

STANDING UNITED AGAINST TERRORISM

Faith & Values

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Special to The Seattle Times



Sunday will mark the 10th anniversary of 9/11. American Muslims in particular will remember it as the day our nation was attacked by terrorists who commandeered four airplanes, murdered our fellow countrymen, and tried to hijack Islam, a religion of peace.

After the Twin Towers fell, tears came to my eyes not only because so many lives were lost but also because Islam, rather than terrorism, was being blamed. Rest assured, when Osama bin Laden died this year, there were no Muslims crying for him.

Islam rejects all types of terrorism and its manifestations, but disinformation and misunderstandings about our religion have led many to see these distortions as truth, rather than as deception or confusion.

The line between the peaceful religion of Islam and terrorism became blurred in the eyes of many mostly because of Islamophobia, right-wing media enablers and a small number of cowardly terrorists.

Though I was born 50 years ago in the heartland of our country, my patriotism and that of American Muslims in general was called into question in one way or another shortly after 8:46 a.m. EST Sept. 11, 2001.

Even though Muslims worked and died in the tower

ers that day, and even though Muslims were among the first responders, we started to be viewed by many as Muslims first and Americans second.

Within 48 hours after 9/11, we saw innocent American Muslims being attacked. I organized a news conference here in Seattle and, standing with the local Muslim leadership on the brick steps of the Idariss Mosque near Northgate, I read our statement.

"We strongly condemn in no uncertain terms the horrifying attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11. We join the nation to call the perpetrators of this terrible crime to be brought swiftly to justice."

God says in the Quran, "Whoever kills an innocent human being, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind, and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all man-kind." (5:32)

American Muslims now regret not doing a better job of defining their faith's teaching and principles to

fellow citizens before 9/11. Over the past 10 years we have paid a heavy price for not having done so.

We have endured more security checks in airports, harassment and verbal abuse for scarf-wearing women, redefining for many Muslims what it means to be American and Muslim.

And the recently released results of an investigation by the Center for American Progress, a think-tank, found that more than half-a-dozen anti-Islamic organizations had together spent more than \$42 million to spread an anti-Islamic agenda in America.

It was a coordinated, strategic and a deliberate effort to engender fear, hatred and animosity toward Islam and Muslims, creating negative stereotypes and poisoning the well of civil discourse.

Historically, what happened to Jews, Japanese Americans and Irish Catholics is happening to Muslims now, even though for the past decade we have actively spoken out against extremism and terrorism.

As Americans, none of us can afford to be religiously illiterate and we must all work to protect the true teachings of one another's faith if we are to live and prosper together in peace.

America must remain a beacon for tolerance, religious freedom and hope in the world.

Aziz Junjo is host of "Focus on Islam," a weekly cable-television show, and a frequent speaker on Islam. Readers may send feedback to faithcolumns@seattletimes.com

Good Article

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