

Election Observations

From the Desk of a Muslim Woman

Election Day

It is November 4th and I know the country is on the brink of something memorable and exciting. I am so engrossed in the day to day swinging poll numbers, that I keep forgetting it is my birthday this week! The buzz is contagious. When I walk into my office this morning my young medical assistant wants to know if I already voted because she was at the voting booth at 7:00am!

I am a Muslim woman and this election year I have felt a spectrum of emotions rush through me. Anger when the Muslim faith was considered a damaging association for Barack Obama, and vindication when Colin Powell said there is nothing wrong with a Muslim American kid becoming the president of the United States. I have felt sadness listening to the plight of millions of Iraqi families on National Public Radio (NPR) and frustration at other world leaders for their apathy and fractionated politicking!

Even if Barack Obama is not elected president, he has inked many firsts for this nation. He has shown that coming from relatively modest means, an ethnic minority, and with half of his family still living on another continent, he can compete to be commander in chief of the most powerful nation in the world! He has motivated people of all ages to cast their votes, from eighteen year old youths to centenarians and everyone in between.

For years I have been listening to negative comments about Muslims on television with a sinking heart and a clenched jaw. It's painful to witness my children hear anti-Muslim sentiments on TV, and see their innocent faces turn sad with disappointment and confusion. This is the only home they know so why are they being singled out? As a member of a minority community and a tax paying resident of the US, I feel the responsibility lies at the door of our leaders of the last eight years and the infamous Vulcan advisors: Their arrogance, blinkered vision and greed demolished the good opinion of the American people the world over! I also feel that we as Muslims need to be weary of forming and defending harmful association that may irreparably harm us. An analogy that comes to mind is of the last Romanov Tsar and Tsarina of Russia and their naïve association with Rasputin, 'the Man of God', who proved to be no such thing and was one of indisputable reasons that led to the execution of Nicholas the II and his family!

Morning After

November 5th brings the dawn of hope at home and good will from all over the world. Many grown men and women of all color were in tears last night, their dreams realized and life long faith in the country renewed. As a Muslim I feel the winds of change. A young man in Pakistan is interviewed on camera and he shows optimism that the world will be a better place under Barack Obama. The Afghanistani head of state looks restrained but hopeful. Chritiana Amanpour, in an interview on CNN reaffirms the wave of

worldwide goodwill for the president elect and the people of the US. Even Iran sends congratulations to the first African American President Elect of the United States! To me all this speaks volumes.

'The genius of America lies in the ability of its people to change,' said Barack Obama in front of thousands of supporters. I believe the tide against islamophobia will change too. Americans will once again see Muslim Americans as an important and desirable thread of the fabric of American Society. The woman wearing the head scarf (hijab) will feel safe in this land of the free. Our mosques once again will be regarded as what they are-centers of worship and community gatherings and never a safe haven for undesirable activity. Studies done after 2002, by a reputable organization, showed that post 9/11 more than 70% of Americans harbored anti-Muslim sentiments. These perceptions tell a story of distrust and fear, emotions that were further fanned to help rationalize questionable foreign policies. In my opinion now its time for change and as our President elect Barack Obama loves to say- change we can!

The End.

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