

**SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER: AN INTERFAITH
COALITION**

NATIONAL FAITH LEADERS TO PROTEST ANTI-MUSLIM HEARINGS

**WELCOME AND MODERATOR:
REVEREND MICHAEL KINNAMON,
GENERAL SECRETARY, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

**SPEAKERS:
MARK PELAVIN,
DIRECTOR,
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**RABBI MARC SCHNEIER,
PRESIDENT, THE FOUNDATION FOR ETHNIC UNDERSTANDING**

**IMAM MOHAMED HAGMAGID ALI,
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MR. : If we could all silence our cell phones or BlackBerrys, we'll begin.

REVEREND MICHAEL KINNAMON: Good afternoon. My name is Michael Kinnamon. I'm the general secretary of the National Council of Churches in the United States and it's my pleasure to welcome the members of the media to this press conference, which is being held by Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders, following the first in the series of hearings from the House Committee on Homeland Security, hearings, which as you know, were aimed at raising questions about possible radicalization of the Muslim community and that community's response.

The religious leaders who stand here with me, shoulder to shoulder, in fact stand shoulder to shoulder along with many others across the country in opposing violent extremism, which is itself a threat to the security of this and other nations. But we also stand shoulder to shoulder in opposing the singling out of any one religious community in a way that would cast unwarranted suspicion on that part of the American population.

In a few minutes, you will hear several of us criticize these hearings, I'm sure, but we also come to this press conference in order to announce a very constructive initiative in interfaith relations which we think will make a positive contribution to the building up of real security across this country. And in order to speak about that, I'd like to invite Mark Pelavin, who is director of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism and also associate director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism to speak about that.

MARK PELAVIN: Thank you, Dr. Kinnamon. I'm glad to be here. I'm proud to stand with all of my colleagues here this afternoon. As you can see, we represent a new organization, an organization which is in the process of being born today, an organization called Shoulder-to-Shoulder.

And our message from the American religious community to Congressman King, the other members of Congress and to the American public is a simple one: that we think the best response to trying to single out one religious community is for the entire religious community to stand together, shoulder to shoulder.

This is a group of religious leaders who first came together back in September, spoke out against the discussion that was taking place concerning the cultural center in New York, about the possibility of burnings of Korans in Florida. And we've come together and developed an organization.

Today is our first chance to stand together. And one of the things we wanted to say as clearly as we can today is that whenever a religious group is singled out because of its faith, we will be there, we will stand shoulder to shoulder wherever, whenever is necessary. You can see

it from the statement you have in front of you that we represent the entire spectrum of American religious life.

Every branch of American Judaism, Catholics, Protestants, mainline and evangelical, the American Muslim community, all are gathered here to stand shoulder to shoulder and say to you again that we will not allow America's religious community to be divided. Thank you.

REV. KINNAMON: I have spoken with a number of our church leaders that make up the leadership of the National Council of Churches about these hearings of the House Committee on Homeland Security. All of us, I want to say very strongly, are concerned about the security of this nation, but we as leaders – and I'm speaking now of the National Council of Churches for a moment – oppose these hearings for at least four reasons.

First of all, we believe that they are factually wrong. Second, we believe that they are counterproductive. Third, we believe that they are contrary to fundamental principles of America. And fourth – and I don't say this at all lightly – we believe that they are counter to central teachings of the Christian faith. Let me say a brief word about these.

First of all, a stated premise or rationale behind the hearings, especially as stated by their chairman, is that the American Muslim community has failed to support law enforcement in its efforts to oppose terrorism. But this is rejected by law enforcement officials themselves, as we've heard throughout this morning's hearing. And even the attorney general has said that the cooperation from Muslim Americans has been absolutely essential in identifying and preventing terrorist threats.

Second, these hearings, we believe, are counterproductive because they run the risk of alienating members of the Muslim community, as members of this committee heard this morning in the hearings. Violent extremists want Muslim youth to think that this country is anti-Muslim, that Americans now view Muslim neighbors with suspicion, as something not quite part of us. If the committee wants to investigate violent extremism, please do so. But don't imply that it's associated with one part of the mosaic that is the United States of America.

Third, we believe that these hearings are also contrary to fundamental principles of what it means to be the United States. As Denis McDonough, the deputy national security advisor to the president, said last weekend, this country does not – or I should say should not – practice guilt by association. Unfortunately, we do have a history of demonizing whole groups because of the actions of a few, as Japanese-Americans will surely attest from their experience in the Second World War. But such a practice stands contrary to the fundamental ethos of this nation.

And finally, these hearings are contrary to central teachings of Christianity. These hearings not only violate, as I'm sure you'll hear from other colleagues, the commandments not to bear false witness against a neighbor, they also break the Golden Rule about doing unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Unfortunately, I say, individuals who profess the Christian faith have been guilty of extremist rhetoric and even of terrorist activity. But I would deeply resent the implication that

the Christian community as a whole was implicated in these things or has done little to try to prevent them.

Last week, the Islamic Society of North America, with whom I'm very pleased to stand here this afternoon, denounced in extremely strong language the murder of Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian who was the minister for minorities in Pakistan. We believe strongly, said ISNA leaders, in the responsibility of Muslims to ensure the safety and dignity of religious minorities in Muslim-majority countries.

As Christians in the United States, we feel the same responsibility. Today, speaking on behalf of the National Council of Churches, I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with Muslim and Jewish neighbors, equal citizens in this great nation, whose welfare we all seek.

I'm very pleased to now invite three colleagues who will also offer their observations, the first of which is my friend Rabbi Marc Schneier, who is the president and co-founder of The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding.

RABBI MARC SCHNEIER: Thank you and good afternoon. We stand shoulder to shoulder, not only sharing a common faith, but also a common fate. And we stand shoulder to shoulder recognizing that an injustice to anyone anywhere must be the concern of everyone everywhere.

And as I sat this morning in the hearing room, I was witness to an injustice. I was witness to an injustice that the underlying tone of these hearings is to stigmatize, to stereotype and to profile Muslim Americans. And that is why I feel Congressman Ellison's pain. I share the pain. I share his concern that these hearings will only exacerbate anti-Muslim bigotry and Islamophobia in our country; and why we stand shoulder to shoulder.

So in conclusion, my friends, those of us who have come together in this alliance, in this coalition, we have the responsibility to make sure that these hearings serve not to induce fear, but to broaden awareness, the awareness that Muslim Americans are as dedicated, are as devoted to America as we are; that Muslim Americans are in the forefront of the preservation and the improvement of the United States of America. Thank you.

REV. KINNAMON: It's my pleasure to invite now to speak to us, one of the best colleagues we have in the National Council of Churches, Imam Mohamed Hagmagid Ali, who is president of the Islamic Society of North America.

IMAM MOHAMED HAGMAGID ALI: Thank you and good afternoon. As American Muslims, we're deeply disturbed by the hearing that targeted our community. But I would like to say that American Muslims have spoken many, many times against violent extremism. There's – many imams around United States have spoken against violent extremism. The Islamic Society of North America have led a campaign of Muslim scholars who have sent a strong message –

I was saying that American Muslim scholars have spoken against violent extremism and the Islamic Society of North America have led that effort. They have issued fatwas that aiding, helping, participating in violent extremism is absolutely prohibited by Islam, and they consider it a sin. It is the Holy Koran that says whoever take a life, as if you have taken life of all humanity, and whoever save one life, as if have saved all humanity. And these are verse, by the way, in the Old Testament.

I was asked before, one time, by a journalist about this verse. And she said to me that she asked a rabbi who quoted the same verse and she asked a minister who quoted the same verse. I said, God is consistent. (Laughter.) This – the belief of all of us – people of faith that we stand together, shoulder to shoulder, against extremism, bigotry and hate, discrimination against people of religion, whether in United States or abroad, will stand together against this commission against minorities, with Christians or anti-Semitism, we stand together, shoulder to shoulder because our religion – all of our scholars – to stand as one family, as a family of Adam and Eve.

I would like to say that we would like to hear from Congress, from this kind of hearing, the great work American Muslims are doing. Muslims are saving life: Muslim doctors, like in Katrina and saving life of people around the world. The story of American Muslim policemen – policewomen, people who are protecting the border. This is the story that America needs to hear.

I do believe that by isolating and singling out the community, we're really feeding into the stereotyping and discrimination against the community. But this America that I know that's standing with me here, that America that I love, of standing shoulder to shoulder, rejecting and refusing discrimination against any minority. Thank you.

REV. KINNAMON: It's a source of joy to me that we stand here, Jew, Muslim, Christian. But also, as a Christian, it's a joy that we stand here, Catholic, mainline and evangelical. And in that spirit, I'm very pleased to introduce another speaker and my good colleague, Reverend Richard Cizik, who is the president and co-founder of The New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good.

REVEREND RICHARD CIZIK: Thank you, Dr. Kinnamon. Thank you all for coming. I'm here to represent the millions and millions of American evangelicals who care about freedom, who care about religious freedom, who care even about what happens to Muslim Americans, very much so.

I'm president of The New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good. I ran into a conservative Republican, walking across the sidewalk outside this building the other day and he said, what are you doing? I said, I'm building the new evangelicals. He said, well, what's wrong with the old evangelicals?

The new evangelicals are those who believe in a civil public square – that is, a public square in which all faiths are free to enter and engage in politics and every other cultural,

religious and political activity, but within a framework of what is agreed to be just and free for other faiths too. That is what a civil public square is.

And as evangelicals, we reject as well the old ideas. The old ideas were that we have in America a sacred public square, that is, where one religion – which many evangelicals, quite frankly, believe was their religion – has a preferred place. So we reject the idea of a sacred public square where, today, it would be – quite frankly, by numbers, evangelical Christians, who are the majority, would have all the rights. But maybe tomorrow it may be Muslims. So we reject the idea of a sacred public square.

We also reject the idea of a naked public square, that is, where religious values are excluded and marginalized. We would like to say here today that a civil public square raises questions about what happened at the hearing today.

We would say as evangelicals that every right we assert for ourselves is at once a right we defend for other faiths too. And because of that, a right for a Christian is a right for a Muslim, a Jew, a secular or any other faith in America. And thus we are concerned that a security hearing that focuses on one faith group exclusively serves only to amplify the Islamophobia that we know exists – and, I have to admit, exists, sad to say, within evangelicals. But I also stand here today to say that that Islamophobia is wrong and it is waning. And it deserves to be excluded from this country, that kind of Islamophobia.

It is a dangerous thing when one group is singled out in the front of the rest. It is humiliating; it is shaming; it is stigmatizing; and it almost always invites citizens to marginalize that targeted group. Every evangelical should join, I say, Dr. Kinnamon, as a mainline Protestant, as my fellow Catholics and Muslims and everyone else here – every American evangelical should stand shoulder to shoulder, today especially, with our Muslim friends, neighbors and believers.

And we should strive, I would lastly – finally – for a good society: a good society in which all religious voices are welcome and enjoy maximum freedom. And that's maximum freedom away from being stigmatized, ostracized, humiliated, shamed or excluded. And so this is our dream: a civil society in which we all stand together, shoulder to shoulder, on behalf of each other's rights.

This is America. This is our America. This is our dream which we aspire to. And it is a good dream. And it is worthy of all of us and everyone here and all those listening. I thank you.

REV. DR. KINNAMON: It was painful to see in the hearings today how the arguments seem to divide along the lines of political party. And so I want to stress that we stand here not as Democrats or Republicans but rather as persons of faith who believe that our principles of faith lead us to the kind of convictions that you've heard us express.

We also have developed a joint statement out of our common work, shoulder to shoulder. I believe that statement is – either will be distributed or is. And we would like to read parts of that statement now in the public hearing.

We have three colleagues who will do that: first, Rabbi Jack Moline, who is director of public policy for the Rabbinical Assembly and also a board member of the Interfaith Alliance; Reverend Brent Walker, who is the executive director of the Baptist Committee for Religious Liberty; and Reverend J. Herbert Nelson, who is the director of public witness, compassion, peace and justice ministry for the Presbyterian Washington office here in D.C.

RABBI JACK MOLINE: Thank you, Dr. Kinnamon. It's my privilege to begin reading the document "Shoulder to Shoulder: Religious Leaders Stand Shoulder to Shoulder against Extremism of All Kinds in Support of American Values," Washington, D.C., March 10th, 2011.

As American religious leaders, we share a deep sense of obligation to call upon our fellow citizens to treat each other with compassion and honesty and to foster an ethical commitment to bedrock American values such as pluralism and religious freedom, mutuality and respect – values also at the core of our religious traditions.

As the House Committee on Homeland Security convenes history on the putative "radicalization" of American Muslims, our obligation takes on renewed urgency. We gather together to affirm that we stand united, all Americans, in urging our elected representatives to act not against a single, unfairly maligned group, but against all forms of violence and extremism that endanger our security.

As spiritual leaders and people of faith, we call on the United States Congress, elected officials at every level of government and all American citizens not to perpetuate damaging false witness against our neighbors. Instead, we encourage all communities of faith and people of goodwill throughout this country to stand shoulder to shoulder in communities of growing awareness, trust and hope.

All of our faith communities share a powerful prohibition against bearing false witness, with the understanding that destroying a person's reputation is tantamount to destroying his or her life. To assert that Muslims as a broad group are not deeply devoted to America's safety and the peaceful interaction of its entire citizenry – that is false witness.

By subjecting American Muslims to such scrutiny, we weaken our more perfect union and we harm the national vision of our common good that is a witness to the nations. We encourage all citizens of this country to honor freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution that enable the free exercise of religion across our great land.

BRENT WALKER: Again, I'm Brent Walker. I'm the executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

Far from a radicalized fringe group, Muslims are woven into the American tapestry. Muslims serve as teachers and factory workers, doctors and lawyers, social service volunteers and loving parents. They serve proudly and with distinction in the military and the FBI, on police forces and in fire departments and in all branches of the U.S. armed forces, next to soldiers of all faiths, many having given their lives for this country.

In these and other vocations, Muslims work hard, give back to their communities and worship in peace. The Muslim community's clergy work closely with the leaders of our nation's other faith groups, where we study our sacred texts together, pray together, join hands to address issues of shared concern such as homelessness, drug abuse and violence against women.

The rationale for these hearings rests on the assertion that the American Muslim community has failed to support American law enforcement in its efforts against terrorism. This assertion is false. A study by Duke University indicated that, quote, "The largest single source of initial information," end quote, in helping prevent terrorist attacks were members of the Muslim community.

In fact, the American Muslim community is deeply engaged in preventing terrorism.

REVEREND J. HERBERT NELSON: We stand shoulder to shoulder as faith leaders reminded of the fact that we are committed to building a future in which extremism is an artifact of the past and where religious identity is not the cause of hostility but of acceptance. This country's spiritual, religious and ethnic diversity serves to enrich our public discourse. When our public discourse is enriched, extremism is seldom given any quarter.

We urge the members of our government, as well as citizens of goodwill, to refrain from passing judgment on religious or faith groups based on the actions of a few who pervert that spiritual tradition through acts of violence and hostile rhetoric. We believe that politicians, cultural figures and members of the media are never justified in exploiting religious differences in order to advance ideological or political aims.

Our leaders in Congress and the administration must stand on it and speak out against these hearings, hearings that perpetuate misrepresentation and harm our country, rather than lead it to a greater awareness and a strengthened citizenry.

Spiritual leaders have a moral responsibility and a sacred calling to categorically denounce derision, misinformation or outright bigotry directed against anyone, regardless of faith – their faith community. Silence is not an option. Only by taking a stand together can we fulfill the highest calling of our respective faiths and thereby play a role in building a safer, more secure America.

REV. KINNAMON: In a moment, we'll have time for some questions and answers. Before that, I would like to call on colleague Father James Massa, who will read a statement from Archbishop Wilton Gregory, who is the archbishop of Atlanta and also the chairperson of the Committee on Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. And I'll also say that if – Congressman Carson, if you would like to say a word, we also would welcome that at that time as well. Thank you.

FATHER JAMES MASSA: As the statement indicates, this wonderful meeting of interfaith leaders has a long prehistory. We've been together before on similar platforms and whenever one of our partners is unfairly portrayed in public fora, we stand with them. And so

this comes to you, Imam Magid, from Archbishop Gregory. And we speak to you as one of our dear friends in the Catholic community.

I greet you on Ash Wednesday, the day when Catholics all over the world begin the holy season of Lent. It is in this holy season, which is characterized by 40 days of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, that we seek to draw closer to God and neighbor as we prepare for the celebration of Easter.

In this context, I wish to share with you my deep concern and offer a personal note of support to you and the members of the Islamic Society of North America. As your religious community is singled out for particular scrutiny at this time, given our own experience of prejudice in this country when we first began to arrive in large numbers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, we Catholics want to express our solidarity with you, our Muslim brothers and sisters.

My brother Catholic bishops and I continue to discern the most effective means of addressing with you both the issues of prejudice against Muslims in the United States and the appropriate means of protecting our nation against threats to its security. We are grateful for the mutual collaboration and friendship that has existed for 20 years between our conference and the Islamic Society of North America.

As we move together in witnessing to shared human values and religious freedom, let me assure you of my continued prayers and support. Most Reverend Wilton Gregory, Archbishop of Atlanta.

REV. KINNAMON: Congressman Carson, we are grateful that you have come to stand with us here, shoulder to shoulder, and would welcome a word from you, if you'd like to give that.

REP. ANDRÉ CARSON (D-IN): Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity. Well, thank you – thank you all for the opportunity. As we have leaders from the various faith communities here, I think it's critically important that we stand in solidarity.

As a proud American and a proud Muslim, I am deeply concerned by Representative King's hearings. At a time when we should be actively working together to strengthen relationships across the Muslim world to help fight extremism, Representative King's hearings risk tearing down some of the bridges that we have built.

But it's more than destroying the relationship with the Muslim community. These hearings weaken the very foundation upon which this country was built. Our nation was founded under the principle that we have the right to practice our religion freely and without persecution. Targeting American Muslims goes against centuries of religious freedoms in the U.S. and contradicts the very proud American history that many Muslims families can trace back to generations.

With so many leaders from different faiths here today, it's easy to recognize how wrong these hearings really are. They are concerned, like so many Americans, because they know that while Muslims will be the focus today, it might be a different group tomorrow.

I came here as a former law enforcement who worked in intelligence with different faith groups to help thwart plots against this country. I stand here as a proud American and as a proud Muslim and the representative of Indiana's 7th Congressional District.

But I want the American people to know that going forward, this statement here today shows a sentiment in this country that we are entering a new paradigm in a new dispensation of time where people of goodwill, people from all races, are saying, enough is enough. And we will no longer stand for bigotry or intolerance in any form. Thank you.

REV. KINNAMON: We thank you for that statement. I give thanks for all the colleagues who have spoken. I'm honored to stand here with them. We thank you also for being present and now welcome questions that you might have for any of the colleagues here. Please.

Q: Jerome Socolovsky with the Voice of America. I'd like to know, in your view, what would be the proper way for Congress to investigate violence committed in the name of Islam. I can choose. (Laughter.)

IMAM ALI: As an American Muslim – as Muslim community in America, we get disturbed by anyone who hijacks our religion and misuses Islam to justify violence. But we do believe, through treating the Muslim community as a partner, not suspect, as the assistant to the president has said in the mosque where I am the imam, when it comes to violent extremism, Muslim Americans are the solution, not the problem.

Therefore, I would like to say that it takes a collective effort from all the people to stand against violent extremism. But singling out a community or to have misinformation that Muslim communities have not done enough – there's no doubt in my mind, whoever has said that has not done the research. They have not done their homework.

REV. KINNAMON: I can imagine hearings that would come under the heading of the role of religion in promoting violent extremism, that would be able to address the real problem, not a group of people, the vast, vast majority of whom have nothing to do with the problem – rather, are part of the solution. The problem with the way in which these hearings have been framed is, I think, what we stand here against.

But please hear us: Across the board, we're concerned with issues of security. And we recognize that this committee, in fact, has a responsibility to look into violent extremism. But the targeting of a single community – that's what we stand to say "no" to because we think – because you've heard that it's counterproductive as well as, dare I say it, un-American. Please.

Q: Shawna Thomas, NBC News. There was talk during the hearing of, are we letting political correctness get into the way of talking about an issue that does deserve some attention?

You just said it's the framing you're against. Isn't that just another way of saying political correctness?

REV. KINNAMON: We heard also when Sheriff Baca said that there is an – that the obligation to responsibly investigate all is not a matter of political correctness. I think we reject the notion that this is political correctness. We are trying to address the issue, not a false issue.

And the problem is, there's an implication of a broader community. And that does nothing to address the real question at hand.

MR. PELAVIN: I would just add that I think that our concern about the hearing functions on two levels. One is a level of compassion, that our hearts go out to any religious communities, especially minority communities, that's singled out by this kind of investigation. But we're also concerned at a pragmatic level.

As you've heard from a number of the speakers here today, the very framing of the hearing can serve to create a further wedge between Muslim Americans and other Americans, and serve to drive Muslim Americans away from cooperation with law enforcement rather than towards cooperation with law enforcement, as has been the pattern. So we're concerned both on compassionate grounds and on pragmatic grounds.

JAMES ZOGBY: Let me – let me make a couple observations about that.

Q: Could you identify yourself?

MR. ZOGBY: The name is James Zogby. And I'm president of the Arab American Institute. A couple observations here: One is, the issue of radicalization has to be looked at. But the issue of radicalization goes beyond any particular religious community. If we look into our prisons where much has been made of radicalized Islam in prisons, our prisons are a mess. And radicalization occurs across the board. And there are skinheads, and there are white Christian movements, and there are movements in the Hispanic prison population and movements in the African-American population. And there's also Islam.

To single out one to the exclusion of the other means that we're not addressing radicalization; we're targeting a particular community. Secondly, I think that the problem here was not just in the framing of it, but in the backstory to the hearing and the purpose of the hearing itself.

Look, the congressman who called the hearing – I'm not going to question his motives. But he has a record and a history of statements that have been abusive towards Muslims. And he also has a history of partnerships with people who call into question his ability to be objective as he moves forward on these issues. What came through so very clearly today was a circling the horses around the congressman from one side of the aisle, and a division in the ranks on the – on the other side of the aisle.

The point is, is that if we're going to move forward on this – in this nation to address radicalization and to make ourselves secure, one of the places to begin is to heal the partisan divide. This issue was not just used to create a divide between Muslims and the rest of America, but between Democrats and Republicans. It was exploited rather, I think, callously for partisan purposes, and was shameful as that.

When our president went to Cairo and spoke about reaching out to the Muslim world, I was asked after debating on a number of television shows with folks from different – a different political party, could the president actually succeed in reaching to a relationship with the Muslim community? I said, absolutely. I'm not just convinced that we can heal the partisan divide here as easily.

And what we saw today play out was just that. And Muslims were in effect the football that got kicked around on the field. And it was a dangerous display, and much more so than political correctness. It was a political – I think I would – I would just say extravaganza engineered by one side for advantage. And I think it was shameful.

Q: Khanmi Bhat (ph) from the Pakistan –

MR. : Please tell us – say who you are.

Q: My name is Khanmi Bhat (ph). I write for the Pakistani Spectator. My question is that, do you see any ray of hope and the trust in American intellect of the statements of American people that they would be able to see that if this – (inaudible) – that there's any substance in it? As long as, James, like you said, about politicians? Politicians do these kinds of things all over the world. You go to Muslim countries like in Pakistan, then you will see a lot of politicians make – (inaudible) – out of anti-Semitism.

So if this happen in America, it's not very unique. But I think we should trust the American people that they should be able to make their own decision that this was just a setup to create that, not if there's some reality to that.

So I will repeat my question: Do you see any real hope in Muslims that Americans will be able to understand that it was – that it was really not substantive because the response, as he just said – (inaudible) – that we (love ?) this country.

MR. ZOGBY: This is the ray of hope right here.

MR. : Exactly.

IMAM ALI: Yeah. I see a lot of hope. I will give you an example. In an anniversary of 9/11, Christians, Jews come to the Adams Center – the mosque where I'm the imam – and they spent the night in the parking lot protecting the mosque. America has shown its best in difficult time. And you can see it – (inaudible) – you can ask American Muslims across the United States that how much support they're getting from their fellow Americans, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Hindus and so forth. Their support is overwhelming.

MR. KINNAMON: The last question?

Q: Laurie Goodstein with The New York Times. There are going to be people who will ask why none of you are addressing some of the substance that was in the hearing today. Specifically, there were two witnesses who spoke of having their family members that they called “radicalized” at specific mosques, and in those mosques. And so then in fact, the leaders of those mosques urged them not to cooperate with law enforcement or who were promoting radicalization.

I’m wondering if any of you will speak to that. Is there anything that you think of, you know – (inaudible) – and you know, as to both the Muslim leaders but also to others as well?

IMAM ALI: I’d like to say that Muslims are not saying there’s no problem. We do believe there’s elements that targeting our youth in our community. But we’re saying that Muslims are really engaging in this fight against violent extremism.

I’ve held in my – the mosque where I am the imam – a town hall meeting to speak about radicalization and violent extremism. Mosques around the United States have done a lot. Of what I wish there was examples in that hearing of a mosque have done that because the impression had been given in the hearing that all mosques are not doing anything. That’s what I see being unfair.

RABBI SCHNEIER: To respond to your question, there is always a silver lining in every dark cloud. And one of these silver linings that I have experienced since I first entered this field five years ago, that you see – among the American Muslim leadership, you see more and more leaders beginning to speak out to champion the cause of moderation, centrism, not only here in the United States, but around the world.

I’ll give you an example, an experience I just had with the leadership of ISNA one week ago. Palestinian youth were being taught in schools about the Holocaust. And both Hamas and Fatah raised a very strong objection to those children being taught about the Holocaust. And you know who responded, responded to that objection was the leadership of ISNA. The leadership of ISNA in a very public statement, they denounced Holocaust denial – the leadership of ISNA, who understands that a people who fight for their own rights are only as honorable as when they fight for the rights of all people.

That, I would not have been able to have encountered 10 years ago. The fact that on Sunday, how many Muslim Americans took to Times Square to demonstrate, not focusing on the hearing, but to publicly demonstrate their dedication, their commitment and their love for the United States. And Imam Shamsi Ali, the head of the great mosque of New York, the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, informed me it was the first time that the New York Muslim community actually took to the streets to rally on behalf of America.

So I think we have to be sensitive to the fact that this is a process. But the good news is that the process has begun. And this process, and the journey has begun. And it will be a

journey to the promised land of greater cooperation and understanding between Americans and Muslims in our country. Thank you.

Q: Sir, your name?

RABBI SCHNEIER: It's Rabbi Mark Schneier. Thank you.

REV. KILLMER: And I'm Reverend Richard Killmer, executive director of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. We are not saying that there are no legitimate security concerns; there certainly are. The question is, there is a better way to do it. There is a better way to respond to this reality. And you don't do it by dividing people; you don't do it by picking on one particular people. But you do it by calling all of the people of faith together to be creative, to come up with smart ideas for making our country safe. You don't divide us; you call us together.

REV. KINNAMON: Let me simply say also that all of us ache for the two families who were represented in the hearings. I know that I also was deeply moved by their testimony. I don't doubt the reality of their experience.

However, having said that, we also heard in the hearings testimony about studies done by the RAND Corporation, by Duke University and others which bore witness to the active response of the Muslim community on behalf of law-enforcement officials in identifying and responding to threats of terrorism. That also was a part of the hearing, and we need to stress it.

Friends, I'm grateful for your having been here this afternoon, for the chance to listen and to hear these other colleagues speak about shoulder to shoulder. And we now have to close the press conference, but with thanks to you for being here.

(END)