

August 14, 2006

## **YOUR CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW WITH MUSLIMS**

Before we get started on today's topic, let me first say a word about the voters of Georgia's 4th Congressional District flushing our Ambassador to Outer Space and her blabber mouth down the political toilet: Good riddance! (Oops! That's two words.)

Now that we have that out of the way, let's talk about your participation in an upcoming column.

Like most of you, I have been alarmed, appalled, angered and disgusted at the behavior of Muslim terrorists: Kidnapping and beheading innocent people and videotaping the deed; destroying the World Trade Center and killing several thousand innocent people; blowing up cars, themselves and a lot of innocent bystanders; threatening to destroy the Great Satan (that's us, I think); rioting over a cartoon of the prophet Muhammad,

But do they represent the majority of their faith? Or are they to Islam what the Ku Klux Klan is to Christianity? We are about to find out.

In a couple of weeks, I am going to interview a panel of Muslims from a variety of backgrounds who to the best of my knowledge are also American citizens. This is at their request. I was contacted some time back by an individual who asked that I give him and his friends the opportunity to let my readers — that's you — know what mainstream Muslims really think and believe and to get past the stereotypes that many of us have of Islam, based on what we read and see in the media. It was an offer I couldn't refuse.

After more emails and negotiations than you care to know about, we settled on an upcoming weekend at a location near Atlanta. To avoid the interview being a public relations ploy, there are several conditions attached. The panelists must be from a variety of backgrounds, including some from the Middle East. They have to be willing to be identified by name, and everything they say is on the record. Their agreeing to these conditions both surprises and pleases me. I have long held the opinion that moderate Muslims are afraid to speak out publicly on the actions of Muslim terrorists. Maybe I, too, can learn something in this endeavor.

Here is where you come in. In addition to a number of questions that I want to present to them, I suspect that you also have some. If you were given the opportunity to sit face-to-face with this group, what would you want to ask them? What does the Koran teach? What are their views on Christianity? Judaism? Islamic law? The State of Israel? The violence in the Middle East and elsewhere? Does being a Muslim in the United States raise conflicts between their faith and their country? Give me your questions, and I'll do my best to get you an answer. No venting. No harangues. And keep the questions short and to the point, please.

You can email your questions to the address at the bottom of this column, or send them to P.O. Box 725373, Atlanta, GA 31139. It goes without saying that if the panelists are willing to have their names used, you should be, too.

Through your questions and the responses of the panel, maybe, just maybe, we can find out things about the Islamic faith that will put the current insanity we are experiencing in the world today into some kind of perspective and allow us to coexist peacefully, at least in Georgia. I sure hope so.

One caveat: As that great philosopher Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over 'til it's over." In other words, until I actually meet with the participants, this is not a done deal. Something could cause the meeting to be canceled between the time you read this and when our meeting is scheduled. Things could get complicated for any number of reasons.

In the meantime, give me your questions and I will try to get you some answers. Who knows? Handle this assignment well, and you just might become modest and much-beloved columnists.