

7/5/2011

Positive and Representative Reporting

# Muslim Americans must draw a line in the sand on violence

BY KHALILAH SABRA  
Special to The Seattle Times

**M**USLIM civic energy is useless when progressive thought is buried beneath violent transgressions and isolation. We, as a community, must draw a line in the sand.

Our community leaders must be more aggressive in reminding its members what values Islam teaches us to embrace, with what degree of passion and what real Islamic character is. Most of all, we must ensure every member knows how to respond to the urges and tensions of a Muslim life that is currently dealing with society's response to Islam.

Violence is not the answer. Men have only the rights that they can protect. Our most priceless right is life. The prohibition against murder is rooted in every religion and in every human constitution.

The recent attempt at violence in Seattle does not speak for the wishes of the Muslim community ["2 masses of Muslims want an end to the violence and an end to the bloodletting, in America and beyond. American Muslims hurt, considerably, for the harm and injustices of war that the men who were arrested spoke about. The proclivity of it sickens everyone. But blowing up American landmarks and military training facilities won't end occupation or war or conquer all the other perceived injustices. These types of actions do not productively address U.S. actions abroad but do intensify the mistrust of Muslims here at home.

Until humanity cures what ails the heart, it won't make a dent in the body count. In the meantime, no matter how profound the indignation, individual Muslims cannot use Islam to raise bomb squads or exploit the actions that evil counts on to beef up its own bottom line. Violence causes irreversible ruin to those whom perpetrators claim to hate and to those with whom they claim solidarity.

Because of individual agendas, there's almost no context in which "Muslim" is not a scary word, a code for a character that provokes both contempt and fear.



JON KRAUSE / OP ART

It is hard to conceptualize why this should be, given the respectable tenets of Islam.

Yet the word "Islam" is seldom associated with peace, freedom or justice among most Americans. Even the diagnosis of what is a "real" Muslim fails to meet the standard of being factual. The Islamic communities must collectively address this problem, as Muslims and as Americans. Each individual in society is responsible to the whole.

With all that this country has been through, it has always been a lighthouse to those in search of liberty and justice. That's why so many Muslims have crossed its borders. Through violence it becomes a lighthouse for another kind of people: for hijackers, mass murderers and Islamophobes — the kinds of people Muslims, and others seeking liberty, have relied upon the law to protect them from.

By respecting the laws we do have, fixing the ones that are flawed, and by living up to the true meaning of the word "citizen," we preserve our common good.



Khalilah Sabra is executive director of Muslim American Society Immigrant Justice Center.