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Let's work together for peace and harmony

Everyone accepts that Sept. 11, 2001, was a horrific event when the U.S. was attacked at three different locations resulting in senseless loss of innocent lives.

Muslims from every walk of life condemned the attack in the strongest possible terms.

Since then there have been numerous conferences, seminars, and presentations highlighting Islam's condemnation of terrorism and suicide bombing.

Islam condemns terrorism, suicide bombing or taking of any life without due cause or process. The Qur'an emphasizes that the killing of one human being, without just cause, is like killing all of humanity.

Last year, we had a very successful Sept. 11 commemoration wherein people of all faith traditions, including Christians, Jews, and Muslims, came together to pay tribute to the 9/11 victims. This event also condemned Islamophobia that has engulfed the country especially related to the Islamic Center near Ground Zero. Even now Muslims continue to face an enormous amount of challenges, including civil rights violations,

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deportations and profiling at airports and personal harassments. They have also suffered due to closings of Islamic charities, monitoring of mosques and other Muslim organizations. Despite all these there is no sign of alienation or anger among American Muslims, according to a Pew Center survey.

In fact most of them are found to be satisfied with the way things are going in the U.S. and rate their communities highly as places to live.

Islamophobia has grown substantially and public opinion polls have confirmed that negative perceptions of Islam and Muslims are on the rise.

This was blatantly evident when the Cordoba House/Park 51 center project in lower Manhattan was revealed.

Muslims are still facing resistance in building a mosque or Islamic center in

many parts of the country.

One American boldly said that not only Muslims have a right to build an Islamic center near ground zero, but also when any memorial is built for 9/11 victims Muslim victims (who numbered more than 300) should be recognized.

Islamophobia is inconsistent with American values. This beloved country is for people of all faiths, colors, and creeds. The Muslims should not be ostracized because of action of the few extremists. People must distinguish between mainstream Islam and violent extremist ideology. Painting every one with the same broad brush will be unfortunate and will cloud our judgments.

According to a previous Gallop survey, American Muslims are highly educated, professional and an integral part of American society.

They have a deep appreciation and love for America and the rights and freedom it promotes.

They vote regularly and emphasize the values they share with people of other faiths.

Islam teaches us to examine the common belief and practices with people of other

faiths and to work collaboratively for the benefit of the society. Area Muslims have participated in many social justice activities like the Peace Coalition, the CROP walk to eradicate hunger, sponsored thanksgiving dinners and provided meat and non-perishable goods to food pantries.

Islam also emphasizes the importance of fighting crime, drugs, violence and other social ills.

American Muslims are more than 10 million in number and can be enlisted in efforts to fight extremism. There is also a lot of misunderstanding between the U.S. government and the Muslim World. American Muslims can help bridge that gap as well.

On this 10th anniversary of Sept. 11, let us come together for the peace, harmony and improvement of societies.

We must work together to remove Islamophobia by reaching a deeper understanding of our shared values.

Only then can we achieve true peace and harmony in America.

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