

YOUSUF



“We are as American as anybody else. As a matter of fact, sometimes I tell people that I am more American than they are, because I earned my citizenship. I proved that I wanted to be American. You were just born here.”

Yousuf: I'm a single father. I'm a small business owner. And I serve as a President of Islamic Society of Corona-Norco. I'm an activist. My passion is to work with people, especially those who don't have a voice, to fight injustice. That sometimes gets me in trouble.

Fauzia: I'm a mother of three beautiful kids. My husband is an IT developer, and we run a business together. I am also a General Secretary for the Islamic Society of Corona-Norco. I am a progressive Muslim woman. I am fighting for basic rights which are owed to everyone as humans, not just for Muslims.

Yousuf: We're supposed to do that as Muslims. It says in Holy Quran that if you kill a single human, you kill the entire humanity. And if you save a single human, you save the entire humanity. It never mentions Muslims or

*Humanity / (h)yōō'manədē/
1. All human beings, collectively;
the human race; humankind*

*2. The quality of being
humane; kindness; benevolence*

non-Muslims. Our religion is simply based upon humanity.

Fauzia: The core values of Islam are the same as you'll find in the Bible or the Torah. I am yet to find any religion that does not have these same basic, core values.

Yousuf: But, Muslims have left a vacuum. We've let the media portray who we are. First thing comes to mind when you talk about Muslim men is the guy wearing a big rag on his head, with a big beard, a long white dress, riding the camel, eating dates. A Muslim woman is a box walking around behind the husband.

Fauzia: There are 1.6 billion Muslims out there in this world, but we are represented as Saudi Arabia and the oppression of women, or by terrorism and the Islamic State.

Yousuf: There are a few Muslims out there who think they can go out and fight for Islam with a gun or bomb. But they do not represent the majority of Muslims. We are not part of them, they are not part of us. They're killing us, in fact. Most of the victims of ISIS are Muslim.

Saying “Allahu Akbar” does not mean I pledge allegiance to the Islamic State. Allahu Akbar is a beautiful phrase for giving thanks, like saying “Praise the Lord.” Why should I give that up just because some crazy people out there have hijacked it? A baby is born, allahu akbar.

Fauzia: 9/11 was a wakeup call to Muslims living in this country that you will be singled out. We do face Islamophobia. It's not made up. At the airport it is the “random searches.” If I interview for a job with this covered head, against somebody else who is not covered, guess who's gonna get the job?

Yousuf: As for headscarves, yes, a woman is supposed to cover her head. But this is for reasons of modesty, not oppression. A man is also supposed to cover his body as much as possible, from his knees to his neck. If you look at when Islam was introduced, about 1400 years ago, I don't think any other religion had ever empowered women so much. Women were given rights to inheritance, and to divorce.

FAUZIA



"As a woman, I'm fighting. I'm very vocal. I'm out there presenting a cause. Not only as a Muslim woman. It's about a value for every woman out there. I want the same things for every little girl."

Fauzia: People ask me, "So, does your husband let you do this?" Yes. In fact, he makes it possible. He is taking care of the house when I'm traveling. He sets his schedule so he can pick up the kids. He cooks. And he is a Muslim guy.

There are so many misconceptions of Islam. We need to tell the people this is not us. We are normal, American citizens who have the same values, who want to get a good job, to be financially stable, and have our kids go to the best colleges. I like football, and Starbucks coffee! And I'm just one of millions of Muslims who are fighting, who are progressive, and who are doing great things. Our point is to spread love and peace.

Yousuf: If you have not heard these things before, maybe it is because you have not communicated with enough Muslims.



Scarf with imprint of the American flag, worn by Fauzia.

Yousuf presented the museum with this carving of an eagle – the national bird of the United States – to represent his identity.

Fauzia: Loving each other, being kind to each other. That's what would "make America great again."

Yousuf: The Constitution of the United States is based on equality and social justice. If we go back to that document I think that we can say we have always been a great nation.

When you spread Islamophobia, it is you who is promoting hate, and who is promoting terror. People are being beaten because of their color, because of their race, because of what they believe. What happened to us, as a country? We need to stand up as Americans and speak about what's unjust, regardless of who the injustice is done to. We need to stand up as humans, of all faiths, and remember that we are one.