

Beat: Lifestyle

CLOSURE OF INTERVENTION OF BARACK OBAMA IN BALTIMORE - MARYLAND

SPEAKING AT ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF BALTIMORE

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USPA NEWS - CLOSURE of the intervention of U.S. President Barack Obama, on February 3, 2106 at Islamic Society of Baltimore :

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CLOSURE of the intervention of U.S. President Barack Obama, on February 3, 2106 at Islamic Society of Baltimore :

'But across the Islamic world, influential voices should consistently speak out with an affirmative vision of their faith. And it's happening. These are the voices of Muslim clerics who teach that Islam prohibits terrorism, for the Koran says whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind. (Applause.) These are the voices of Muslim scholars, some of whom join us today, who know Islam has a tradition of respect for other faiths; and Muslim teachers who point out that the first word revealed in the Koran -- ighra -- means "read" -- to seek knowledge, to question assumptions. (Applause.)

Muslim political leaders have to push back on the lie that the West oppresses Muslims, and against conspiracy theories that says America is the cause of every ill in the Middle East. Now, that doesn't mean that Muslim Americans aren't free to criticize American -- U.S. foreign policy. That's part of being an American. I promise you, as the President of the United States, I'm mindful that that is a healthy tradition that is alive and well in America. (Laughter.) But like leaders everywhere, these leaders have been offering, and need to continue to offer, a positive vision for progress, and that includes political and economic progress.

And we have to acknowledge that much of the violence in places like the Middle East is now turning into fights between sects -- Shia, Sunni and others -- where differences are often exploited to serve political agendas, as I said earlier. And this bloodshed is destroying Muslim families and communities, and there has to be global pressure to have the vision and the courage to end this kind of thinking and this approach to organizing political power.

It's not historically unique. It's happened in every part of the world -- from Northern Ireland to Africa, to Asia, to right here in the United States -- in the past. But it is something that we have to fight against.

And we know it's possible. Across the history of Islam, different sects traditionally have lived and thrived together peacefully. And in many parts of the world they do today, including here in the United States.

Like people of all religions, Muslims living their faith in a modern, pluralistic world are called upon to uphold human rights, to make sure that everyone has opportunity. That includes the aspirations of women and youth and all people. If we expect our own dignity to be respected, so must we respect the dignity of others. (Applause.)

So let me conclude by saying that as Muslim communities stand up for the future that you believe in, that you exhibit in your daily lives, as you teach your children, America will be your partner.

We will -- I will -- do everything I can to lift up the multiplicity of Muslim voices that promote pluralism and peace. (Applause.) We will continue to reach out to young Muslims around the world, empowering them with science and technology and entrepreneurship, so they can pursue their God-given potential, and help build up their communities and provide opportunity.

It's why we will continue to partner with Muslim American communities -- not just to help you protect against extremist threats, but to expand health care and education and opportunity -- (applause) -- because that's the best way to build strong, resilient communities.

Our values must guide us in this work. Engagement with Muslim American communities must never be a cover for surveillance. (Applause.) We can't give in to profiling entire groups of people. There's no one single profile of terrorists.

We can't securitize our entire relationship with Muslim Americans. We can't deal with you solely through the prism of law enforcement.

We've got to build trust and mutual respect. That's how we'll keep our communities strong and our communities united.

As I was in discussion with the young people before I came in here, I said this will be a process. Law enforcement has a tough job. Some of these groups are specifically trying to target Muslim youth. We're going to have to be partners in this process.

There will be times where the relationship is clumsy or mishandled. But I want you to know that from the President to the FBI Director, to everybody in law enforcement, my directive and their understanding is, is that this is something we have to do together. And if we don't do it well, then we're actually not making ourselves safer; we're making ourselves less safe.

And here, I want to speak directly to the young people who may be listening. In our lives, we all have many identities. We are sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters. We're classmates; Cub Scout troop members. We're followers of our faith. We're citizens of our country. And today, there are voices in this world, particularly over the Internet, who are constantly claiming that you have to choose between your identities -- as a Muslim, for example, or an American.

Do not believe them. If you're ever wondering whether you fit in here, let me say it as clearly as I can, as President of the United States: You fit in here -- right here. (Applause.) You're right where you belong. You're part of America, too. (Applause.) You're not Muslim or American. You're Muslim and American. (Applause.)

Don't grow cynical. Don't respond to ignorance by embracing a world view that suggests you must choose between your faith and your patriotism. Don't believe that you have to choose between your best impulses and somehow embrace a world view that pits us against each other -- or, even worse, glorifies violence.

Understand your power to bring about change. Stay engaged in your community. Help move our country forward -- your country forward. (Applause.)

We are blessed to live in a nation where even if we sometimes stumble, even if we sometimes fall short, we never stop striving for our ideals. We keep moving closer to that more perfect union. We're a country where, if you work hard and if you play by the rules, you can ultimately make it, no matter who you are or how you pray. It may not always start off even in the race, but here, more than any place else, there's the opportunity to run that race.

And as we go forward, I want every Muslim American to remember you are not alone. Your fellow Americans stand with you -- just as Sabah described her friends after she decided that she was going to start wearing a hijab. That's not unusual. Because just as so often we only hear about Muslims after a terrorist attack, so often we only hear about Americans' response to Muslims after a hate crime has happened, we don't always hear about the extraordinary respect and love and community that so many Americans feel.

I'm thinking about the seven-year-old boy in Texas who emptied his piggy bank to help a mosque that had been vandalized. (Applause.) Or all the faith communities that rallied around Muslim Americans after the tragedy in Chapel Hill. The churches and the synagogues standing shoulder-to-shoulder with their local mosques, including the woman carrying a sign saying 'We love our Muslim neighbors.' Think of our men and women in uniform who, when they heard that a little girl was afraid because she's a Muslim, sent her a message -- 'I Will Protect You.' (Applause.)

I want every American to remember how Muslim communities are standing up for others, as well. Because right now, as we speak, there are Muslims in Kenya who saved Christians from terrorists, and Muslims who just met in Morocco to protect religious minorities, including Christians and Jews. (Applause.) The good people of this mosque helped this city move forward after the turmoil of last year. Muslim Americans across the country helped African American churches rebuild after arson.

Remember the Muslim Americans in Boston who reached out to victims of the Marathon bombing; the Muslim Americans across the country who raised money for the families of San Bernardino; the Muslim Americans in Chattanooga who honored our fallen servicemembers, one of them saying, 'in the name of God, the God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad, God bless our fallen heroes.' (Applause.)

We are one American family. We will rise and fall together. It won't always be easy. There will be times where our worst impulses are given voice. But I believe that ultimately, our best voices will win out. And that gives me confidence and faith in the future. (Applause.)

After more than 200 years, our blended heritage, the patchwork quilt which is America, that is not a weakness, that is one of our

greatest strengths. It's what makes us a beacon to the world.

It's what led that mother who wrote to me -- the one who worries about her young daughter -- it led her to end her letter with hope, despite her fears. She said, 'I still believe in one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.' (Applause.)

May God's peace be upon you. May God bless the United States of America. Thank you very much, everybody. (Applause.)

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