philip C. Chinn Book Award from the National Association of Multicultural Education and was nominated for an Asian American Studies Book Award.



## When Global Issues Are Personal

KHYATI JOSHI

Joshi's journey from being a child of Indian immigrants to studying the Holocaust to researching the immigrant experience shows how the global can influence the personal and vice versa. "Growing up, I spent most summers in India. Experiences with my family and friends there provided me with perspectives I never heard in the U.S.," Joshi says. "Approaching questions from different viewpoints, which is essential to scholarship, was an inherent part of my upbringing."

Her abiding interest in global issues of social justice has found a natural fit at FDU. "I have a transnational life, I am part of transnational communities, and that reaches into my classroom — whether it's my experience in India or my experience in Israel. All that affects my teaching," Joshi says. "The continuing thread is pursuing the promises enunciated in the United States' founding documents: fairness, freedom and an equal opportunity to make the most of our lives." ❖