

Being Muslim in Trump's America

I don't know about everyone else but I'm still in absolute shock that the 45th president of the United States is Donald J. Trump. A man whose campaign rhetoric was full of hate, prejudice, racism, bigotry, xenophobia, islamophobia and blatant vulgar sexism. He called Mexican immigrants rapists and killers and has consistently called for the construction of "the wall". He has offended the black community by making disparaging remarks about the Black Lives Matter movement. He actually mocked a disabled reporter on video by imitating his physical disability and then denied it. He even said, "I could stand in the middle of 5th Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose voters."

One of the worst things that came to light about him is his disgusting and vile attitude towards women. His true nature was caught on camera and on tape when he boasted about groping and making unwanted advances on women. Then he had the audacity to justify it by saying it's just locker room talk. I mean come on. Talk about alternative facts.

Throughout his campaign he called for a ban on Muslims immigrating to the U.S, suggested developing a Muslim registry and has said that "Islam hates us." He has made some very dangerous and Islamophobic statement that highlight his true attitude towards Islam and Muslims. And we as Muslims shouldn't be naïve about this; his top aides and several figures in his administration actually believe they're at war with Islam. The list of ridiculous things he's said and done can go on and on. There were several times throughout his campaign where he said or did something that most people thought made him unfit and unqualified to be President.

Despite all this and much more, he was still elected the 45th President of the United States of America. As I said I'm still in shock. If we use his first few weeks as an indication of what's to come, Americans, especially Muslim Americans, are going to face some interesting times. And it seems like his team and him are trying their best to fulfill their campaign promises. Someone wittingly remarked that President Obama entered office with a mandate of change and was largely

unsuccessful. Trump was elected to office with a mandate of disruption and has been doing so since his inauguration.

He set the tone of his administration towards Islam and Muslims when he said, “We will reinforce old alliances and form new ones – and unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth.” On top of that he has surrounded himself with cabinet members and aides who are known to be open bigots and Islamophobes who believe there’s a clash of civilizations and that they’re at war with Islam.

Wake-up Call

The fact that he won the election should be a wake-up call for all of us. It should make us realize that the society we live in, American, society, has some real deeply-rooted issues. Racism, prejudice and bigotry towards minorities run deep within the veins of America, this is a reality that none of us should be blind to. I mean there was official segregation between races, black and whites, up until the 60’s and there continues to be unofficial segregation until today. We as Muslims living in America should be aware of its history and how it has shaped the America we see today. We should recognize that Islamophobia is an extension of that prejudice and racism; it’s part of that same mindset and mentality.

Islamophobia

Islam and Muslims have been under the microscope for some time now. Since 9/11 a whole industry has been created and developed whose sole purpose is to create closed-minded prejudice and hatred towards Islam and Muslims. There’s a whole well-funded industry of Islamophobia and propaganda dedicated to tarnishing the Image of Islam and Muslims in the average person’s mind. They’ve created an environment where the word Islam has negative associations. That when someone hears the word Islam they automatically think of violence, terror, bombings and the enemy.

The main stream media, whether its CNN, BCC or Fox News, portrays Islam and Muslims in the most negative light possible. CNN has had panel discussions on “Is Islam a violent religion?” and “Is Islam more violent than other religions?” There are headlines that create doubts and irrational fears in the average person’s

mind about their normal Muslim neighbors and co-workers like, “How she went from a school teacher to an ISIS member” and “When Americans leave for Jihad”. These are absolutely ridiculous things that may seem bizarre and outrageous to us but real for the person sitting next to us in class or at the doctor’s office.

And it’s this rhetoric, this hate, this prejudice and bigotry that has created an environment that would allow for hate crimes to take place, that would make it okay for people to think that a “Muslim Ban” or a “Muslim Registry” is needed. In the past year we’ve seen a noticeable spike in Islamophobic incidents. There are reports of people being kicked off planes simply because they’re Muslim. Sisters have been assaulted and harassed and had their hijabs torn off. We’ve had these insane armed protests outside masājīd. Three Muslim youth had their life taken away from them because of this bigotry. Just recently a few masjids were burned down to the ground and most recently we had the tragic shooting that took place during Isha prayer at a masjid in Quebec, taking the lives of 6 innocent Muslims.

There’s so much bigotry and fear-mongering that at times it seems overwhelming. There’s so much bias, hate and prejudice that sometimes we feel stuck. And with Trump in office it seems as if the rhetoric has been taken to a new level. It seems like “war on Islam” is part of the Trump doctrine. Now the question we should be focused on is: what can we do about it? How do we deal with it? What are we supposed to do?

Patience and Prayer: Focus on our relationship with Allah

One thing that we can definitely take solace in is the fact that the Prophet (saw), the last and final messenger, our role model also experienced this same anti-Muslim rhetoric. As a matter of fact, he faced Islamophobia on steroids. There was a very powerful anti-Islam, anti-Muslim sentiment amongst the people of Makkah. This rhetoric and opposition didn’t cause them to give into fear; it didn’t make them scared. Rather, it made them stronger.

In multiple places throughout the Quran Allah (swt) taught the Prophet (saw) how to deal with this opposition. How to derive strength from these trials and hardships. When the people of Quraish rejected him, when they called him a liar, a magician, a sorcerer and a madman Allah (Swt) told him, “So be patient, [O

Muhammad]. Indeed, the promise of Allah is truth. And ask forgiveness for your sin and exalt [Allah] with praise of your Lord in the evening and the morning.”

فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَسْتَغْفِرْ لِدُنْيَاكَ وَسَيِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ بِالْعِشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَرِ ﴿٥٥﴾

Allah (swt) told him to seek strength through patience and prayer. To focus on his relationship with Allah (swt).

Allah (swt) told him something similar in Surah Taha, “So be patient over what they say and exalt [Allah] with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting; and during periods of the night [exalt Him] and at the ends of the day, that you may be satisfied.”

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا وَمِنْ آنَاءِ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾

These are the same words of advice that Allah (swt) gives to us as believers, “O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.”

The true strength of the believers has never been through financial or physical means. Their true power has always come through their spiritual strength.

Outlook

In light of everything that’s going on around us both politically and socially I feel that it’s very important for us to keep the following five things in mind:

- 1) Faith – We should focus on strengthening our relationship with Allah ﷻ Faith and spirituality are what give us the ability to face challenges and difficulties with strength, steadfastness, patience and perseverance.
- 2) Accepting the Divine Decree and Having Trust in Allah– We should recognize that everything that’s happening is part of the Divine Decree and will of Allah ﷻ; nothing happens without His will or permission. There’s some deep divine wisdom behind everything that’s going on and we should place our faith and trust in Him. As Allah ﷻ says, “Say: Nothing shall befall us

except what Allah has willed for us. He alone is our Protector, so in Allah let the believers place their trust.”¹

- 3) Blessings in Disguise – Oftentimes things may seem like they’re horrible but there’s always a silver lining. As Allah ﷻ tells us, “And it is possible that you dislike a matter, but Allah places much good in it.”² We’ve already seen that our communities are organizing, coming together and uniting against prejudice. Perhaps this is our opportunity to strengthen our communities and our relationships with other minority groups. This past weekend 1000’s of people protested the “Muslim Ban” at airports all across America. The vast majority of those standing for us and with us were non-Muslim. As a matter of fact all this negative attention towards Islam and Muslims may actually be changing peoples’ perceptions of Islam for the better (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/01/25/americans-dont-support-trumps-ban-on-muslim-immigration/?utm_term=.1264a2ca7637).
- 4) Optimism and hope – Our faith and religion teach us to be optimistic and hopeful regarding the future; not pessimistic and desperate. We’re taught to keep a positive attitude and remember that ultimately Allah ﷻ is in control. Allah ﷻ tells us, “And do not become weak, nor grieve, for surely you shall be victorious if you believe.”³
- 5) Be Proactive! – Now is the time to work towards change. We can’t retreat into fear or isolation. It’s time for us to get involved in our local communities, build relationships with people of other faiths and make our voices heard.

May Allah ﷻ make all of our affairs easy for us and give us the strength, patience, forbearance, wisdom and guidance to

¹ 9:51

² 2:216

³ 3:139

