NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

THE NEW YORK POST, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2001

Our Fellow Americans

The Friends Within



JOHN PODHORETZ

IT is a mark of this nation's moral and spiritual greatness that along with the rage, there is concern — concern for the safety and security of Arab-Americans and Muslims in general. The president, his father and Mayor Giuliani cautioned us against blaming American Arabs and Muslims for the evil events of the week almost immediately following the attacks.

Along Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn Heights, a shopping strip dominated by businesses owned by Arab-Americans, the NYPD is out in mammoth force. Mosques across the country are being guarded.

The media are keeping careful watch as well — perhaps too careful. A Friday-night story on NBC News ominously detailed the growing threat to Arab-Americans, the main thrust of which was that a child was insulted on a playground.

Here's what's amazing: In a nation of 281 million people and about 2 million Muslims, there has not been a single serious "bias" incident against a Muslim anywhere in the country since Tuesday.

Chicago cabbies claim they're being verbally abused by passengers. Some Arab groups have received ugly messages on their voice mails. (To which I say big deal; I get ugly anti-Semitic e-mails several times a week, as do most people I know who write in support of Israel, gentiles included.)

The most horrible story so far comes from Mesa, Ariz.: A gas-station owner was killed in a drive-by shooting that might have been related to Tuesday's horrors. The victim, a practitioner of the Sikh faith, wore a turban and a beard; perhaps the evil yahoo who killed him thought he looked enough like Osama Bin Laden to be worthy of murder.

The very fact that this crime seems so exceptional and so monstrous testifies to Americans' extraordinary liberality. (I use "liberality" in the dictionary sense — "generosity" and "freedom from bias or prejudice.")

For decades, people have made cheap and easy use of the word "racism" to describe our national attitudes toward minorities. That has always been a slander against this nation, and never more so than in the aftermath of Tuesday's attack.

It's not just the breathtaking paucity of violence against Muslims and Arabs. It's also the painful fact that — despite all the hysterical talk about the supposed evil of "racial profiling" — our national refusal to judge people by their skin color or accent was used as a weapon against us by Osama Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terror network.



God hears all prayers: A vigil in Panama City, Fla. AP

This nation is so fundamentally anti-racist that ordinary Americans and law-enforcement officers have evidently allowed a fifth column of terrorists to live among us for years.

These Fifth Columnists attended flight schools in Florida, and even behaved quite badly there. Teachers at the school and other students seem to have believed that they came from a different culture with different rules for interpersonal contact, and did not judge them. One of them, we read, even had a pro-Bin Laden bumper sticker on his car — *after* Bin Laden had already been named as responsible in the destruction of USS Cole in Yemen.

In the past decade, terrorism expert Steven Emerson has been writing and making TV programs about groups inside America that offer financial and logistical support to terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. These groups were not shut down, nor demonstrated against — and some of their leaders were invited to the White House as part of an ethnic-outreach program.

It's understandable that Arab-Americans and American Muslims fear for their safety. But they live in the only country in the world whose public officials would express this level of concern for their safety and well-being at a time when emotions are running so high.

More important, and more telling, the vast majority of Americans is concerned for them as well. Just another reason to give thanks for living in the greatest and noblest country the world has ever seen.

CITY_21MC100_011829475

NYC-WTC_000412202