



Sacred Conversation on Race The journey **continues**

O God, we pray for your presence and wisdom, as we begin to look carefully at the realities of RACE and Arab Americans. Amen.

Racial stereotyping results in a climate of fear

“Because you’re an Arab.” That is the reason given to an Arab-American teacher in a Christian school by the principal, who told him that another teacher had been hired to replace him two days after the horrific 2001 terrorist attacks.



Guilty by association

More than 1000 incidents of hate crime and discrimination against Arab-Americans occurred in the first year after 9/11, according to the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC).

Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans became “guilty by association” in the aftermath of the horrific 9/11 attacks.

Foreign policy impacts domestic civil rights

Racial profiling

Many who “look” Arab or Muslim were harassed and discriminated. For example, Sikhs, Hindus and non-Arab such as South Asian and Latin American were targeted.



Racial and religious stereotyping, and ignorance, has resulted in a climate of fear. Islamophobia is still very much relevant today.

Domestic Civil Rights

In *How Does it Feel to be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America*, author Moustafa Bayoumi writes,

“Far away from the headlines of the moment, young Arab and Muslim Americans face a volatile mixture of fear, suspicion, curiosity, and misunderstanding . . .

However, the principles currently at stake revolve not only around issues of full equality and inclusion, but fundamentally around the consequences of American foreign policy have on domestic civil rights.”



How U.S. citizens treat each other—our fellow human beings—are beyond tolerance, and goes to acceptance and companionship.

How we as Christians and citizens view the world, and specifically approaches to issues in the Middle East, play out in interpersonal relations as well.

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“We need to see each other not as abstractions”

Prayerful reflection

In response to the question “who is my neighbor,” Jesus told the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37).

Samaritans had long been stereotyped by Jesus’ countrymen as despicable.

Yet Jesus used the parable to describe how a Samaritan came to the help of one who suffered violence and injustice,

The spiritual value of this parable is the common humanity of us all.

“When we see God in the other, we accept the otherness of the other... Then we accept each other’s human, civil, religious, and political rights ...”

– Bishop Munib Younan
Palestinian Bishop of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church
of Jordan and the Holy Land,
based in Jerusalem

In interacting with people who have different heritages, races, or faiths, we need an intentional attitude that is based in God.

“We need to see each other as incarnate [in the flesh] brothers and sisters — not as abstractions. Americans [and Westerners] must know there are human beings in the Middle East whose lives are at stake.”

– Patriarch Hazim
Greek Orthodox Patriarch of
Antioch and All the East, based
in Damascus, Syria.

In other words, the implications of US policy in the Middle East can be extended to include personal relations with Muslim and Arab-Americans.

Questions for discussion

The UCC has spoken out condemning actions against Muslims and Islam, and has also been critical of US policy in the Middle East.

These public witnesses show that Christians in the U.S. do not all agree with U.S. actions in the Middle East, or with some hostile Christian approaches toward Islam.

We have been effective globally; how can we be most effective at home? Do you know your neighbors who are Arab- or Muslim-Americans? Is there a personal and ongoing relationship?

Do you know that there are about 1.7 million Arab-Americans in the U.S., and 1.13 million of which are Christian?

How about the fact that, according to the 2010 US Census, there are roughly 2.6 million American Muslims, 2.2 million of whom are not Arabs?



Shortly after the 9/11 attacks, a local church leader called Peter Makari, area executive for the Middle East and Europe of the UCC’s Wider Church Ministries and Global Ministries.

The church leader asked how the congregation might be paired with a mosque over in Cairo or

Beirut, to express solidarity with the Muslim community.

After thanking him for his concern and effort, Peter suggested that the local church engage with a mosque locally, or get to know the Muslim-American community in their town.

1. How have you witnessed treatment of Arab or Muslim-Americans?
2. What kinds of engagement can your church community make with a local mosque?
3. What can you do to learn more about Islam and the issues of the Middle East?

