

**Briefing Before the Indiana Advisory Committee to
The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights**

**Civil Rights Issues Facing Muslims and Arab Americans
In Indiana Post-September 11**

**Executive Summary and Transcript of Briefing
Held in Indianapolis, May 30, 2002**

The United States Commission on Civil Rights

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency established by Congress in 1957, reconstituted in 1983, and reauthorized in 1994. It is directed to investigate complaints alleging that citizens are being deprived of their right to vote by reason of their race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices; study and collect information relating to discrimination or a denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice; appraise federal laws and policies with respect to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, or in the administration of justice; serve as a national clearinghouse for information in respect to discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin; submit reports, findings, and recommendations to the President and Congress; and issue public service announcements to discourage discrimination or denial of equal protection of the laws.

The State Advisory Committees

By law, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has established an advisory committee in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The committees are composed of state citizens who serve without compensation. The committees advise the Commission of civil rights issues in their states that are within the Commission's jurisdiction. More specifically, they are authorized to advise the Commission on matters of their state's concern in the preparation of Commission reports to the President and the Congress; receive reports, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals, public officials, and representatives of public and private organizations to committee inquiries; forward advice and recommendations to the Commission, as requested; and observe any open hearing or conference conducted by the Commission in their states.

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Indiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

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Executive Summary

Americans of all backgrounds reacted with shock and grief to the events of September 11, 2001. For people of Islamic faith and those of Middle Eastern ethnicity, the day also ushered in fear of reprisal. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights responded to mounting reports of retaliation by asking its state advisory committees to examine local civil rights conditions in the weeks and months after the attacks. Through briefings and community forums, the committees documented widespread backlash against Muslims and Arab Americans, and those perceived to be. For simply sharing a similar appearance or a cultural or religious background with the 19 hijackers, many people became victims of harassment and intimidation; some were physically assaulted, even murdered. Their homes, businesses, and mosques were vandalized; and they faced increased discrimination in workplaces, schools, and other areas of public life. As complaints of retaliation and discrimination subsided, civil liberties concerns grew as the government implemented antiterrorism legislation that seemed to affect people of Arab ancestry more than any other group.

On May 30, 2002, the Commission's Indiana Advisory Committee held a briefing to collect information on the civil rights implications of September 11, with an emphasis on assessing the status of Islam. Six panelists spoke before the Committee: Kevin Jaques, a professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington; David Shaheed, a judge with Marion County Superior Courts; Michael Saahir, imam of the Nur-Allah Islamic Center; Rafia Syeed, founder of the faith-based initiative Bridging the Gap; Syeed Mohammed Ali, a longtime resident of Indianapolis; and Dr. Shahid Athar, president of the Islamic Medical Association and past president of the Islamic Society of Greater Indianapolis. Panelists discussed the tenets of Islam, retaliatory acts against Muslims and Arab Americans in Indiana and ways to curb backlash through education, civil liberties concerns stemming from the war on terror, and acts of support Muslims received from the Indiana community. The full transcript of the briefing follows this summary.

Islam 101

September 11 highlighted how little most Americans know about Islam, provoking a flurry of public discussion on the rapidly growing religion. When knowledge of Islam is limited, assertions that it is an inherently violent religion are sometimes accepted as fact. And when all Muslims are viewed as a threat or somehow responsible for September 11, civil rights abuses against them become more likely. Illuminating the differences between the views of extremists and mainstream Muslims has been a goal of many since the attacks.

Kevin Jaques, a professor of Islamic studies at Indiana University, Bloomington, opened up the Advisory Committee briefing with an overview of the history and central ideas of Islam. He began by defining basic terms essential to any discussion on the religion and describing the Quran, the 6,000-versed Islamic holy book. He traced the evolution of the different schools of Islam and discussed the roots and principles of Islamic fundamentalism.

Worldwide there are between 1.2 billion and 1.5 billion Muslims, about one in five people. Although Islam is often associated almost exclusively with the Middle East, in reality Arabs make up fewer than 20 percent of all Muslims. Indonesia has the largest Muslim community (160 million). And African countries and South Asian countries such as Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh are home to nearly half the world's Muslim population. Muslims also constitute a sizable minority in the United States and many Western European countries. Professor Jaques estimated that there are between 6 million and 8 million Muslims living in the United States. About half are African Americans, many who converted to Islam since the 1970s.

Post-9/11 Backlash and Expressions of Support

The September 11 backlash in Indiana has taken many forms. One of the most publicized incidents occurred three days after the attacks, when a 28-year-old man repeatedly rammed his car into an Evansville Islamic Center. He reportedly told police that he was "getting the Muslims back" for "what they did." A Hindu man in Bloomington was beaten up, presumably because he was mistaken for a Muslim, and at a bus stop a Muslim woman wearing a traditional headscarf was punched by a man who asked, "Where are you going? To mosque, bombing classes?" Other incidents the panelists described were less overtly violent, but nonetheless threatening. For example, Professor Jaques said many students in his Islamic studies class had received hate mail. One student, a member of the Muslim Students Association, received so many death threats via e-mail that he disregarded them, deleting the e-mails without providing copies to officials. Professor Jaques lamented that the student had concluded, "It's common life. I've come to realize that if you want to be publicly active as a Muslim in America, you're just going to have to expect that." The scope of the backlash may be wider than acknowledged. Because Muslims and Arab Americans—especially recent immigrants—are often reluctant to file complaints, Professor Jaques estimated that at least five times more backlash incidents have occurred than have been reported.

Some panelists experienced the backlash firsthand. One Friday, in the parking lot of Imam Saahir's mosque, tires were slashed on about 10 cars, forcing the mosque to hire security. Judge Shaheed said someone had called him "Taliban" at a gathering after the attacks, while Dr. Athar's medical practice received a call asking, "Is this bin Laden's office?" and another threatening to bomb the building. He also received several hate-filled e-mails, copies of which he provided to the Advisory Committee. Most were to the point: "We do not want you in our country. Your religion is full of hate and violence." "Are my children safe having you in American [sic]? NO! Leave and go back to your great [I]slamic society." Professor Jaques received an e-mail that read, "All Muslims are killers, and you're going to get what you deserve."

Despite these events, panelists emphasized the support they received from the Indiana community. Judge Shaheed told the Committee, "These [hate] incidents were limited and merely a trifling annoyance compared to the outpouring of concern by leaders of government and the faith communities to see that Muslims and people of Middle-Eastern appearance were not unjustly targeted for abuse and attack." After September 11, figures from all over the political spectrum denounced the scapegoating of Muslims and Arab Americans. Judge Shaheed noted that Indiana's senators, representatives, and local officials held press conferences urging residents not to retaliate and met with Muslims to convey a commitment to protecting their rights. Members of Christian congregations visited mosques to show their concern about places of worship being vandalized. Christian and Jewish women accom-

panied Muslim women to stores so they could shop without feeling threatened. Although Dr. Athar received five or six hateful e-mails after the attacks, he received 60 e-mails and letters of support.

Civil Liberties Concerns

Bias-motivated attacks against Muslims started to taper off eight weeks after September 11, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations. But concerns that the government was compromising civil liberties in its war on terror persisted. Panelists feared that Muslims and Arab Americans would be the primary groups forced to sacrifice their rights. Judge Shaheed said, "As the FBI, CIA, and other federal and state agencies direct their energies to the war on terror, the concern of many Muslims and Arab Americans is: 'What is the face of this enemy?' Just as the 'war on drugs' raised concerns about profiling, this 'war on terrorism' has the same potential."

To counter further terrorist attacks, the government has implemented legislation such as the USA Patriot Act and refocused law enforcement efforts. At Indiana University, Bloomington, some students were hesitant to use e-mail or the Internet because one provision of the Patriot Act gives the federal government greater authority to track and intercept communications. "It's just assumed that, for many of the students that I've talked to, that their e-mails are being read, and so they're very, very careful and paranoid about going to Islamic sites in general," Professor Jaques said. He also related the case of a Pakistani student who was questioned by the FBI several times after September 11—one of the thousands of Muslim men the agency interviewed.

Dispelling Misconceptions About Islam

Educating people about Muslims and Islam is a key to stemming post-September 11 backlash and ensuring that Muslims are accepted into American communities. The panelists at the Advisory Committee's briefing had spoken at dozens of similar events since the attacks. One panelist, Dr. Athar, had already made more than 40 presentations on Islam-related issues. Several noted that their job of educating the public is made more difficult by media outlets that perpetuate the myth that Islam is a violent religion.

Only weeks before the terrorist attacks, Rafia Syeed created the nonprofit, faith-based initiative Bridging the Gap to help diminish misunderstanding about Islam. Her first interfaith forum was held a week after September 11. Since then, the organization has hosted three forums with Christian and Jewish leaders, providing a platform for interfaith dialogue. Ms. Syeed has also visited numerous schools and churches, fielding questions about Islam from non-Muslims and sharing passages from the Quran that promote peace. Ms. Syeed aims to educate people on such issues as the tenets of Islam, similarities among Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, the status of women in Muslim societies, and how terrorism contradicts the religion's peaceful foundations.

There is concern, however, that interest in learning about Islam may be waning. Immediately after September 11, enrollment in Professor Jaques' Islamic studies classes spiked as students scrambled to discover more about the religion. In the ensuing months, however, enrollment dropped off significantly. "One of the theories is that people are just tired of hearing about Islam, but the other view is that people have made up their mind about what Islam is, and there's really no reason to take classes on it now. They've got a fixed view, which unfortunately tends to be a negative view," he said.

Public forums on Islam and the status of Muslims in America continue a year after the attacks. As the Council on American-Islamic Relations noted in its September 11 anniversary report, "Interfaith communication has now become part and parcel of ordinary Muslim activity, even in communities where such functions had not even been considered in the past." And as Dr. Athar concluded, "If something good can come out of September 11 it is that now we are talking." Many are realizing that September 11 was also an attack on Muslims and Arab Americans, who have paid a high price for the actions of a few.

Proceedings

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. I would like to reconvene the Indiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and I'd like to start by offering apologies to our guests. We have a number of wonderful guests that are going to be making presentations for us.

I'd like to apologize to Dr. Kevin Jaques, the assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington, who will be our first speaker, for our delays, but lunch was a necessary item and we're a little late getting back, and we apologize for that, but I would like to get started and to call upon Dr. Jaques and ask if he would share comments with us.

The purpose of our meeting today is to receive briefings from various segments of the community on the status of Islam in our country since September 11 of 2001. So, Dr. Jaques.

**Kevin Jaques, Assistant Professor,
Department of Religious Studies at Indiana
University, Bloomington**

DR. JQUES. Thank you. I was asked originally to present some general information about the history of Islam, sort of what the central ideas of Islam are, and then an overview of Islam in America. Some of this might go a little far a field of what you have just originally outlined here for what your goals are, so I'll try to rein it in as much as possible.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Well, it would be helpful for us to have a good background as a starting point for receiving the rest of the briefings that we will have.

DR. JQUES. Okay. The first thing that I'd like to emphasize for people is that Islam is an incredibly diverse religious tradition. Currently, there are between 1.2 and 1.5 billion Muslims in

the world that range from virtually every ethnic group that one can find on the face of the planet.

The Muslim world itself, the so-called Muslim world that is made up of countries that are majority Muslim, stretch from Morocco in the west all the way to Indonesia in the east. It is a tradition that, while having its roots in the Middle East, is now made up—the majority of Muslims are no longer Arabs; they are South Asians and Southeast Asians. The world's largest Muslim country is Indonesia. And in many ways, the directions that the Muslim world looks for new intellectual ideas and for a growing view and perspective on the changing world is not the Middle East, but in many ways is the United States and the Muslim community in the United States, which, because of freedom of speech and freedom of religion in the United States, Muslim intellectuals have been drifting towards over the last 20 years.

And so, the context of what you're looking at not only has import for the status of Islam in America, but it has implications for the status of Islam around the world, because, as I say, the discourse about what Islam will be over the course of the next century or so is taking place here in ways that it's not taking place in other places, and to the extent that that discourse is hampered or suppressed because of negative public reactions will have ripple effects throughout the entire Islamic world.

I want to talk a little bit about basic terms, so that everybody knows when they use a term, exactly what that means, and the most fundamental one is the word "Islam." The word "Islam" means submission, and a Muslim is one who submits, and what a Muslim submits to is the will of God. And the will of God is understood in two senses. It's understood, as one, this sort of preordained force in history, where what God wants will happen and there's no way to change

the course of history because God creates all things. The other is even a more fundamental issue for Muslims, particularly in how Muslims live their daily life, and that is that the will of God is understood to be composed of a very complex set of rules that dictates how Muslims live in virtually every phase of their life, from birth until death. And one of the key issues that Muslims have always dealt with in the history of Islam is how to interpret those rules. How is it that Muslims are supposed to submit to the will of God and conform to what God wants them to do, and who has the right to articulate what those rules are?

Ultimately the rules are thought to reside, at least by implication, in the text of Revelation, in the primary text of Revelation is, of course, the Quran. The Quran is for those of you who have never seen a Quran, the Quran is a fairly brief book. It has 114 chapters, approximately 6,242 verses. It was revealed, according to Muslim belief, to the prophet Muhammad between 610 and 632 C.E., up until just a few months before he died, and it characterizes itself as the final revelation from God that was sent to guide the previous revelatory traditions back onto the right path, and the revelatory traditions that it is most concerned with is Judaism and Christianity.

God, or Allah in Islam—the word “Allah” simply means “the God,” and the God that Muslims refer to is the God of Abraham and the God of Moses and the God of Jesus, and Islam sees itself—and in most ways it’s very true—that it’s part of this larger Judeo-Christian ethic that is so important for the West. Islam sees itself as being part of this tradition, not something that is exterior to it. It’s not an Eastern religion. It’s a Western religion. It’s very much a part of the development of Western culture and Western ideas.

The Quran deals with a large number of issues. Most of the Quran is taken up with talking about and retelling stories that one finds in the Hebrew Bible, and to a certain extent in the New Testament, but it addresses more stories from the Hebrew Bible. And very little of the Quran—of the 6,000-plus verses of the Quran, only about 500 deal with rules, with how it is people are

supposed to live. And so, very early on, Muslims decided they had to have some other source for knowing what they were supposed to do. If God has this complex system of rules that people are supposed to follow, there must be some other way to find them than just these 500 verses.

And very early on, Muslims came to believe that the prophet Muhammad himself was, in a sense, living revelation; that in Islam, all prophets, not just Muhammad, are protected by error from God. God puts a cloak over them that prevents them from making mistakes in matters of religion. So, what they do becomes an example of what God wants humans to do. And so, his example, or what’s referred to as his Sunnah, becomes the other source of revelation for Muslims, that they can look at and figure out what they’re supposed to do. And this is much larger, numbering—in terms of citations about what it is Muhammad said and did, numbering in the thousands.

The problem the Muslims quickly confronted, and it’s a major problem in terms of Islam today, particularly Islam in a context like America that’s so foreign to Arabia in the 7th century, is that as times change and as Muslims go to other places, the way people live simply doesn’t reflect everything that happened in Mecca and in Medina and Western Arabia during that 23-year period that Muhammad was—during his revelatory mission. And so, a class of Muslim intellectuals that are known as the fuqaha, the jurists, developed methods of interpreting Quran and the Sunnah so that these could be made applicable to changing cultural circumstances, so that whether it’s in Arabia or whether it’s Indonesia or whether it’s Indianapolis, the Quran and the Sunnah can have importance for how it is people are supposed to live.

Because much of this is dependent on individual applications of reason and methods of interpretation, over time there developed great diversity in how Muslims interpret what it is they’re supposed to do. This diversity was controlled to a certain amount by the development of four central schools of law, in Sunni Islam, Sunnis being the majority of Muslims, being

about 90 percent of Muslims today. The remaining approximately 10 percent are Shiite Muslims, which are found primarily in Iran and part of South Asia. These four schools developed methods of interpreting the Quran and the Sunnah so that the diversity that could have come out of that was squelched to a certain extent. There's still local variations, even within these four schools, but the diversity is somewhat controlled by the fact that there are certain methods of interpreting the will of God that are fixed, according to these schools.

Starting roughly in the 14th century, and then in full in the 18th century, there began to be a countertradition that developed in Islam that said that the authority of these four schools was un-Islamic; that each individual had the ability to interpret the will of God on their own. As long as they could read Arabic, they could turn to the Quran and they could turn to the Sunnah and figure out what God wanted them to do on their own, and they didn't need authorities telling them how to understand the will of God.

And out of this movement comes two modern movements. You have the Modernist Movement, which began in its contemporary phase in Egypt in the late 19th and the early 20th century by the Egyptian thinker Muhammad Abdul, and it's—you see a lot of Modernist ideas in the United States. It depends on a strong application of individual reason to knowing what it is you're supposed to do, and focuses most heavily on looking at the Quran and the spirit of the Quran to guide Muslim actions, and it's a very liberal view of Islam. The other side of this is Islamic revivalism, or what's known as Islamic fundamentalism, where revivalists want to—they think the only way to interpret the Quran and the Sunnah is to intellectually step back into time, to the time that the prophet and his companions lived, and they seek to create in their minds and seek to create in the real world a society that, in their opinion, reflects that time of the prophet.

One of the problems with this is that it tends to look very much like traditional culture no matter where you find it. People in Afghanistan want that picture of the prophet's life to look like

traditional Afghani culture. In Indonesia, they tend to want to have it look like what they picture Arabia to look like through an Indonesian lens, and so it's very much controlled by local culture. And the people who planned the September 11 attacks and things like this come out of this tradition.

And this leads to one other term that I think is important for people to have an idea about, and that's this term of *fatwa*, or these legal edicts that people always hear about. People issue *fatwas* and everybody's supposed to follow them. A *fatwa* is a nonbinding legal opinion that technically only a jurist who's been trained in law and legal interpretation has the right to issue. No one's required to follow them. Matter of fact, if you go to a jurist and you ask for an opinion and you don't like that jurist's opinion, you can go to another jurist, and you keep going to jurists until you find an opinion that works for you, and if a qualified jurist articulates those opinions, so you go to five different jurists and five different jurists give you five different opinions, under Islamic law, each one of those opinions is correct because only God knows the truth. And so, therefore, as long as there's the effort made to discover the truth, everybody is technically right, is technically correct. So therefore, this is one of the ways that they've been able to get past the diversity in legal opinion and create—or try to reduce the amount of problems that comes out of legal diversity.

What revivalists have tried to do is say, "No, there's only one way to know the truth, and that's my way of knowing the truth," and it has cut against the—I don't want to say all revivalists. Certain—particularly the violent revivalists, there's a huge revivalist movement out there in the world that's particularly strong in the United States that's not violent in the least. It's simply a more conservative view of Islam that focuses on individual responsibility. So, I don't want to lump all revivalists together, but violent revivalists tend to say, "There's one view, and that's my view, and you have to follow it because I speak for God," and this is completely against

the tradition as it's been developed over 1,300 years.

How all of this plays out in America is very interesting. Currently in the United States, there are roughly between 6 and 8 million Muslims. We really don't have any good statistics. This is one of the problems with studying Islam in America is that most of the statistics we have are horrible. They're outdated, and those that were made tend to be very inaccurate because it's next to impossible to identify who a Muslim is. Anyone around this table could be a Muslim, and no one would be able to know. Muslims don't tend to have particular kinds of names. Now, if you're very familiar with a particular country, you can see a name and say, "Okay. Well, this guy's probably Muslim," based on the name. But you can't go simply by Arabic names, for instance, because there are a lot of Arab Christians in the United States, and so if you base it off Arabic names, you're going to get far too many people, because the majority of Arabs in the United States are Christian; they're not Muslim, and so it would tend to throw off your polling. And so, what they've mostly done is they've tried to guess, based on self-identification and based on the number of mosques in certain areas, which is another problem, that you really never know how many mosques there are in a place because sometimes mosques are miscounted and different groups have tried to count mosques, and then they will count student organizations as mosques, and that throws off the number.

So, it's hard to tell exactly how many Muslims there are, but there are probably 6 to 8 million, half of whom are African American Muslims. The majority of those folks converted to Islam since the 1970s. After that are Arab American Muslims, some of whom have been here since the 1980s, and they account for roughly 20 percent of the Muslim population. After that are South Asia Muslims, from Pakistan and from India, who account for somewhere around 10 percent. The majority of these Muslims—their families, anyway—came to the United States beginning in—after World War II, often for education in technical sciences, and

many of whom decided to stay because they could get better paying jobs here than they could if they went home.

And in many ways, South Asian Muslims are forming the intellectual core of Islam in America. In the 1960s, predominantly South Asian Muslims formed the Muslim Students Association that started in Illinois and Indiana, that now is probably one of the largest and well-organized Muslim organizations in the world. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, as these folks graduated from college, they founded the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), which is the sort of umbrella group for a number of Muslim professional organizations, including the Society for Muslim Social Science—Scientists and the Islamic—North American Islamic Trust and different organizations like this. To a certain extent, ISNA has tried to foster Muslim community development and has, since September 11, been a lightning rod for trying to get Muslims to talk to the government and to communicate with government about their grievances and about their concerns. And I don't know if you have any representatives from ISNA here today, but it would be—they're based here in Plainfield, Indiana, and they would definitely be an important group for your organization to communicate with, because they have become one of the really important organizing groups in the United States, not just in the Midwest, but across the United States.

Another group, the Islamic Circle of North America, which is more Pakistani oriented and less well organized than ISNA, has also been involved in trying to get Muslims to communicate concerns about the way that things have happened since September 11. Among the African American community, the largest group is the Muslim American Society [MAS], that was founded in—it was reorganized with that name, I believe, in the early 1990s by Worth Deen Mohammed, Elijah Mohammed's son. When Elijah Mohammed died in 1975, Worth Deen Mohammed began a process of leading his followers out of the Nation of Islam and into Sunni Islam, which was, by and large, completed by the early 1980s. Louis Farrakhan restarted the Nation of

Islam several years after that, and so the majority of MAS participants were formerly members of the Nation of Islam, that have now moved into Sunni Islam since the 1970s. And the MAS, I know, has been very active in trying to get Muslims to participate in American society, both economically and through voting and other avenues.

One of the things that I think is important for people to understand about trying to communicate with the Muslim community in general about issues of civil rights and things like this is that for many Muslim immigrants who come here, they come from societies where they don't have any avenues for political participation. Many people, especially fairly recent immigrants, are frequently afraid of government, and if someone comes knocking on the door, they're running the other way because it's not a good sign. And so, when things happen to them, they are very reticent to talk with anybody in an official capacity.

I had a student at IU from South Asia who has been here two or three years, and at a dining hall—this was about a week after September 11—students started pelting him with breadsticks and harassing him, and he didn't know what to do. He came to me and said, "Well, you know, I don't know how to handle this. I've never experienced this before." And he did not want to talk with any kind of governmental organization or anybody on campus—any authority on campus about what happened. And so, what I decided to do is to refer him to the Black Student Union, who has had a history of having to deal with discrimination issues and things like this, and he talked to them, and they talked about strategies about how to deal with discrimination and things like this.

And that might be one thing that your group may want to consider in terms of talking with Muslims, is that trying to—and this is another thing that happens in the American Muslim community in general. Because it is so diverse, different Muslims populations of different demographics tend not to talk to other Muslim demographics. So, African American Muslims deal with the September 11 attacks in a different

way than Pakistani or South Asian Muslims, because their history of knowing how to deal with these things is vastly different. And there has been some outreach between different ethnic groups within the Muslim community, but not a whole lot. It still tends to be—especially when things like this happen, people, instead of bonding together as—Muslims tend to bond together as they're ethnic groups, and that, to a certain extent, reinforces the ideas that there is no one to talk to and there is no greater outreach when things happen.

If you have any questions—

MR. GRADISON. Yeah. I think in our own group, we've kind of experienced that, too. The agendas are often much different, so you'll have—because Muslims represent this multiplicity of ethnic and national groups, they—first on their agenda may not be Islam; it may be their ethnic or their national boundaries. We have such a broad agenda in this group, it's tough to get good—we love to have—like in this group, for instance, we like a broad representation, too.

So, I presume that it's the same kind of problem with the Arab American community, or your experience with it, to get them to participate more in the broader issues like civil rights. It's something they choose not to address. They stay closer to their ethnicity and their nationality than they do their religion or—

DR. JAQUES. Well, a lot of—and for all of these groups, it's dependent on a number of things. It's not just ethnicity, but it's how long they've been in the United States. If they're second- or third-generation persons, they are much more likely to air concerns. It tends to be new immigrants, across the board, that are more reluctant to talk about things. And consequently, because they don't know the culture as well, they tend to be more targets of harassment than other groups, because other groups, they've been here a while. If you're a second-generation American, no matter what your ethnicity is, you know the lay of the land much better than if you've been here a year or six months. And so, people know, "Well, I don't go to that place at a certain time," or "I don't go to that part of

town,” where new people just don’t tend to know that, and so that’s another issue. It’s not just ethnicity; it’s how recent people are here, what kind of things they experienced in their countries of origin before they came here, which can be different depending on economics and things like that as well.

But you’re absolutely right; trying to find a representative cross-section of Muslims, even in Indiana, to come together all at one time is very difficult to do, simply—it depends on where you go. If you were to go to someplace like Bloomington and go to their mosque on a Friday, you’d see a multiplicity of different people there. Would you get very many people to talk to you afterwards? Probably not, simply because of cultural biases against talking with people that come from the government, and—because that’s a big issue. But that’s very hard to get people to come out from different groups, and it has nothing to do with ethnicity; it just has to do with views on society and views on government and things like that.

MR. GRADISON. So, it may not be very good reporting as to incidents of discrimination, action, whatever it—

DR. JAQUES. No, it’s—

MR. GRADISON. It’s just not good reporting.

DR. JAQUES. Yeah. I would say a conservative estimate would be at least five times more incidents have occurred than have been reported. I know personally at IU, which is a very small community, of far more incidents that I’ve been told about than were reported to university officials, some of which were fairly serious and some of which would not be considered as serious.

But all—and I keep telling people—all things need to be reported. But the fear is, “Well, if I report it, then I’m going to get attention and I don’t want attention, I just want to get along,” and so they tend just to put it off and put it to the side. But I would say at least five times, and that could be conservative.

MR. GRADISON. It doesn’t make it much different from anybody else.

DR. JAQUES. I’m sorry?

MR. GRADISON. It doesn’t make it much different from any other—

DR. JAQUES. No, it doesn’t.

MR. GRADISON.—group.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. For those that do find the courage to interact with some authoritative figure and make some kind of formal report, are they feeling a sense of responsiveness and satisfaction from that interaction, or just more frustration and—

DR. JAQUES. It depends. The student that I had that was pelted with breadsticks, he didn’t report it, and then about, oh, two months later, the FBI came, because he’s a Pakistani national, and the FBI came and knocked on his door to ask him questions, and they came several times after that, and it was all very—from his way of interpreting it, it was a very upsetting experience.

There was no—of course, I wouldn’t expect—there was not advance warning; they would just show up. And no matter what he was doing, he had to answer their questions right then. There was always, in his mind, the implicit threat that if he didn’t cooperate, or didn’t cooperate the way that they wanted, he could be kicked out of the country or taken to jail, and then what would he do? There was no one he could turn to in that situation.

So, he’s more naked to governmental power, from his point of view, than he would be if he was in Pakistan, because at least in Pakistan he has family. Here, he’s by himself; he doesn’t have anyone else, and so he feels even greater pressure and greater fear of the government because of that. And each time it was over, there were very ominous things, you know, “Tell all your friends we’re coming to talk to them, too,” and “We’ll be back,” and things like this, and it was just a horrible situation for him.

For those people who have reported it that I’ve talked to, sometimes it’s responsive, sometimes it’s not responsive. I only have been told of one case out of about 20 or 25 that I know were reported, where the police followed-up with them afterwards, and this was a Maliay student who was actually beaten at a bus stop as she

was trying to get on a bus. This guy—if I recall this correctly, this man got off the bus, punched her, and said, “Where are you going; to mosque, to bomb classes or bombing classes?” or something like that, and she was simply wearing *hijab*, the head covering. And he was never apprehended, and she reported it to the police, and the police did follow-up with her later to say, “We don’t have any suspects.” And outside of that, that’s the only incident that I know for a fact there was follow-up afterwards. So, by and large, they tend not to be terribly positive experiences in terms of reporting. The police were generally nice, I was told, but they weren’t terribly responsive afterwards.

MS. BRITA. Has there been a change? Have you seen a more thorough inspection of student visas and things like this at IU since September 11?

DR. JAQUES. Well, the administration says that they are—

MS. BRITA. Uh-huh.

DR. JAQUES.—and that student files are being looked over to make sure the students that are enrolled are actually attending and things like this. There’s a general fear among, not in this—not in any Muslim students, this is just students from South Asia.

I know of a number of Hindu students who have been placed under the same scrutiny simply because they have the name and they have the look, and one student said that he was going to get a T-shirt printed up saying, “I’m not Muslim. Don’t bother me,” because everywhere he would go, he would get harassed, and he was not Muslim.

And so, in general, whether or not there has been an increase in scrutiny, students certainly feel that there has. One of the things that people are particularly paranoid about is e-mail and any kind of telephone communication or anything like that. It’s just assumed that, for many of the students that I’ve talked to, that their e-mails are being read, and so they’re very, very careful and paranoid about going to Islamic sites in general.

The raid of these different financial organizations have made many Muslims that I’ve talked

to uncomfortable, because people donate money because they’re charitable organizations. They don’t expect, when they donate money to some organization, that they’re funding any kind of terrorist thing at all, and they’re terrified that because they’ve donated money, or they might have donated money, because often you put money in a box and you really don’t know where the money is going that the government’s going to put A, B, and C together and come knock on their door and say, “Well, since you’ve donated money, you’re in collusion here.”

And I’ve had several students come to me who are new to the country, saying, “Well, can they do that?” And I have to say, frankly, “I don’t know. I have no idea whether they can do that. I’m not an attorney.” And so there’s a general fear on that. And I know of a number of students who left since September 11, simply because the fear and the concern has just been too great, it’s just—it’s been too hard.

I have two students from—who are twins, from Malaysia, who shared with me an e-mail from their father, where he encouraged them to come home; that he said, “Well, I told you before you went, America was a violent place. They shoot people in the streets there, and I want you to come home now, because it’s just not safe.”

And after September 11, a large number of Muslims stayed in their dorms; they didn’t go to classes. And I actually told several students who contacted me, “If you feel concerned, stay in your dorm, don’t go out,” because there were beatings and there were various attacks, and it was a very bad situation. And it’s gotten better, for the most part.

Just something that happened to me just at the end of the semester. I teach a course on Islamic law and theology, and our final project was to look at suicide bombings, and it required students to role-play both sides, those that say it’s permissible and those that say it’s not, and to use the Quran and the Sunnah to figure out their positions. And a number of Muslim students in the class got hate mail as a result of that, that was reported to IU, and IU said, “Well, we can’t do

anything about it, because we've traced it to some server, but we can't really go past that server, so sorry." And then I got the hate mail, and then one of my colleagues in the department who does Jewish studies got the hate mail too, and so we were completely confused as to why we got hate mail. But it was just sort of this general, you know, "All Muslims are killers, and you're going to get what you deserve," and stuff like this. And a friend of mine who—a student that I've become friendly with over the course of the year that I've been at IU got an e-mail and I said, "Well, can you send me a copy of it?" And he said, "No, I don't have it. I deleted it," and I said, "Didn't it strike you as odd?" He said, "Since September 11, I get at least one hate mail a week from someone threatening to kill me." He says, "I just disregard them now." And he's a Muslim. He's active on campus with the Muslim Students Union, Muslim Students Association. He makes a lot of public presentations about Islam. He's the most gentle, sweetest person you'd ever meet, but he said, "You know, I get so much hate mail now I just disregard it," and it just doesn't seem to phase him anymore. And that's a shocking thing that you can get one e-mail a week where someone's threatening to kill you, and you just don't think anything of it anymore. Because I was petrified when I saw this thing, because it was a pretty vile note, and he said, "Yeah, it's common life." He says—and this was his quote—"I've come to realize that if you want to be publicly active as a Muslim in America, you're just going to have to expect that," and that, for me, was a horrible statement.

MS. BRITA. Yeah, yeah. Again, we were talking this morning that education is critical.

DR. JAQUES. Yeah.

MS. BRITA. It really is.

DR. JAQUES. And that's part of the bad thing that's come out of this. I teach a number of courses on, as I say, law and theology, and a number of other courses, and enrollment for my courses is slowly starting to decline. After September 11, right after that happened, students were trying to get into my class. They wanted to know about it. And in the fall, it was pretty high.

But my classes and the classes that are offered in the Near Eastern Languages and Cultures Department for Islam have seriously dropped off in attendance, and one of the theories is that people are just tired of hearing about Islam, but the other view is that people have made up their mind about what Islam is, and there's really no reason to take classes on it now. They've got a fixed view, which unfortunately tends to be a negative view. And there's no reason to take courses about Islam.

MS. BRITA. Do you think there's a fear; they have a fear of having that on their transcript, that they took an Islamic course?

DR. JAQUES. A fear from who, Muslims or non-Muslims?

MS. BRITA. Non-Muslims, government officials who may see that they took courses.

DR. JAQUES. No, I don't—

MS. BRITA. You don't think so?

DR. JAQUES. No. I think there's more a fear, frankly, from Muslim students I've talked to, that they would have courses in Islam on their transcripts—

MS. BRITA. Yeah.

DR. JAQUES.—for fear that, "Oh, well, you know, what did you do in America? You took all of these courses on Islam," and they're, I think, more concerned than non-Muslims.

MS. BRITA. All right. I understand that.

DR. JAQUES. I just think, for the average non-Muslim student at a state university—and this is from participating in public forums over the last six months and things like this, and seeing how the discourse has changed—the discourse immediately after September 11 was shockingly open and loving. There were hundreds of people that would fill a hall to say, "We stand with the Muslims and we understand this does not represent you." Those people have all drifted away.

And the people that tend to come to these things now tend to be very negative, and it's—you know, it's "America versus Islam," and things like this.

And I think there—as I say, there's been a hardening of views, and the kind of openness that happened immediately after September 11,

maybe that a phantom, or maybe, in the—since there's been so much attention, often negative, from outlets like the 700 Club, which I don't know if you've seen this, but on Pat Robertson's program, there's almost a nightly thing on Islam, and it's always some of the most hateful stuff that you'd expect to hear, and it's helping cement in people's minds a view of Islam that is historically inaccurate and theologically inaccurate. And so, people think, "Well, I don't need to take courses." And that's where this idea of education is running into rough water because there's been so much exposure, much of it incorrect.

MS. BRITA. What were the demographics of your class prior to September 11?

DR. JAQUES. My intro to Islam class was—in terms of Muslim/non-Muslim?

MS. BRITA. Uh-huh.

DR. JAQUES. Approximately 12 to 15 percent Muslim, and the rest were non-Muslim.

MR. GRADISON. Twelve to 15?

DR. JAQUES. Twelve to 15 percent, yeah, which is actually quite a few, when you think in terms of demographics overall at IU. My spring classes on Islam, it was overwhelmingly Muslim, and probably 50 percent Muslim, 50 percent non-Muslim.

And judging from people who I've talked to, who I know have signed up for the class, my classes for the fall, it's, you know, running about that now, and that's why that we—my classes are enrolling low is because a large number of the non-Muslims simply aren't taking the class.

MS. BRITA. Uh-huh, or have gotten—

DR. JAQUES. It could be just because I'm a bad teacher. You never know.

[Laughter.]

DR. JAQUES. I don't want to read too much into it.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Dr. Jaques, in some of your conversations with your colleagues, or perhaps even in our class, in the study that you're conducting, have there been opportunities to compare and contrast the doctrines or philosophies of the revivalist to those of the Christian fundamentalist?

DR. JAQUES. To a certain extent, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Are there similarities? Disparities? Significant disparities?

DR. JAQUES. There are similarities between Islamic fundamentalists and Christian fundamentalists on some levels. In terms of sort of cultural policy levels, both groups tend to be very much sort of independent business, "Don't tax me. Leave me alone," that type of thing.

As I said, there's—within Islamic revivalism, there's a vast majority of revivalists that are nonviolent. They want to form in a cohesive Muslim community that's based on certain doctrinal ideas, and there's only a fringe that's violent. And so, in the vast majority of revivalists, these nonviolent revivalists, there tends to be, in terms of ideas about how culture should run. There are several strong similarities between Christian fundamentalists and Islamic fundamentalists—or revivalists is probably the better term.

Of course, they break down over theological issues and things like this, but in terms of sort of policy, public policy, how-do-you-live-in public-life issues, particularly among American Muslim revivalists who have been in the country or they're second- or third-generation Americans, there tends to be very strong similarities in terms of a conservative voting record, political participation, things like this. For the last presidential elections, a very large Muslim organization in the United States came out and endorsed the Republican ticket, to the consternation of a lot of other Muslims; that they were going out and saying, "Vote Republican." But it's not really a surprise, because conservative religious views tend to be similar in that there's certain views on life and certain views on the role of citizens in society that tends to cut across the board, that you find both in Christian fundamentalists and in Muslim fundamentalists or revivalists.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Do we have any other questions?

MS. BRITA. No, but this has really been interesting.

MR. GRADISON. I just have a comment. It does seem curious that you have some of these Christian fundamentalists saying awful things

about Muslims fundamentalists and they would characterize them, and they've got all of these things in common. You know, it—

DR. JAQUES. Well, where it breaks down between Christian fundamentalists and Muslim revivalists is over the issue of Israel and over the issue of Jerusalem in particular. I'm not a specialist in Christian fundamentalism, so what I say here has to be understood in the light of classes that I took as a doctoral student, not in terms of much more knowledge than that. Christian fundamentalists see the issue of Israel in terms—in eschatological terms, of the return of Jesus, and Israel must win and the temple must be rebuilt in order for Jesus to return. Muslim revivalists see it very differently. Eschatological notion for Muslim revivalists in terms of Israel. It's an issue of Muslim rights over a holy place, and so the reason that many Christian fundamentalists have not been able to see the similarities with Muslims is because of this issue of Palestine.

There's actually a group of conservative Christian scholars of Islam who are attempting to bring together Muslim revivalists and Christian fundamentalists to talk so that they can see what their similarities are, so they can form a more cohesive political and social agenda in the United States. And they're trying to get them to get past the issue of Jerusalem, because that's the main area where they break down, and they just can't have any kind of discussion past that.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Well, we would certainly like to thank you, Doctor.

MR. GRADISON. Thank you very much.

MS. BRITA. Yes, thank you.

DR. JAQUES. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES.—your presentation. It's been helpful to give us some background information, help us to better understand. It leaves us with lots of questions, and maybe we'll have an opportunity to visit with you in Bloomington and take some more of your valuable time.

DR. JAQUES. Well, I would welcome the opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Thank you very much.

MS. BRITA. Thank you.

MR. GRADISON. Thank you. I thought it was very knowledgeable to listen to you for 15 minutes and find out what little I really knew about it.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. At this point, we'd like to ask if Judge David Shaheed—

JUDGE SHAHEED. Shaheed, yes.

MR. GRADISON. I know how to pronounce that name.

JUDGE SHAHEED. Yeah. Mike, how are you?

MR. TAYLOR. How are you doing?

MR. GRADISON. I—

MR. TAYLOR. He was my mentor when he was in college.

JUDGE SHAHEED. I brought some copies of my remarks.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Okay.

JUDGE SHAHEED. I don't—I may have enough almost to go around.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Before you start with your remarks, I neglected with our last guest—I was to allow—since we know who you are, perhaps—

JUDGE SHAHEED. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. It's only fair that we sort of quickly go around the room and identify ourselves and the communities that we come from so that you can forget us just as quickly—

JUDGE SHAHEED. Okay. A couple I have the good fortune to know.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Yeah. My name is Hollis Hughes, and I reside in South Bend, Indiana.

JUDGE SHAHEED. Okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Michael?

MR. TAYLOR. Sidney—the Judge, he—

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Well, there are other people that need to hear, so—

MR. TAYLOR. Oh, okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES.—I don't have to do this again.

MR. GRADISON. I'm Michael Gradison, from Indianapolis.

MR. TAYLOR. Sidney Taylor, Indianapolis.

MR. BECERRA. Frank Becerra, banker, Merrillville, Indiana.

MS. BRITA. Kathy Brita, teacher, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

MS. DAVIS. I'm Constance Davis, the regional director for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. And we have several members that are absent today, so we generally have a little larger group than we have today. Your Honor?

David Shaheed, Judge, Marion County Superior Courts

JUDGE SHAHEED. Okay. Well, to the members of the committee, it's an honor to have this opportunity to share some thoughts with you this afternoon. There are several incidents in Indiana since September the 11th of 2001 which I believe should be brought to the attention of the committee, and there are also some thoughts that I have that I would like to share regarding civil liberties in the months and years ahead as we address the threats to the security of all Americans.

Regarding incidents in Indiana involving Arab Americans and Muslims since September 11, there were isolated situations where Muslims were taunted or insulted. Muslim sisters who were wearing *hijab*, or scarves, to cover their hair, were spat upon. I myself was at a gathering where someone wanted to call me Taliban instead of my name. Imam Michael Saahir, who will be making a presentation after me, will also speak of an incident which occurred at the mosque, where he is the imamal leader. These incidents were limited and merely a trifling annoyance compared to the outpouring of concern by leaders of government and the faith communities to see that Muslims and people of Middle-Eastern appearance were not unjustly targeted for abuse and attack.

Within a few weeks of the September 11 attack on our country, Indiana Senator Richard Lugar held a press conference in downtown Indianapolis to urge calm and reason in this time of crisis. He invited Muslims from central Indiana to participate in the press conference, and stated in his remarks that the conduct of the ex-

tremist did not represent or reflect true Islam. Then he met privately with those Muslims he had invited to the press conference to assure them that he wanted to maintain dialogue with the Muslim community. He also allowed those present to advise him of concerns related to the acts of individual citizens and the government against Muslims and Arab Americans.

Bart Peterson, mayor of Indianapolis, in public remarks, urged citizens of Indianapolis to avoid jumping to conclusions and targeting Muslims and others merely because of a perceived association based upon their religion or place of birth. In addition, Mayor Peterson visited the Islamic Society of North American in Plainfield during Ramadan to personally address Muslims in the Indianapolis area. He conveyed his concern for fair treatment and his commitment to the protection of all citizens in Central Indiana.

On the same evening that he was visiting the Muslims in Plainfield, Indiana, Congresswoman Julia Carson was sharing her thoughts and concerns at the Al-Fajr Mosque on the west side of Indianapolis. Muslims were also impressed when George W. Bush visited the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C., to acknowledge the virtues of the religion of Islam and his support for the Muslims who are good citizens in America. He noted that they stand with America against terrorism. President Bush also condemned the targeting of innocent Muslims and persons of Middle Eastern ancestry. Members of Christian congregations visited mosques, Islamic centers, to show their concern about their places of worship becoming the targets for vandalism and retaliatory attacks. Christian and Jewish women accompanied Muslim women to the store for them to do their shopping so that Muslim women would not feel threatened. Religious leaders locally and in other parts of the state visited Muslims to dialogue and share their faith with their congregations.

There were two incidents in Evansville, Indiana, which demonstrate the need for the proactive stance taken by religious leaders and leaders in government. On September the 14th, 2001, John Joseph Kirkwood was arrested after inten-

tionally ramming his car into the Islamic Center of Evansville. On Wednesday, May 22, 2002, Mr. Kirkwood was sentenced to four years in prison for his conduct, and I've got an attachment of the newspaper article from the *Evansville Courier* regarding that incident. On October the 11th, 2001, nine Egyptian men living in Evansville were detained, and rumors began to circulate that they were a terrorist cell connected with Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. After eight days of questioning, eight of the men were returned to their families. One of the men was deported for an alleged immigration violation.

The last incident should be analyzed more closely, because it illustrates the complexities of life in America since 9/11. First of all, the suspected terrorist cell was not discovered by the interception of wire or oral or electronic communications now permitted by the Patriot Act of 2001. It was not the fruit of a physical surveillance of people or the search of their property. The FBI was called by the wife of one of the men who was detained because she was concerned based upon certain remarks that he had made after 9/11. She was fearful that he might commit suicide because he missed his four children who were living in Egypt. She was also fearful that he might crash his car into something and hurt other people. There were also concerns about a number of overseas phone calls, and one of the men had inquired about flying lessons, and also I have a brief attachment about that as well. Eight of the men and their wives were subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury in Chicago, but instead were questioned and gave statements to the FBI in Chicago.

As the FBI, CIA, and other federal and state agencies direct their energies to the war on terror, the concern of many Muslims and Arab Americans is: "What is the face of this enemy?" Just as the "war on drugs" raised concerns about profiling, this "war on terrorism" has the same potential. On September 11, 2001, President Bush was scheduled to meet with religious and community leaders on racial profiling. So, as the boundaries and reach of the Patriot Act are explored, there should be some sensitivity to the

fact that those who are most likely to be the subject of surveillance and observation are also Americans who love this country and are equally motivated to take steps to protect themselves and others, citizens who live here.

Finally, as rumors abound concerning the threat of weapons of mass destruction getting into the hands of the terrorists who want to destroy America and the certainty of another attack like 9/11, government leaders in particular should not lose that initial compassion and concern for the Muslim and Arab Americans who are law-abiding, productive citizens of America. As a balance to this faceless enemy who threatens the security of all Americans, the leaders should continue to educate the public that the vast majority of Muslims and Arab Americans are your neighbors, co-workers, and good friends.

That's probably a little shorter than what I had time, but I think that says what I needed to say. But I'm available to answer any questions. Yes, Mike.

MR. GRADISON. Judge Shaheed, what has been your experience, your contacts in your community, and so on about the increase in incidence of either violence or intimidation or discrimination that's affected the brothers and sisters?

JUDGE SHAHEED. Well, there have been isolated incidents. I don't want to take anything away from the remarks of Imam Saahir, but we were at the mosque that we attend on the east side of Indianapolis, where he is the imam, or religious leader.

After our Juma prayers, which are on Friday, there was one incident where cars were vandalized, tires—I think there were about eight to 10 cars that—where the tires were slashed and so forth. That was probably the only specific incident of vandalism. Since that time, we have security during the time that we're at the mosque. Now, there are plenty of other cars that are in that particular area, and because the parking lot isn't large enough, a lot of the Muslims that are attending Juma use the side streets, so it may have been that people thought that they could take advantage of that opportunity to either re-

spond based upon 9/11 or just to complain because people were parking on the side streets. You know, that's not really clear.

Now, I've heard of other incidents in other parts of the country, but with respect to Indiana, I have not heard of any particular violent incidents, other than the situation in Evansville with the Islamic Center.

MR. GRADISON. Phone calls? Threats? Anecdotal—

JUDGE SHAHEED. Yeah, those kinds of things, but as the professor was saying, there's a certain amount of that which kind of goes along with being a minority in America, and so, you know, think about it.

MR. GRADISON. A minority within a minority.

JUDGE SHAHEED. Right, yes. You have to really think about those, yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Judge Shaheed, you mentioned a number of positive kinds of things that happened after September 11. Are there some other things that you think ought to be going on in the community that will help prevent future problems, or at least help maintain civility in our communities?

JUDGE SHAHEED. Well, very much so. I think now, as we drift into the sameness of the situation, where everybody understands that there's this war going on and there's this enemy out there, the big question is: What is the face of this enemy? And I think the early efforts to educate the populace in America were very positive, but we don't see that as much anymore.

I think part of that probably is due to the current flare-up with respect to the Palestinians and the Israelis. I think that has probably caused the media to drift to taking sides with respect to that conflict and looking at the broader issue of: What about the civil liberties of all of the Americans?

But I would say that one of the most important things—and I was glad to hear the professor mention this—is that there are religious leaders that continue the drumbeat of their agenda. Pat Robertson, as was mentioned, has a constant, steady drumbeat of misinformation, distortion, and attack of Islam. There's another gentleman

out in California who uses his program, his religious program, to target Islam.

And we understand that. I mean this is America. There's freedom of speech, and so these kinds of things are expected to happen. But, on the other hand, the vast majority—when you look at the population of Muslims in the world, it is over one billion. Some say about 1.3 billion, and if you would round up all of the people that supposedly were associated with al Qaeda, they wouldn't even represent a tenth of a percent of the Muslims that are in the world. And it's clear, based upon all of the intelligence stuff that I've heard, that there were no Muslims that were living in America that were involved in any of this. All of this was hatched by people outside of America.

So, in the meantime, you have Muslims that are living here, working here, going to school here, trying to live here, that are being targeted by these efforts of people who want to use this as an opportunity to launch an attack on Islam, but the government leaders for the most part, are silent. So, we all understand the impact of a constant message. If it has to do with buying burgers, buying soft drinks, buying stocks, you know, where you live, these constant themes on the consciousness of the American people eventually have an impact. It may have an impact upon how many people enroll in a class on Islam, but it also addresses attitudes that affect other aspects of people's lives in America.

So, I think it's very important that leaders, religious leaders and government leaders, recognize that the unabated and unresponded to attacks on Islam and Muslims, without any justification or authority, should probably be addressed in the same way that any slander should be addressed.

MR. TAYLOR. Do you think the situation would be worse if there was another terrorist attack?

JUDGE SHAHEED. Most certainly. And see, that's part of the concern, because the statements by Donald Rumsfeld and Mueller and the others, it's not a question of if, but when. What we have to really be on the lookout for is a nuclear or

dirty bomb, and we have to really be on the lookout for bioterrorism. And so, when they put these statements out here in the atmosphere, then five, 10 minutes, an hour, then comes Pat Robertson with his campaign, and so the context is that all of this is connected. Now, when Ashcroft makes his comments, he joins in with the conversations of the Pat Robertsons and the Reverend Prices, and that, in the minds of people who don't know anything about Islam, Muslims become the face of this.

And really the more complex issue is what motivates someone to have a diseased heart, or what is the face of a diseased heart? You know, Tim McVeigh. I mean he had a diseased view of how to achieve his ends in America. He lived here, went to school here, got all of the benefits that are—

MR. TAYLOR. Military.

JUDGE SHAHEED.—associated with America, went into the military, but his heart became diseased. And so, the commonality here is that anyone's heart can become diseased if they give themselves to the influences that caused this.

And this is not a Muslim issue. This is a humanity issue. We live in a global society, where there are people all around the world that are being influenced by various things, and to allow people to take this particular incident and make Muslims the culprits of this is the same kind of scenario that caused the President to want to have his meeting in Washington on September 11 about the profiling issue, because we know that African Americans, with the war on drugs, ended up being the face of the drug dealer. And so, when blacks were driving through New Jersey, they were more likely to be stopped, and especially if they were young black men.

The U.S. Customs Office had the same issue, because they decided that blacks who were traveling in certain parts of the world were more likely to be carrying drugs, and so black women were often stopped and inspected and searched in very horrendous and despicable ways because they met the profile. And so, we understand what happens when a war goes off and there are laws out there that allow law enforcement to take ac-

tion. And so, I think there's a big concern that if nothing is done to balance the efforts of people who have an agenda, by government, you know, unwittingly or without any action, Muslims and Arab Americans will become the victims in the war, without anybody really declaring war on Muslims.

MR. BECERRA. David, there is a perception, however—although I agree with you that one-tenth of 1 percent of the Muslims were the ones behind 9/11—when you see television, and you see a whole nation with signs, you know, “anti-U.S.” and all of that, the perception is there that it's more widespread. Is that correct?

JUDGE SHAHEED. Well, I think that anybody that's going to a football game knows that the camera can't focus on everybody at the same time, so you really don't have a sense, really, of how many people are there and what all of the people are doing at the same time. I think, especially when you get into other parts of the world and news coverage, I think that there's been a rather—there's an ongoing debate as to the—how balanced the news coverage is, and I've heard different reports where the Jewish community sometimes feels that the American media is slanted—you know, to the Palestinians, and vice versa, you know. So, I would be a little bit skeptical of the news coverage, mainly because, even though I haven't traveled extensively, I've traveled enough in some of these parts of the world—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Emirates, and so forth—they don't have hostilities against Americans. They don't have an agenda against America, per se. I think there's a concern about policies, but as to any like deep-seated hostility against America as a country and the people of America, I think that's vastly exaggerated. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Okay. Do we have any other questions for Judge Shaheed?

[No response.]

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. We'd like to thank you for your comments and your remarks. They've been helpful to us.

JUDGE SHAHEED. Well thank you for the opportunity to be here and participate, and we look

forward to good things coming from your efforts, and I'll stay for some of the others, if that's possible.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Thank you. Our program calls for a break at this time. Rather than taking a 15-minute break, let's take a five-minute break and then march ahead, and I'll hold you to five minutes. We'll start with you. I'll race you all to the restroom.

[Recess taken.]

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. I would like to reconvene our session, and at this time, we'd like to ask our next speaker, Michael Saahir?

IMAM SAAHIR. Saahir.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Okay. Imam at the Nur-Allah Islamic Center.

Michael Saahir, Imam, Nur-Allah Islamic Center

IMAM SAAHIR. Thank you for the invitation, and—but I had the misfortune that turned into a fortune. I had my times mixed up, so I came earlier, and now I don't have as many copies to make.

MS. BRITA. Oh, okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Okay.

IMAM SAAHIR. Good afternoon, and thank you for the invitation, once again. As mentioned, my name is Michael Saahir. I'm the imam at the Nur-Allah Islamic Center on East 46th Street, and I have a few things prepared that I have written, and I will share those with you now. You have a copy before you. It's just the first two pages that I will go through.

And I tried to think up some verses from the Holy Quran that may fit what I was hoping would be covered today, and the first would be from the Quran. It says, "And O my people! give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due: commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief." And again in the Quran, it says, in chapter 5, verse 8, "O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah [for God] as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is

next to piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do."

And I felt those verses, in particular the second, would be appropriate for this occasion. So often that after September 11, there were things, that may have been said or done that could make someone want to react, but being mindful of what God is telling us here helps, I think, us all to progress further and to progress better. And I'll just read the remaining part.

We are thankful to the Indiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights for addressing the civil rights needs of the Islamic community. September 11 represents a day of testing the human and social spirit of every American and man and woman in humanity. The initial reaction of non-Muslim Americans toward Muslim Americans ranged from outbursts of emotional anger, demonstrated through threatening phone calls, to questions of concerns seeking answers as to why the tragic attack occurred. Happily, we can report that many Americans, upon hearing of the threats against Muslims, called, visited, opened their halls of worship for the security and well-being of the Muslims.

The ensuing days and weeks presented reports from Muslims, though overall minimal, of desecration of mosques and job discriminations. One family, whose car displayed an obvious Islamic license plate, had trash and garbage and graffiti thrown over their car while shopping at an eastside department store. Reports of negative comments during employment hours and one report of a job firing have been associated with post-September 11. There have been efforts to address these job-related situations, but no remedy has been achieved to date. Concern of Muslim women wearing traditional Islamic attire in public stemmed from state and national reports of assaults against Muslims. The stares and occasional negative audible comments of others passing by added to the existing apprehension. I should make that plural, apprehensions. Again, we can fortunately say, many non-Muslim Americans would quickly approach the Muslim women adorned in their Islamic attire and

warmly greet them and share words of encouragement.

All Americans have suffered from the tragic events of September 11. Sadly, many Muslim Americans have had to carry the additional burden of looking Arab or having an Islamic name. We reiterate our deep appreciation to the Indiana Advisory Council to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights for addressing these concerns. Our prayer is for justice and security for all Americans, and for all of humanity.

And I have attached, which you can read when time allows, of an interview done by Tony Brown of *Tony Brown's Journal*. He had interviewed Imam W. Deen Mohammed, I think in November of last year, and I shared with you the portion that deals with the issues of September 11, so whenever you have time, you can read that as well.

And if I'm able to answer any questions, I'll do my best to share with you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Thank you for your comments so far. In your experiences since September 11, have you had occasion to be invited—particularly I'm interested in the African American community, especially the African American Christian community. How are they responding, since there are so many Muslim Americans who are African Americans? Has the African American Christian community reached out to its Muslim brothers?

IMAM SAAHIR. No, they have not, and I similarly inquired with some ministers who I'm friends with, and one summed it up, I think, pretty good. Though some are weak—oh, here's how he responded, "Oh, I thought it was the brown Muslims, not the black Muslims." So, he summed it up. It was kind of weak.

[Laughter.]

IMAM SAAHIR. So, in other words, Muslims who are African Americans, you know, we go into this "Blame them, we're African Americans," but when you have to sign your name as a member of a mosque—his name is Mohammed Jihad. And we had a meeting with some library officials very recently, and when we first went in, we shared our names, he only said "Moham-

med" and stopped, but then after they got with the meeting and they kind of relaxed, he shared with them his full name, and he said, "Since September 11, when you say that name—" you know, and he's African American. The weight that comes with having that name, though, there's no—the meaning of it is, you know, to strive for justice, but the way that the media has portrayed it, it means holy war, in their interpretations, and it does not even touch the meaning holy war.

So, in answer to your questions, the African American Christian community really, speaking honestly, that it was a letdown, a letdown. One reason why it was a letdown, because African Americans, you really are just barely beginning to see the other side of it just as our own selves, so we don't have amnesia that quick. So, it was a letdown. And there have been other occasions too where we should have gotten support from the Christian community, even before September the 11, and we didn't get it, and to a degree there, we got resistance from African American Christians, based upon someone having a Muslim name.

MS. BRITA. Why do you think that is?

IMAM SAAHIR. I have to give you my personal opinion on it.

MS. BRITA. Okay.

IMAM SAAHIR. The history of Islam in the African American community goes back to a man named Elijah Mohammed, and he was very sharp with his words. He was stinging with his words. He didn't bite his tongue. And his effort was to bring African Americans into a venue for Islam, and the teaching at that time was that Christianity is the white man's religion, et cetera, et cetera, long story short.

And my personal opinion is that I think some of the Christians in the black church are hurt, because when the word came out that we had received bomb threats on September 11, that night, and when the TV got a hold of it, oh, the white Christians just poured out. I mean they poured out. There was some even came and said, "Since you all have been threatened, we're going to come in—" they came and joined us in our

service. You can wait for the African Americans a week, a month, four or five months, even now. And the wait is over, but that's what happened. So, it's just my personal opinion. And I said, "Well, what can cause this?" Some think that we have abandoned them or abandoned the church, that we left the church. And this is just personal notes. I mean you have to have some kind of piece of mind so you say, "Well, what could it be?" And when you run up through and you filter and you refilter, you say, "Well, the only thing left is this," which is not true, but that's the conclusion that I came to.

MR. TAYLOR. Yeah, I think it's a sad thing that especially African Americans, whether they're Muslims or Christians or whatever, forget that on the whole, when it comes to discrimination, we're all in the same pie. You know, when we go into a department store and our checks are coded, you know, they don't put on there—they're coded because you're black, not because you're Muslim or Christian or atheist.

When you go in the store and you see three people of Caucasian persuasion in front of you, and then you see them get checks to buy merchandise and they give them the check, and they punch the number in and they take the check and put it in the drawer, and then when it comes to you, then when they take your check, it come up on their computer and it tells them they've got to see your driver's license.

I've just watched that system for so long, and for African American clergy to single you out and say that you're not part of the race or you don't belong and shouldn't be able to participate because you're Muslim is outrageous, but I know that goes on, because—and to me, it goes back to education. They're not educated enough.

MS. BRITA. I show my driver's license every time I write a check.

MR. TAYLOR. A lot of people don't. I've been in lines a lot of times when a lot of people can ring merchandise, [a local department store] is a good one. People will be in front of you, and they ring the merchandise and never ask them for their driver's license, but mine, they always ask for my driver's license.

MR. BECERRA. Is it a newer checking account?

MR. TAYLOR. No, I've had that checking account—before it was Bank One, it was NBD and Indiana Bank, Indiana National.

[Laughter.]

MR. BECERRA. So, your check numbers are high; they're not low?

MR. TAYLOR. Yeah, they're up in the 1800s.

MR. BECERRA. Okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Michael, do you have a question or a statement?

MR. GRADISON. You've already touched on the African American churches and their response. Have you engaged in outreach of your own to explain or educate other African American churches about the Muslim brotherhood sisterhood and African Americans associated with it? Have you reached out to them or have they reached out to you, asked you to come over and meet with their Sunday schools or meet with their associations or preached to their congregation at a service? Has there been any of that kind of interplay that has grown since September 11 where they've reached out?

IMAM SAAHIR. With whom?

MR. GRADISON. With other African American churches and congregations, in order to achieve greater understanding.

IMAM SAAHIR. Well, that's—

MR. GRADISON. Is there more of that kind of interplay or dialogue since September 11? Has there been more reaching out for that kind of dialogue and interplay?

IMAM SAAHIR. Not since, but there are years of history of it before the things that—for example, concerning clergy.

[Laughter.]

MR. GRADISON. Yeah.

MR. TAYLOR. Excuse me.

IMAM SAAHIR. We have the Bread Basket program that went on for years. There have been many programs where we had went to the churches before, so it's not that they don't know us. They know us very well. But then that doesn't put us above being the ones to reach out also. It's just that it was so obvious in the con-

trast, you know, that when the news media came out and said that we had—and they played the actual voices on TV of the bomb threats. The phone calls poured in from all of these churches. I'm sure that we all watched the same news channels.

And it's not that we were asking for anyone to call, so it shouldn't be for us to try to make the extra step either to be included in what you're already included in. I mean I was born and raised in Indianapolis, so I'm not asking to come home. I live here. My parents are from here.

MR. GRADISON. So, was there a response, either—I guess kind of an organized response from concerned clergy, an organization itself, pastors, concerned clergy? I mean where you actually had discussion with leadership there or—

IMAM SAAHIR. Well, I would have to refer that to Judge Shaheed because he's more active with concerned clergy. He knows. But I'm just saying that we have—the point being they do know us already. That was the main point. I'm not trying to single out concerned clergy.

MS. BRITA. I was just briefly looking at this attachment that you have. What is Wahhabism?

IMAM SAAHIR. Of the—that was—you can call it a school of thought—

MS. BRITA. Okay.

IMAM SAAHIR.—that was—I think it may have had its roots in Saudi Arabia. And that is—many people have alluded to that the Arab, and maybe I should wait until someone else can speak further on that than myself for further understanding. It's like a school of thought that they have attributed many of the Saudi Arabian Muslims to be influenced by, and from what they were saying, that may have been the influence behind people such as the Taliban. I think it's more a type of teaching that's not as open as some of the other schools of thought in Islam.

MS. BRITA. And would you call it a negative school of thought?

IMAM SAAHIR. A negative school of thought?

MS. BRITA. Or is it associated with the violence?

IMAM SAAHIR. Well, to call it negative, that's kind of hard to say. If it's—the point being made here was that the freedoms in America—

MS. BRITA. Uh-huh.

IMAM SAAHIR.—and the freedom of thinking in America—

MS. BRITA. Uh-huh.

IMAM SAAHIR.—then Wahhabism wouldn't work here, because it's too narrow.

MS. BRITA. Okay.

IMAM SAAHIR. You know, if they're negative or not, I really can't say, but in the American system—

MS. BRITA. A culture, not to be compared to the American culture, but our behaviors, our rights, are something that they couldn't consider living by.

IMAM SAAHIR. Well, I understand and I would agree with you.

MS. BRITA. Okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Are there any further questions?

[No response.]

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. If not, I would like to thank Imam Saahir for coming and being with us.

IMAM SAAHIR. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. And we really appreciate your comments—

MS. BRITA. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES.—and your candor.

MR. GRADISON. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. At this time, we'd like to invite Rafia Syeed. Did I mispronounce that badly?

MS. SYEED. That's okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Ms. Syeed, could we ask you to take a seat?

MS. SYEED. Yeah, I want to give this—

MS. BRITA. Oh, okay.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Thank you.

MS. BRITA. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Ms. Syeed, since I probably did not do a real good job of pronouncing your name, would you repeat your name for me?

Rafia Syeed, Founder, Bridging the Gap

MS. SYEED. That's all right. My name is Rafia Syeed. I am from Plainfield, Indiana, which is sort of a little out of town from here.

Well, I'm very happy to be here this afternoon. Thank you very much for organizing things like that so that everybody could be heard about what is happening and what are the concerns. Now, my effort is a little bit different here. We have been talking about what has been happening to people, but what I have done, I have started something which we shared with other people so that these things would not happen again, or we will not be fighting each other, but I have been in this country for 26 years and I have raised six kids in this country, and personally I knew it had a very big problem dealing with people, but there are some problems over there.

Now, I have started Bridging the Gap. That's what I will talk about, but I'm going—you know, I'm trying to see the future, rather than going again by what happened and what I would see what should happen with all of this. So, what is Bridging the Gap? We have these green folders, these brochures there, so this will explain Bridging the Gap. It's an organization of concerned people who want to be together and want to share each other's concerns and educate ourselves.

And why was Bridging the Gap important? Why is this? This is the second question. Bridging the gap is because time to time I have felt that people in this country do not know much, or in some cases, don't know anything, about Islam and the Muslims, so I felt, as the saying goes, it is always better to light a little candle rather than curse the darkness. So, I thought that was my job, to tell people also who we are as Muslims, because I didn't want to blame everything on others. I wanted to take responsibility myself. So, that's when Bridging the Gap came along.

Now, what were the things that made me get this Bridging the Gap started? There are five, six things. I will just say them very quickly. First of all, I was watching one time TV a few years ago, and in Los Angeles, there's a TV program, they

were asking the people on the street, "What do you know about Islam?" You know, just asking them. One of them—very many things came which had nothing to do with Islam. Some of them honestly said, "We don't know anything." One of them said, "Oh, well, I think this Islam is—this is—the founder was Buddha, and they are them." You know, that just doesn't go with it. Then other thing was that Oklahoma City bombing. That really was a nightmare for Muslims, all of you know. Half an hour after that bombing, they said, "This is the job of Muslims." I do not want to say the name of a congressman because, as a Muslim, I am supposed not to embarrass anybody, but maybe some of you know who was the congressman. Just after half an hour—

MR. GRADISON. It was embarrassing.

MR. TAYLOR. Don't tell us who it is.

MS. SYEED.—he came and he said, "We know who, because Islamic Society of North America had a regional conference in Oklahoma that weekend." And when I heard it on there, I was in my living room. I opened the TV. I said, "Oh, my gosh. What's—I didn't at first get what was happening. I saw the building was falling and stretchers there. I said, "What's this?"

Then I came to know this is like that, and I'm kind of—you know, I'm, "Oh, my gosh. What's—" and the congressman said, "It's Muslims who did it." I was shocked. So, I called my husband, and asked him, I said, "Do you know what's happening?" He said, "Okay. Well, we'll see."

So, within one hour, everyone, almost, who could get to Plainfield, all of the TV channels and newspapers, were there, not asking, "Why did you do that?" They're asking, "What was the demand?" Did you get the point?

So, if you do something, you'll ask, first of all, "Did you do that?" But they took it for granted that it has been done by them, but what was the demand? So, then Islam people there told them, "Okay. We'll wait for 48 hours, then we'll let you know what happened, and if it is us, then you will know that, too." And all of us

know what happened after that. I don't have to go into detail.

Number three. So many times, even our educated people and our evangelists, they said, and they have been saying, "The God of Muslim is evil and our God is good God." If I were Muslim, it is very—I can't really tolerate it, because I will read you one quote from my book, which is Quran. It says, "Those who believe in Quran and those who follow Jewish books and those who are Christians—" this is my book says "—any who believe in one God in the last day and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord. And there shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve." This is what my book says.

And they say, "Our God is good, their God is bad." I say, "Oh, my God, where are we? You know, why can't we be together and share these values together and make the place a little bit better place?" "And among his signs," referring to God, "is the creation of the Heavens and the earth and the variations in your languages—" see? "—and your colors. Whereby in that are signs for those who know." It is chapter 30, verse 22 from my book.

So, these are the verses, you know, full of love, so how we are together and how we are to consider ourselves brothers and sisters in a sense. But then there come this evil God, good God, terrorist, it was a little bit too much for me.

Okay. The third thing was women in Islam. Oh, my gosh, this is a big trouble. I was one time listening to the radio and a person was asking her, "So, what should we do with these Muslims?" You know, they're trying for solutions. The other person says, "We should give them some education, particularly for women." Here I am. I am a Muslim woman. I am in this country, and I'm doing whatever I can to raise my family to do. I want to tell you one thing: Pakistan, Turkey, Bangladesh, all three, Muslim countries, had prime ministers and presidents, they were Muslim women, so how come that is not known to anybody? How come they say, "We should give them a little education?" Now, you saw Afghanistan, head to toe burka, that's not Islamic. That's not prescribed Islamic dress.

A fifth thing is this Islamic terrorism. Now, it really bothers me. This is not a lecture on Islam, but I am trying to give reasons for Bridging the Gap—how many of us know actually what Islam is, which comes from one word, which is peace, and we are supposed to be peaceful people.

Number six. Muslims hate America. This is such a thing people say. Muslim don't hate America. Why did I leave my country and came here? I've been here 26 years. I don't hate this place. And we also—we say that tolerance and understanding in America will not be found anywhere in the world at this point. But in this country, there's such a tolerance, there is such an understanding, that we can sit down at a table here and we talk on. So, why should Muslims hate America? Yes, there are some reasons for that. Some of our speakers have done a little bit that tells people, they don't hate people but they hate some policies.

All right. My daughter one time came to me and she asked—I have raised six kids in this country. I came, my oldest daughter was 5 years old. She's a mother of three now; okay? And I have six of them, and I'm very thankful to God, they're all very successful, from anthropologists, lawyers, dentists, and all of those things. One time my daughter came, she said to me, "Mom, we were very upset today in school." I said, "Why?" "You know what's happening here? People are telling me that I am cousin to Saddam Hussein." I am from northern part of India, which is Kashmir, and Saddam Hussein is in where? In Iraq. So, anybody who knows the geographical map will not connect these two together. When we are raising our children ourselves, first thing we have to inculcate in ourselves as Muslims, and in our children, that's a good value system. There's no hate. Okay.

Now, what have we done on Bridging the Gap so far? Bridging the Gap have—we have, from September—after September 11 until now, we had three seminars, and fourth one is coming, which is on May 9. It will be in Plainfield, Indiana. So, seminars were about, intercultural understanding, and it was also about fasting and mostly a response to 9/11, in all of our seminars.

And in these seminars I don't get only Muslims. Our treasurer is a Christian lady, our vice president is a Christian lady, and our board member is a Jewish brother. So, we have it together. It's not only a Muslim organization. That's why I call it Bridging the Gap. And we make sure when we're having a seminar, all three faiths speak there. So, that's what is very important for us.

So, it's very important, first of all, to know each other. You know, when we sit at the table and when we are neighbors, you have heard this. In the beginning, the speaker, he said that there are 6 to 8 million Muslims in this country. Now, it is a common-sense question. If all of them were terrorists, you and I would not be in the room today, and if—there is one billion point some Muslims around the world. If they were all terrorists, how could the world be surviving right now? We have to understand that this is an element in all of the religions. McVeigh and others, David Koresh, and Jim Jones poisoned 900 people at one time.

Now, all Muslims aren't terrorists, this effort is to educate ourselves. Who are the Christians? What are they? Who are the Jews? Who are the Muslims? Because we are after all the same. There is a saying in our prophecy that says, "All of you are from Adam and Eve, and he was created out of dust." That's what we believe in, so we have to concentrate on that. We should know Muslims have made a lot of contributions to society, not only now but a long time ago. In the 8th century, this Al-Buni, was first-rate scholar, and scientist, who had equal facility in physics, metaphysics, mathematics, geography, and history. He discusses the rotation of the earth and the correct values of latitude and longitude of the earth. He gave this to us. There are some contributions of Muslims, and that is not known anywhere. Muslims are known only for terrorism. That is hurting for the Muslim.

And then we have this very important thing is that media involvement. I thank media this time. They were a little bit more fair than they were at—in the past, but still there's a lot of education needed for media people. I will tell you one thing. Media said so much about the Trade Cen-

ter bombing. Do you know, that Sears Tower was built by a Muslim, and his name was Fazlur R. Khan, and he was from Pakistan. Do you know that? You go up there, you read the name, and it's there. Why didn't we hear, that this is a Muslim who built this?

So, we cannot, as Muslims, see anybody in any trouble. For us, Islamically speaking, if we kill one person without a reason, its as if we killed humanity, and if we save one person we save everybody, so it's not the job of a Muslim to make those buildings fall. So, it's very important for us that we get educated on all of these things, that we know each other, so that we will be able to make this place a better one.

Any questions I will be happy to answer.

MR. BECERRA. Well, you're right about incrustation of religions. I'm Roman Catholic. I was in a Catholic seminary for four years studying to be a Catholic priest, and I—as you know, our religion, my religion, is going through a lot of trial and tribulation right now. Molestations and—so, I mean I do understand that we all have our shortcomings in all sense of the word, so I can identify with what you said there.

MS. BRITA. And in a sense—I don't want to sound simplistic here. I'm Catholic, too—I also think this is going to bring a tremendous cleansing—

MR. BECERRA. Absolutely.

MS. BRITA.—and a new beginning for us, and more understanding, and a closer look at those that we choose to be the leaders of our church, and your whole community is going through this now.

MS. SYEED. Of course.

MS. BRITA. And perhaps with people like you and Bridging the Gap, it will create greater understanding than what we have now. You know, a lot of damage has been done in both places. And Jews have certainly had their crosses to bear.

MR. GRADISON. Crosses to bear?

MS. BRITA. I know. I'm sorry.

[Laughter.]

MR. BECERRA. Yeah, Michael's going to correct you there.

MS. BRITA. That came right out of a Catholic mouth.

MR. GRADISON. Now, wait a minute.

[Laughter.]

MS. BRITA. Michael, I'm sorry.

MS. SYEED. He is a good listener.

MS. BRITA. I'm sorry.

MR. GRADISON. That's correct, now we know.

MS. BRITA. Don't put that down. Erase that.

[Laughter.]

MS. BRITA. But, you know, I hope that is the condition that will come for you.

MS. SYEED. That's what I hope. You know, we all will be accountable to God if we don't be together.

MS. BRITA. That's right.

MS. SYEED. In our book, it says that the people who have a common interest, they should come, "O mankind, we create—" this is God. It's his words. "O, mankind, we created you from a single soul, male and female and made you into nations and tribes—" see, we know we'll be different—"nations and tribes, so that you know each other." This is my foundation for Bridging the Gap. "And one another truly, the most honored of you in God's sight is the greatest of you in piety." God is all knowing, all everything.

MS. BRITA. Congratulations to you.

MS. SYEED. Thank you very much.

MR. GRADISON. We're proud to offer you a platform. It's one thing we can do as individual members of this committee and as the committee itself, so we're glad to provide you the platform. You should be taking advantage of every platform, because this is a unique opportunity.

And the simple fact is there's a need to educate an awful lot of people about Islam and the—for all of the deep misunderstanding that is out there in America, of all places.

MS. SYEED. The North Methodist Church on 38th Street, had one seminar there. They came forward, and said, "You can use our facility." They were very, very gracious there. They provided food for us and facility at no charge.

MR. GRADISON. That's great.

MS. SYEED. The Methodist Hospital, chaplain is Dr. Lou Weiss. He came forward, he said, "We're going to provide a facility for you," and they did it, and I really thank all of them.

MR. GRADISON. He's a troublemaker.

MS. SYEED. And I thank all of you as well.

MR. GRADISON. I know him well.

MS. SYEED. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. I'm truly appreciative of the fact that you opened your comments with the statement about lighting one little candle rather than cursing the dark. Your belief, and your action on your belief, that each of us has a responsibility, that each of us can shed a little light by interacting positively with others, is something that I think will continue to spread, and if we aggressively pursue that, we can create some of that understanding, which will alleviate some of this gloom that we're all sort of feeling right at this point. But I really want to thank you for being the activist that you are—

MS. SYEED. I appreciate that.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES.—and for the work that you do.

MS. BRITA. I'll bet your children are proud of you.

MS. SYEED. Thank you. You know, I have—I told you I have raised six kids here, and I have never even got a toy gun for them. You know, everybody gets guns. I said, "No, not for this house." "Mommy, everybody has." I said, "No, guns are for those people who are professionals, who know what and how to use it." You don't have—even six kids raising in this country is not a joke.

MS. BRITA. Right.

MS. SYEED. You should all have sympathy for me raising all of these kids.

MS. BRITA. Right.

MS. SYEED. And I did not even buy a toy gun for them, because I said, "Guns are not for you. You have to learn some more. You have to learn some other things, how to spread peace, not guns."

So, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Thank you for coming.

MR. GRADISON. Thank you.

MS. BRITA. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Mr. Ali? Mr. Ali?

MR. ALI. Hi.

MR. TAYLOR. How are you doing?

MR. GRADISON. Hi.

Syed Mohammed Ali

MR. ALI. My name is Syeed Mohammed Ali. I have been part of this community since 1980, in Indianapolis. When I came, there were 25 Muslim families. Now there must be over 1,200 or 1,500 Muslim families. So, I have seen my community grow from very small number to a larger number. My three kids have been raised here. And I did not prepare any presentation or such, because there are two really distinct points which are bothering me very much, and I came here that I may understand how to go about those through the question-and-answer session.

The number one question I've been troubled with, in my 30 years of life here, this is the first time that we attempted that such a law which was passed, Patriot Act. We contacted our senators and congressmen and things like that, yet still it was passed. Now, the way we—I understand, the enforcement of that law gives sweeping powers to the law enforcement agencies. In what fashion and what manner can we minimize the damage that can come from the act? I'm not going to repeat the same things like our Judge David Shaheed mentioned. You are all well aware of that. What incidents have happened, others have mentioned. The question comes to what respect your organization can guide us so that our rights are not hampered or endangered, or we can protect our rights.

The second thing is that you got a good lesson in Islam, and it was very eloquently presented to you by Professor Jaques. Sister Rafia Syeed mentioned many other things very effectively, and our brother, Michael Saahir. We have come to know Islam much better now than many of our counterparts knew before last year or so.

What bothers me is that it is in our government, it is said that church should be separate

from the politics, yet it is the religion which is being used again and again in politics, the way that Islam, and more currently came the onslaught on the Catholic Church happened 30 and 40 years ago? Yes, we do live with the problems, but my concern is how we go about these things without jeopardizing civil liberties. As long as the people like you are there, I know we can handle those issues and those problems and we will come out ahead. I'm a very optimistic and very open person.

We as Muslims are brought up to respect each and every individual, respect their rights, respect other religions to the extent that when we pray five times, we pray for the descendents of Abraham every single prayer, without—I mean our prayer is not complete until we go to that. The people are there who want peace, they want justice, but right now it looks like that Satanic forces are winning, or they are much more in action. How we can come up to—what kind of ways and means should we develop in the community so we could be guarded?

That's my question.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Okay.

MR. ALI. When you have questions I will answer.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Well, we'll throw it open to members of the committee, if they want to attempt to answer your question. I'm not sure that we have an answer for your question. We may only have more questions. The concern about the Patriot Act is one that I'm sure lots of folks share with you, and I would suspect that part of what we're attempting to do is to get some sense of feel for those kinds of potential violations or actual violations of civil liberties of Arab Americans, Muslim Americans, and even Muslims who are here as students and workers.

I think the Professor, in his first comments, talked about the difficulty of getting people to come forward with those kinds of issues. To the extent that no one comes forward, commissions and advisory committees like ours have a real difficult time being able to make recommendations back through the system, and we're an advisory body, not an action body in that sense.

But without that kind of—I guess what I’m getting to is that we all have some work within our own communities to make sure that when we see issues of concern or those things that we consider to be unjust, we’ve got to take that activist approach and be willing to risk getting involved, to make sure that people speak out. And if they don’t feel comfortable, find ways that we can direct them to agencies or other partners who can come out and speak and at least make known their issues and their concerns. Otherwise, there are great forces of evil at hand—

MR. ALI. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES.—that work well in the dark, and unless somebody’s shedding light on them, we don’t have any way of knowing what the concerns are. But those of us—as an African American, I have real concerns about the Patriot Act, because “driving while black” is still a crime in this country.

MR. TAYLOR. Yes, it is.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. And now if “flying while Muslim” is a crime—

MR. ALI. That will be.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES.—it can get comfortable for me to watch that and not have to deal with the other, so we just have to share some bad news, I’m afraid, so that we can know how to deal with it.

Others? I’ve pontificated enough.

MR. ALI. My question was is there any way or means of communication, we can communicate with the communities from your organization? Because the first time I really heard in 30 years that this U.S. commission is there. It is perhaps my own ignorance that I didn’t come out and try to find out anything. I never had any reason to come out and find anything, because so far I didn’t have any kind of mistreatment or upset, where my liberties were hampered and things like that.

Although in my college days, I was very much involved with the African American people and I associated with them when they were going through whatever it was, but unfortunately I never came across where I could see there is a problem exists. And it’s not me alone. There are

many others in our community, those who do not know how to go about and express themselves to any such committee or organization. So, now we—first thing I am going to do is just spread the word that they come out and speak to at least us and then we can communicate with you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Right. We’ll—

MR. ALI. And the best way we can, approach that, see, I think—

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Certainly. Would—

MR. GRADISON. Yeah. Well, certainly we’re available. Usually it’s NGOs, nongovernmental organizations, get approached for relief because it’s usually—government is the instrument that, I guess, is what you’re battling.

Litigation is already in place, I think even some temporary retraining orders are in place, against the Patriot Act. The first organization, of course, to get into that fight is, not surprisingly, the American Civil Liberties Union, representing a number of Arab American people who have been swept up, families have been swept up, the attorney general’s war on people of color and so there is litigation in place.

I think the Patriot Act will be decimated by the courts. It’s so blatantly unconstitutional in so many areas, it will not survive, but the typical hysteria that happens with legislators—you know, congressional and legislative leadership react hysterically instead of meaningfully and intelligently to great crises such as this. So, I think that’s going to happen. A lot of damage is being done, a lot of hearts have been broken, much is lost already because of what’s happened with these unconstitutional sweeps that have taken place, but I have no doubt the ACLU and its plaintiffs in this case, being the Arab Americans, will emerge victorious, and I think that the courts will—it takes time, and as you know, there’s a process, as it should be, and it’s very slow and it’s very deliberate, but I think it will take place. And it’s just one organization with which I’m associated, and I’m proud to be. What we do is very important, too, because we’ve seen a national profile that we are collecting today, as I mentioned to you earlier, and as Constance and Hollis have mentioned, on the Web site it even-

tually will be there when it's edited, and it will be available for the entire nation to see—through the Civil Rights Commission's Web site, and that's very—and our roles really today is to learn and, in turn, to educate. That's why we conduct these hearings twice a year for the advisory committees throughout the country, including, of course, our own. But this is our first opportunity since I've been on the Commission where we've dealt with the Arab American community specifically, and I'm glad that we've had this opportunity to do so and give you an opportunity to have a forum that you've all responded to very well, and I'm very pleased and very gratified by that.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. As Michael has already mentioned, the briefing that we've conducted today will be posted on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission's Web site, and we would encourage you to look there. Also—

MR. GRADISON. You have got that.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES.—your question about how do you communicate, I'm sure that—we're not the most visible group in the state of Indiana, so getting to us is not as easy as perhaps folks would like it to be, but by utilizing that Web site, you can get to our Midwest Regional Office, Ms. Davis, and communicating to her, and if there is enough inquiry, then I'm sure she'll be assembling the group so that appropriate forums can be held.

But I think the first thing starts with groups being vigilant, finding ways to speak out. I think you need—looking for the support within the local communities, local human rights commissions. I think every town that has a college, university, generally has a chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union working with them. Contacting them is another source of support and interest. So, there are a lot of indirect kinds of ways.

MR. ALI. Does your organization have volunteers who can go out to the community programs and speak about issues?

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. We are not an authoritative body to be able to speak about the issues. We're primarily an advisory body. We're eyes and ears for the Civil Rights Commission,

and so we do the gathering of information, and then pass that information back into the federal government through that format.

MR. GRADISON. But as individuals, obviously, I mean—

MR. ALI. In individual capacity?

MR. GRADISON.—of course, you know me, and—as an individual, not as a representative of the Commission, and you know sort of where my interests lie, and others, Sidney and others, on this committee are always available as individuals, and have participated in other forums in which you people have been involved, and will continue to do so, because our commitment to common-sense values, which I think it is pretty obvious in this group what that is.

MR. ALI. Well, I commend you all for arranging such a get-together or symposium, because I learned a lot, and I am sure you have learned, too, and if we could spread this out on a larger scale, maybe a greater good will come out of that, too. So, thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Thank you for coming.

MS. BRITA. Thank you.

MR. GRADISON. We appreciate these invitations, too. I'm going to try to get down to Plainfield on the 9th, for instance, and—

MR. ALI. Okay. Thank you.

MR. GRADISON.—try to make that down there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Our next speaker is Dr. Shahid Athar.

DR. ATHAR. Good afternoon.

MR. GRADISON. Good afternoon.

MS. BRITA. Good afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Doctor, would you please help out? I'm not doing a great job with names, so if you could give us—

DR. ATHAR. Sure.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES.—a correct pronunciation, I'd appreciate that.

MR. BECERRA. Is it Shahid?

DR. ATHAR. Yes.

MR. BECERRA. Shahid.

DR. ATHAR. Shahid Athar.

MR. BECERRA. Athar.

Dr. Shahid Athar, President of the Islamic Medical Association and Past President of the Islamic Society of Greater Indianapolis

DR. ATHAR. I want to thank you for this opportunity for inviting me and others and giving your time. As the prophet of Islam has said, that if anyone who has not thanked fellow human being, in fact he has not thanked God, so in order to thank God, I must thank you. And he has also said give gifts, because it increases love, so in appreciation of your work and hopefully to increase love our community and you, I brought this gift, and I will pass on two copies to each, because one you can share. This is a booklet that I have authored. Since 1986 have been constantly revised, translated in many languages of the world, and has been received by most of our congressmen, senators, and politicians.

Let me introduce myself a little bit better. You are also getting a handout from one of my articles published in Indianapolis Medical Society magazine, "Jihad of Muslim Physician Against Terrorism." I was born in India. My parents took me to Pakistan after the partition of the country, where I stayed for a very short period of time, and did my medical school; came to Chicago, at Cook County Hospital, for my medical training for three years in 1969; came to Indiana University in 1972 to do subspecialization in endocrinology, which is a field which deals with hormones and diabetes; and since 1972, I'm in Indianapolis in private practice and also on the faculty.

I am not an ordained religious person, but religion became my second hobby because I had to learn my own faith in order to teach my children. There were no Muslim teachers, and I didn't want them to grow up and learn from bin Laden, so I wanted them to have correct information about my own faith, and I wanted to share my faith with you all. So, as a result, I ended up becoming a writer. I've written six books and 125 published articles. Most of them are on the Web page *islam-usa.com*. I'm also founder of the Interfaith Alliance. The chairman, David Shahid, is the current chair, president of the organization,

but I was the president in 1984. Also president of Islamic Society of Greater Indianapolis in past, current president of Islamic Medical Association and—of North America. I'm involved in many other organizations, including Amnesty International, Physicians for Human Rights, and also host of Islamic Catholic dialogue in this city, taking place for last six years, so we have been inviting bishops from about seven different estates, and we have an annual program. I've been just nominated for Governor Otis Bowen's Community Service Award for Physician, which is an annual award; just was nominated by a non-Muslim cardiology group.

MR. BECERRA. Congratulations.

DR. ATHAR. Thank you. Since September 11, I have participated, including today, in some 43 presentations related to Islam, so—I don't have copies of this, but anyone can have that in their file. These are all of the different church organizations, civic groups, nationally and locally, that I have participated. On the first day, seeing what was happenings in New York, from the waiting room of my office, was a disaster, a shock for all of us, my office staff, physicians, myself. Then the problem started with the second compounding. The phone calls started ringing because I am a well-known Muslim in the community, also have a Web site and contributor to *Indianapolis Star*. I have published close to 20 articles at their request, by invitation. So, everyone knows me.

So, phone calls came, "Is this bin Laden's office?" And the secretary said, "No, this is not bin Laden's office. This is Dr. Athar's office." Then the call came that "We are going to bomb your office and we are going to bomb all Muslims," threats like this. My son, who is a medical student, one of his colleagues told him it was again reported in the *Star* that people are not very happy today because of what Muslims have done in New York. And people do not know it, have never been told, that 500 Muslims also died in the World Trade Center, and many them, firemen also were Muslims, so these things were not known.

So, anyway—but I'm not here to talk about the negative things. There are some negative

things. In fact, I got 60 good e-mails of support, and letters and—from people who knew me or who did not know me personally, but five or so, or six, very nasty e-mails came to me, and I don't want to read those e-mails, but I will give this to you that you can put in the file of some of these e-mails, very nasty e-mails, against Islam, against Muslims, nothing to do with me personally. I have given the copies of these e-mails to Susan Brooks, who is the U.S. attorney for the state of Indiana from the Department of Justice. So, you can keep this in the file. Again, I will not go into that detail of these very nasty e-mails, people saying things like, "Today we are going to start using Quran for toilet paper." That can be so offensive to us. But I don't want to get emotional. I just want to thank you for what you are doing, because I believe what a judge wrote a long time ago in a Supreme Court decision, that it is the duty of the government to protect the minority, because the majority can protect itself. It is a very profound statement.

So, in the minority, we are all together, the people who are of color, the people who are of different religions, not only Muslims, but there are 12 other religions. You know, in Parliament of World Religion held in Chicago, 14 religions were represented from the United States. And all of those feel suffering. In this tragedy, 200 incidents of crime against Sikhs took place. Several Sikhs were murdered, and some of their temples were burned, so much so that the Sikhs invited me to their newly formed temple here on the east side of the town, southeast side, and asked me to talk about nonviolence and peace. So, I think you need to protect all of them, because, as I said, the judge said the majority can protect itself. So what you are doing is very important and very dear to us, and anything we can do to help you, I would appreciate.

One thing that you do need to do, in my opinion, is educate the common person. We do not fear educated people like yourself or the priest or the rabbi that are very close friends of mine. I have letters from rabbis and letters from priests, like Father Tom Murphy, who invited me to the church in downtown, at St. John's Parish, I've

been there. I've been to Dr. Kent Mallard at St. Luke. These are all close friends of mine. But it's the common person who is reading the media, and the media is saying most of the time wrong things. In fact, a few days ago—I don't have that clipping. It was in the *Star* from someone who said that "Islam is a terrible religion. We have nothing in common with Islam as far as other religions are concerned, because Islam is based on hate," which Rafia Syeed and Dr. Shaheed mentioned, with the quotations from the Quran, that Islam is nothing like that. They are minority, those who are doing the wrong things, and as you will see in my booklet, those portions have been answered. So, you need to educate common people—somebody needs to do it. If it is not your responsibility, somebody needs to do it. And there are people who are doing it. Even the U.S. Department of Justice, in their national convention, bought quite a number of copies of this booklet to distribute to their Chicago office, and the conference was held in Miami.

I mean I don't know what to do, but I worry, not about myself. I worry about my children and my grandchildren. What are we going to do about them? Do immigrant Muslims like myself—you can take away the citizenship and say that "You go back to your home country," because one of the e-mails said that "We don't want you here. Go back to where you came from." That's fine. We will go back, but 42 percent of the 8 million American Muslims are indigenous Muslims, like Imam Saahir, like Judge David Shaheed. What are you going to do; send them to Africa? What are you going to do to my children and my grandchildren, who are born here? Where are you going to send them? This the only country they have known. And this is very crucial issue.

So, I don't want to leave this world, leaving this world like Bosnia. In Bosnia, for 70 years, during Communist revolution—or Communist occupation, I would call—that religions were suppressed. So, when the religion—when the Communism was gone, people did not know how to talk to each other, communicate with each other, and they started fighting. That was

the reason of this ethnic cleansing which took place. So, we don't want to leave our children in this country like that, so we need to work about bringing Americans together. If something good can come out of this September 11 is that now we are talking, and we want to face this as an American, that this problem of terrorism is not a problem just for you. It's a problem for the world. This problem of terrorism is not a problem against the Jews or the Christians. It's problem for—against Muslims, because the God-fearing Muslims also hate terrorists, and the terrorists are of all kinds, except that only those who are Muslims are called terrorists, and those who are not Muslims, they are not called terrorists. And I think we need to sincerely—I hope you will give me some time some day that I will come and make a formal presentation on terrorism and all of these things, which I have done to many organizations, including the Assembly at Legatos, which is the Catholic CU organization, that I was invited to do that. It was a PowerPoint presentation.

So, I will stop here, and I will be happy to answer any questions, but I have no physical or personal complaints against anyone. I live with friends. I have 20,000 patients to my credit, and all of them are American Christians and Jews, hardly any Muslims. And, you know, they fight for me. I mean my patients will go and tell their colleague and employer that “Muslims are not terrorists, because I know Dr. Athar is not a terrorist.” You know, that's—I've been nominated for this award by a non-Muslim. So, I have personally no problem, but I worry about people who are on the street who have different name. I got an e-mail from Mary Prouty, who is in Inter-faith Alliance, a Christian, saying that she has an Arab friend, very close friend, who is a green card holder, but he cannot find a job because of his last name, and she only asked me if I can find a job for her friend. She's a Christian.

And also I'll tell you one last thing is the e-mail I got from a priest from California, very nice e-mail in support, but at the end, he said that we should stop singing “God Bless America,” and he gave a reason. He said that “God Bless

America” is a selfish song. We should sing “God Bless the World.” I mean I was moved by that. It is that kind of Christians who have raised the level of Christianity and it's not anything else.

So, I will stop, and I'll be happy to answer questions, as much as you want. Yes, sir.

MR. GRADISON. I take it—and I think you've already answered the question—most of—these are invitations that come to you? It's an extraordinary number of public appearances you're making now since September 11. Obviously you—

DR. ATHAR. Before that—I was known before that. I had many appearances before 9/11.

MR. GRADISON. And they were coming to you because you have a leadership role, but you had many more requests in your leadership role since—

DR. ATHAR. Right.

MR. GRADISON.—September 11, when, hopefully, people wanted to learn more about—

DR. ATHAR. People want to know what true Islam is. That's the basic area. Their most common questions are, “What is terrorism?” “Why do people hate?” In America, these are the questions being asked about the recent Palestinian issues, things like that. But there's more awareness of Islam than—as Karen Armstrong has put it in one of her articles which I have published—I mean included in the handout, she asked the question, “If Islam is such an evil religion, why then it is still growing so fast? Why people are still coming to Islam?” You know, if something is evil, people will leave, and that is not—

MR. GRADISON. A third of humanity.

DR. ATHAR. No, not even that. Even during this crisis, the number of Muslims have gone up, because people are becoming—and the books on Islam have been sold. My own books, through Kazi Publications, have been sold out. I didn't bring all of my books, because that's not—the purpose of the talk is to answer questions, you know, but I'm saying that people want to know more and more about Islam, and then they find out that actual Muslim and actual Islam and practicing Muslim is different than what those people are over there, and what they are doing,

or as some people are over there. So, people are still accepting Islam.

MS. BRITA. May I say something?

DR. ATHAR. Sure.

MS. BRITA. You were talking about you're worried about your children and your children's children.

DR. ATHAR. Uh-huh, uh-huh.

MS. BRITA. Listening to you and to Ms. Syeed, I don't think people like you have to worry about this. You've been an example to your children. They've lived it. They know how to respond to this. They know peaceful means of helping people understand, and your example doesn't go away.

DR. ATHAR. No, sister, but my point is this: That the children should not live in fear; okay?

MS. BRITA. Uh-huh.

DR. ATHAR. And people who know my children and my—I have two grandchildren now, 2 weeks old and 3 years old.

MS. BRITA. Oh, congratulations.

DR. ATHAR. Those who will know them, they will be no problem. It is the stray bullet; okay?

MS. BRITA. Yeah.

DR. ATHAR. During 1979, a Sikh was shot in Boston, shot dead, because the person who was caught was asked, "Why did you shoot this Sikh?" "Because," he said, "he looks like an Ayatollah." Very recently here, after September 11, a Thai person was beaten up in Bloomington—he is not Muslim; he's a Buddhist—because he looked different. So, these stereotyping that we have against everyone else, the African Americans have suffered in this country, Catholics have suffered in this country, and Jewish people have suffered in this country, and now it is our time. I think we need to educate people—

MS. BRITA. Exactly.

DR. ATHAR.—that you can be a different religion and different color and still you will be American. One of the e-mails said that "No matter what you say—good things about Islam—we think that you are not American because America was founded on Christianity and it is a Christian county."

MR. TAYLOR. I understand where you're coming from—

DR. ATHAR. Yeah.

MR. TAYLOR.—because being black and being the president of NAACP in Evansville, Indiana, for 15 years and being vice president of the Indianapolis chapter presently, I've been dealing with discrimination for a long time, even before the NAACP. When I was young, I didn't know what discrimination was. But back in those days, my daddy worked on the L&N Railroad, and we couldn't ride in the same car with white people. White people—when the train came from Chicago to Evansville, then they switched up and then the white people and black people could ride in the same car from Chicago to Evansville, but once it crossed the Ohio River into Kentucky going south, all of the black people had to be in one car and all of the white people were in another car; okay?

I didn't know that, I was so young. I was just so glad to ride the train and my daddy had a job. But then once I got older, I realized it was discrimination. And we had to wait in one waiting room at the train station and the white people were in the other waiting room. So, I understand what you're going through.

I've been used to discrimination, and unfortunately after 9/11, then your religion has taken a brunt of the discrimination that is ongoing, and like you said, it's education. I've never really had a hang-up about religions, because being a volunteer and having to raise money, I would go to any church group that would give us some money—you know, Catholic, Islam, Buddhist, it didn't make no difference. If they cut a check—

[Laughter.]

MR. TAYLOR.—I was going to be there. And it's the same thing with you being a doctor. If you were the best heart surgeon over at IU and they told me, "You're either going to die or you're going to Dr. Ali," well, I'm going to be knocking on your door telling you to do some surgery, you know.

[Laughter.]

MR. TAYLOR. But everybody is not educated enough to those type of things, and it's a sorry

thing, because to me, the only people that committed the 9/11 was six or eight or 10 criminals. I mean they were just people that decided to do it, and nobody else in the world, you know, that I could put my finger on had anything to do with it.

DR. ATHAR. That's right. But anyway, I think our country is going in the right direction at this time, both locally—that means nationally—as well as, to some degree, internationally. What we are doing for rebuilding Afghanistan now, if we had done it, in my opinion, 10 years ago after the Russians had left, we would have not come to this state. And I think that's what we need to do, with all due apology, to Palestine. The reason there's—in fact, I have written in one of the things here that there is a factory of creation of terrorists in refuge camps, and if you allow that factory to continue, don't demolish the refuge camp. And so, I think we are going in the right direction, and we need to keep the momentum and keep us together as Americans. When my people—some people ask me, "When are you going back?" I ask the same question.

MR. TAYLOR. Hey.

DR. ATHAR. "When are you going back?"

MR. GRADISON. That's right.

MR. TAYLOR. You know, and that brings me to another thing.

MR. GRADISON. We're all from over there.

MR. TAYLOR. At one time, Dr. Benjamin Hooks, who was the executive director of the NAACP, said—

DR. ATHAR. Yeah, I knew him very well, yes.

MR. TAYLOR.—said somebody had told him to go back to Africa. He said, "I'm not going back to Africa because you can't walk in your apartment when it's 100 degrees outside and turn the thermostat down to 70."

[Laughter.]

MR. TAYLOR. He says, "I'm staying right here in New York."

DR. ATHAR. Well, more questions?

[No response.]

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Well, we want to—

MR. GRADISON. It seems to me, in reading some of these scurrilous attacks that came by e-mail to your office, that you need a lot more

Muslim shrinks, I think, probably; maybe do a bargain-basement business with some of these people.

DR. ATHAR. But, I've not brought to you the good e-mails. The good e-mails are so—

MR. GRADISON. Yeah, there are some, too, I know, that—

DR. ATHAR. No, no, I did not bring those. There are like 50—I've got a whole stack of e-mails, and I made an album of all of the good letters and e-mails and things.

I mean there is a 15-year-old boy who writes to me saying that "I went to the church where my father is the priest, and he is teaching what I think is the wrong message of Islam. He's saying that Allah is a demon God and Muslims are evil, so I had a big fight with my father about what he is teaching, so I am writing to you just to let you know what—" you know, I mean he's only a 15-year-old boy.

And I'm not trying to encourage fight between him and his father, but he's realizing himself. So, I mean there are many, many things like that. I have a full stack. Some of the good e-mail letters are in that article which I have mentioned from different sources. But I'm proud to be an American and I'm proud to be in a country where I have this freedom to come to this Commission and express my thought, because sometimes when I say of my mind, if I was in another—in a Muslim country, I wouldn't get chance to say anything like that.

MR. GRADISON. We are the government.

DR. ATHAR. Huh?

MR. GRADISON. We are the government. We're—

DR. ATHAR. Right.

MR. GRADISON.—representing the government.

DR. ATHAR. Right, right. So—

MR. BECERRA. But Doctor, is this all about religion? Is it really?

DR. ATHAR. What; this—

MR. BECERRA. This whole problem. The reason we're sitting here today.

DR. ATHAR. Well, 50 percent. Actually the war is not between Islam and Christianity and

Judaism; okay? The war is between religion and no religion, and anyone who professes to be of any religion gets attacked one time or other. This is a secular society, to some degree, and nothing wrong being secular as long as you don't impinge on someone else. But on the other hand, the part of the problem internationally is oil and is money and is, you know, whether you belong to this camp or that camp, and it's all politics.

MR. BECERRA. Because I'm looking at No. 10, "Why do Muslims hate America?"

DR. ATHAR. Yeah.

MR. BECERRA. And as long as we support Israel, the problems will continue. I mean that's—

DR. ATHAR. Right.

MR. BECERRA.—the way I'm interpreting this No.10.

DR. ATHAR. Yeah. Nothing wrong with supporting Israel, which is a just country, and it supports all citizens equally, but Israel itself does not support the Muslims and the—

MR. BECERRA. Right.

DR. ATHAR.—Jewish people, and also among the Palestinians, 10 percent of Palestinians are Christians, and including the militant Chris—or Palestinians, like Al-Fadar Muman, and Haj Habash [phonetic] was a Christian. So, they are suffering the same way as the Muslims are suffering.

MR. BECERRA. Right. So, there's a lack of fairness.

DR. ATHAR. Yeah, there's a lack of fairness. So, when the Palestinians see that their house is being demolished by the gunship and by the tanks given to them by U.S.A., we become automatic enemy, like a friend of our enemy is our enemy. This is a saying, and so that's how they become.

And I think if we realize the needs or if we change ourselves from being on the side of the aggressor to being benefactor to those who are oppressed, whether those oppressed people are Palestine or Jewish people, you know, because the Jewish children are also suffering. They are losing their relatives, their parents, in this thing, and that's not good either.

So, unless—if we become fair, I think the problem we can solve, you know, but I don't

know whether we should get into every field or not. And they do not have leadership in Palestine. They don't have leadership. I don't believe in Yassir Arafat's leadership.

So, that's why there are people out suffering more, yes, sir.

MR. BECERRA. But I'm not a Muslim, and if I were a Muslim living in this country, do you feel a certain amount of—even a hurtness, living in a country that's supporting another factor and not being fair? Because—

DR. ATHAR. No—

MR. BECERRA.—I do understand where you're coming from.

DR. ATHAR. No, but see, it is not you who are supporting. It is the—

MR. BECERRA. The government.

DR. ATHAR.—government does it. Government has their own agenda. And our government, for some reason, supports nondemocratic movement all over the world. You know, Israel is not the only place. You supported Marcos, Noriega, even Saddam Hussein.

MR. GRADISON. Are they nondemocratic?

DR. ATHAR. What; Saddam Hussein?

MR. GRADISON. Marcos' government was like Israelis' government?

DR. ATHAR. Marcos—Marcos, you know—

MR. GRADISON. I missed that. I was trying—I thought you said—

DR. ATHAR. I meant the Marcos of the Philippines.

MR. BECERRA. Philippines.

MR. GRADISON. Yeah, I know. I thought you were comparing that to Israel's government.

DR. ATHAR. I'm not comparing. I'm saying that we have a system of supporting the dictators initially until they become omnipotent and they go against us.

MR. TAYLOR. Right.

MR. BECERRA. That's true.

DR. ATHAR. And then we start crying, that—why they are against us.

MR. TAYLOR. Right.

DR. ATHAR. But before they became against us, whether it is Saddam Hussein or bin Laden, we need to figure out how they came to this

prominence. How did they get the power? This is my feeling. And I am not a politician; I'm just a physician, and so I apologize if I don't express it right.

There are a lot of good things in Israel. I'm not saying that—you know, the people in Israel, all of the people, have more freedom sometime than sometime their—other Muslim countries sometimes in terms of doing different projects and education. But the way it is being handled by the Israeli Army is wrong.

And you can only realize it if you are there to see what's happening, and you talk to the Christian Palestinians living in this town, like men, in whole, not Muslim Palestinian. Talk to them what's happening to their family. Their women have been raped en masse in Bethlehem by the Israeli soldiers. These are—I'm talking about Christians; okay? And this is not in the paper because—it's part of the reason the media does not promote these kind of things.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Can we take just a quick break so that we can allow our person to change tapes?

[Pause in proceedings.]

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Okay. Michael?

MR. GRADISON. I'm not going to argue all of the virtues and vices of the Arab-Israeli conflict. I can say this: That as far as I know, Israel is the only democracy with like 20 political parties. I mean all of the governments are gobbled together. I mean it couldn't be possibly more democratic. They have a hard time voting on their government right now. And that the substantial "Peace Now" movement, substantial numbers, young people who demonstrate—

DR. ATHAR. Oh, yeah.

MR. GRADISON.—regularly, freely against Israeli government policy and suppression and oppression of the Palestinians, and it regularly plays a role there, and I have substantial sympathy for the "Peace Now" movement and can certainly understand that terrible things go on there, but there are arguments on both sides of this issue.

It's got to be finished politically. It's never going to be finished militarily. It's going to be resolved with a resolution at some particular

juncture. I think maybe Palestinians suffer now from some leadership problems on their side that make it more difficult to address these things politically. And that's probably happening since the Israelis are so democratic, with a small "d," they're having a hard time keeping a cogent position on peace together and resolution of the questions with the Palestinians and establishment of a Palestinian state, and the Palestinians are having the same problems now. I don't think that, especially after the humiliation, which I don't think has served the Israelis particularly well, Yassir Arafat was holed up in Ramalah office for so long, I think that's hurt both sides, because he's the only one they've got right now who truly stands out as a leader. For better or for worse, that's who they've got right now.

DR. ATHAR. Yeah.

MR. GRADISON. And I think that's affecting what's—right now whether there's any real leadership on both sides moving towards peace, and that's just a shame. I hope that that does happen. I don't think it's so much a religious question between the Israelis—there's so much in common—between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It is a land question. It is—

DR. ATHAR. It is a territorial—

MR. GRADISON.—recognition and whether a Palestinian—

DR. ATHAR.—issue. It's not a religious; you are right.

MR. GRADISON.—a Palestinian state exists, which it clearly has a right to do. I mean it's inevitable. It's got to happen. And the formulation of one, as I say, was that close with Bill Clinton, you know, that close before we got involved in this.

DR. ATHAR. But he was—you know, Rabin was shot by, again, a militant Jew, you know, because—

MR. GRADISON. Sure, of course.

DR. ATHAR.—he was a peacemaker. You know, he was not shot by—

MR. GRADISON. And Gandhi—I watched Gandhi again—

DR. ATHAR. So was Gandhi.

MR. GRADISON.—it was on earlier this week. I watched it again. I don't know how many times I've watched it, and it's the same old story. Here's one of his own militants, his own camp kills him off—

DR. ATHAR. Right, right.

MR. GRADISON.—and how horrible that is that we kill our own leaders.

DR. ATHAR. But anyway, coming back, Mr. Rabin, it evolved into an international thing, and coming back to our issues, you know, we have a responsibility, the elder, the grown-up, the people of responsibility have to keep America together, you know, keep all citizens together in love and respect for each other, and we need to decrease our violence irrespective of September 11 and irrespective of religion. You know, there is lot of violence in our country.

I mean the homicide and the school killings and all kinds of things which is taking place, which is not dignified for our country, which is a superpower.

MR. GRADISON. The only one.

DR. ATHAR. Huh?

MR. GRADISON. It's the only one.

DR. ATHAR. The only superpower, you know, with everything. When I was the chair of the Interfaith Alliance, a delegation from Russia came in—you know, the Russia, the new Russia, not the USSR. They said that "We never did interfaith in USSR, and we are afraid that now there will be religious fighting in Russia because we never did it, so we want to learn how to do interfaith in Russia." And soon after that, the Chechnya war broke out because they never come together. I mean it will take time. So, we are leaders in the Armed Forces. We should be leaders in interfaith, too, and the peace movement, too.

God has given us a big responsibility to be the benefactor of the mankind rather than, as I say, God bless America only, and I think we should not forgot our role, because we will be held—as a religious man, I feel we will be held accountable if we do not do our job as we're supposed to do. This is my feeling.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Doctor, we want to thank you for all that you've shared with us. And

at this point, I'd like to reserve the last few minutes for comments from members of our advisory committee. Again, we'd like to thank you for all that you've provided with us, and especially your gift, which we will—

DR. ATHAR. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES.—honor you by passing on one copy.

MR. BECERRA. Thank you, Doctor.

DR. ATHAR. If you need more, I will be happy to—I usually sell in large numbers, but for your Commission, it's important, I will give you as a donation from my practice.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Thank you.

MR. GRADISON. Thank you.

MR. BECERRA. Thank you very much.

MS. BRITA. Thank you.

[Discussion off the record.]

DR. ATHAR. Do you want us to leave, or do you want us to stay for the comments?

MR. GRADISON. No, I don't think—I don't think we're in executive session.

[Discussion off the record.]

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. In wrapping all of this up, what I would like to do is just to make sure that we're all certain about what happens at the conclusion of this briefing, which we have arrived at. We've heard a great deal today about the need for education and about the whole issue of religion and misuse of religion. What we would like to make sure that everyone understands is that, based on the briefing that we have had today, the transcript from this briefing will be completed and an executive summary will be prepared. This information will be posted on the Web site of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, and it will be available to anyone that would like to see it. And at that point, then, it may at some point provide some impetus for some later discussions and fact-finding by this body.

Are there any other questions that any of you have about the briefing and what's going to happen at this point?

MS. BRITA. Just a question about mechanics here. The transcript is going to be posted on the Web site. We in the past have always received a

full copy in the mail. Are you going to use the Web site instead of—

MS. DAVIS. No.

MS. ALLEN. Oh, no, we will—

MS. DAVIS. We'll give people the full copy.

MS. BRITA. We'll get it? Okay.

MR. GRADISON. Good.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. Are there any other questions?

MR. GRADISON. I just wanted to say, Constance and all of you who helped put this together today, and the participants we've already thanked, but it was a very fine presentation, as good as any in all of the years we've had the Commission, and we've had good ones. This one was very fine, and particularly this area that's never been explored—

MS. BRITA. Uh-huh.

MR. GRADISON.—by this body, and I dare to say not many other national governmental organizations have explored this area of concern for those—about civil liberties and civil rights, and I'm delighted that we stepped to the forefront and will make this national as to what we've discovered and what we've learned today from all of you. And I'm kind of proud that Indiana is headquarters for a lot of this activity and that all of you have been around the country and speaking to various groups about this issue, and thank you again, and to the Commission.

CHAIRPERSON HUGHES. I think with Michael's grand wrap-up, we will consider this briefing closed.

[Thereupon, the proceedings were concluded at 4:13 p.m.]

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