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.

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This effort was a collaboration between the Inclusive America Project of the Aspen Institute's Justice and Society Program and the Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE JUSTICE & SOCIETY PROGRAM

Shoulder to Shoulder
Standing with American Muslims; Upholding American Values