

An Open Letter to the Muslim Community of Atlanta

Shalom and Salaam,

It is with friendship and peace that I extend these thoughts to you. I have learned so much from your community and benefitted from its kindness. I feel the blessing of your presence. I am grateful for you.

I am so thankful that after 9/11 so many of us in the Atlanta faith communities did the work to lay the foundation for the strong network of understanding and support that we have today. We need this network as we are facing a time in our country where there is tremendous uncertainty. The hateful rhetoric and bigotry feel particularly unsettling and volatile now.

With the rise of Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment, there must be considerable unease in your communities. I know we as a Jewish community are grappling with the fear of anti-Semitism and rising hate crimes. We have risen together in the past in times of fear, and I pledge to you that we will stand together against the misinformation, ignorance, and bigotry. Our bonds are secure.

When we come together in Atlanta, as one community of many faiths, we demonstrate how much there is that unites us. We exemplify the best of the United States of America. As we celebrate and bless our differences and uplift the dignity of every soul. We gather and remain connected in sacred solidarity.

Over the years, there are many of you that I count as my family, my friends and my teachers. I have spent time educating people, particularly those misinformed in the Jewish community about the beauty of Islam and the great efforts of our Muslim citizens. So many of you have done the same for the Jewish community, and I am grateful. We are stronger and vibrant because of it.

When the Muslim community is discriminated against and targeted, I feel targeted. When the Muslim community feels under threat, I aim to show up and stand with you. And I am not alone in that sentiment, which means you are not alone.

With the increasing discussion of a Muslim registry, it is as crucial as ever to remember these relationships. I want to raise my voice and declare, "Not to my family." We will resist this together. We will be with you in this struggle.

It is always my hope that we expend our energies building bridges of harmony and understanding in our communities. At this time we need concerted efforts to stand faithful and strong against both unjust legislation and hate crimes. This is a time for vigilance; please know that you can call on me and many others from my community. You can rely on that I will continue doing the work of confronting Islamophobia even when there is not a call.

You can count on my friendship, my solidarity, and my support. Let us remember; it is our courage that makes this country a better and safer place for all of us.

Salaam, Peace and Shalom,



Rabbi Joshua Lesser
Congregation Bet Haverim

office: 2074 lavista rd | atlanta, ga 30329

mailing address: p.o. box 29548 | atlanta, ga 30359

phone: 404.315.6446

web: <http://congregationbethaverim.org>