

# An Open Letter to American Politicians and the American Public

*I never will, by any word or act, bow to the shrine of intolerance, or admit a right of inquiry into the religious opinions of others.*

-Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Edward Dowse

In the past weeks, some politicians, candidates and commentators have not followed Jefferson's example, nor that of our first President, George Washington, when he declared in his letter to the leaders of the Touro Synagogue that the Constitution "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." Ironically, the highly offensive remarks of these individuals deny the foundation of the Constitution, which our political leaders, through their oath of office, swear to defend. Our religious principles teach us to love and respect each other, and our civic responsibility demands that we take a public stand against this gross injustice happening before our eyes today. Simply, suggestions that a Muslim cannot serve as President, or that Muslims should be registered and their mosques closed, are un-American and un-Constitutional. As persons of faith and as Americans, we deeply value our own freedom of religion in this country and the religious freedom of others. It is thus a matter of grave concern to us that this most basic of American precepts is endangered. Good citizens must speak out. As faith and community leaders that value our own freedom of religion, we state unequivocally that we love our Muslim siblings in humanity. They serve our communities as doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, journalists, first responders, and as members of the U.S. Armed Forces and Congress. Muslims are our equals. They are no different than anyone else pursuing the American dream. Together, we are proud Americans. Together, we choose freedom, not fear. So stand with us. Stand with the values enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. And in so doing, send a message to the rest of the world that we live by our nation's own unswerving standards...and no one else's.

**His Eminence Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick**  
Archbishop Emeritus of Washington, D.C.

**Rabbi Rick Jacobs**  
President, Union for Reform Judaism

**Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner**  
Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism  
Senior Vice President, Union for Reform Judaism

**Brian McLaren**  
Christian Thinker, Activist, and Author

**Chris Seiple, Ph.D.**  
President Emeritus, Institute for Global Engagement

**Rev. Dr. Robert M. Franklin**  
Director, Department of Religion, Chautauqua Institution

**Rev. J. Brent Walker**  
Executive Director, Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

**Patrick Carolan**  
Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network

**Rabbi David Seth Kirshner**  
President, New York Board of Rabbis

**Judith J. Pickens,**  
Chairman, Board of Trustees, Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA

**Imam Mohamed Magid**  
Senior Imam, ADAMS Center

**Heidi Hadsell**  
President, Hartford Seminary

**Professor Marshall Breger**  
Columbus School of Law, Catholic University of America

**Rev. Peter Goodwin Heltzel, Ph.D.**  
Associate Professor of Theology and Director of the Micah Institute, New York Theological Seminary

**The Rev. Dr. Jacqueline J. Lewis**  
Senior Minister, Middle Collegiate Church

**Paul Raushenbush**  
Senior Vice-President for Public Engagement, Auburn Seminary

**Pastor Steve Knight**  
Co-founder, Transform Network

**Ambassador John L. Loeb, Jr.**  
Founder and Chairman, George Washington Institute for Religious Freedom

**Rabbi Jack Moline**  
Executive Director, Interfaith Alliance

**Rev. Jim Wallis**  
President, Sojourners

**Rev. Gradye Parsons**  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II**  
Director, Office of Public Witness, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**Dr. Azizah Al-Hibri**  
Founder and Chair, KARAMAH

**Joel Rainey, Ph.D.**  
Mid-Atlantic Baptist Network

**Bishop Warner H. Brown, Jr.**  
President, The Council of Bishops, The United Methodist Church

**Sister Patricia Chappell**  
Executive Director, Pax Christi USA

**Rabbi Marc Schneider**  
President, Foundation for Ethnic Understanding

**Rev. Dr. Roy Medley**  
General Secretary, American Baptist Churches U.S.A.

**Rev. Dr. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki**  
President, Buddhist Council of New York

**Rev. Peter Morales**  
President, Unitarian Universalist Association

**Rabbi Elyse Wechterman**  
Executive Director, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association

**Martin Budd**  
Member, Board of Trustees, Hartford Seminary

**Rev. Alexia Salvatierra**

**Laurie W. and Stephen E. Sowby**  
Formerly of NY Public & International Affairs Office,  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

**Deborah Lauter**  
Director, Civil Rights, Anti-Defamation League

**Pastor Bob Roberts**  
Northwood Church, TX

**Rabbi Burton L. Visotzky**  
Director, Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue, Jewish Theological Seminary

**The Rev. John L. McCullough**  
President and CEO, Church World Service

**Rabbi Jack Bemporad**  
Chairman, Center for Interreligious Understanding; Director, John Paul II Center, Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Rome)

**Jim Winkler**  
President and General Secretary, National Council of Churches

**Dr. James Zogby**  
President, Arab American Institute

**Neil Nicoll**  
President Emeritus, YUSA

**Rabbi Jill Jacobs**  
Executive Director, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

**Dr. Rick Love**  
President, Peace Catalyst International

**Rev. Chloe Breyer**  
Executive Director, The Interfaith Center of New York

**Rev. Dr. Richard Cizik**  
President, New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good

**Holly Roach**  
Co-founder, Transform Network

**Meryl Chertoff**  
Executive Director, Justice and Society Program, The Aspen Institute

**Catherine Orsborn**  
Campaign Director, Shoulder to Shoulder