

Muslims For Kucinich

A resource on the 2004 and 2008 presidential campaigns of Democrat Dennis Kucinich and on his other political activities

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Kucinich speech to ISNA

The following is a transcript of Kucinich's remarks to the conference of the Islamic Society of North America on August 30, 2003. Any errors in this transcript are entirely my own.

Speech by Representative Dennis Kucinich:

Salam alaikum. Peace be unto you and peace be unto our nation and the world.

In two weeks we will observe the second anniversary of 9/11 and I think it's urgent to assess the impact of 9/11 on American Muslims, to assess the impact of 9/11 as to the direction of American and as to the protection of our basic rights.

Much has been revealed with respect to the reaction of our government to 9/11. The response of our government was reflective of stereotypical thinking, discrimination, prejudice, the crippling of our thought capacities to protect our democracy. I would suggest that we can recover from this, that we can redirect our nation away from fear, away from cruelty, away from violence against our democratic rights.

As the co-chair of the Progressive Caucus - the largest caucus within the Democratic party - and as the only one who is running for president, who led the effort in the House of Representatives against the Administration's efforts to go to war in Iraq, as the only one running for president who not only spoke out against but voted against the Patriot Act, as the only one running for president who not only spoke out against but voted against the Homeland Security Bill - which doesn't make us safe - as the only one running for president who consistently spoke out about profiling of our Muslim brothers and sisters, who has consistently spoken out against the detentions and the suspension of habeas corpus when it has come to our Muslim brothers and sisters - I am here to tell you that we are at a transformational moment in our democracy, that we have an opportunity to rescue our democracy, that we have to recognize that the America that we have seen over the last year and a half does not reflect the kind of workings of a democratic society that the founders of this nation anticipated.

And so my candidacy for president of the United States arose because America disconnected with its purpose as a nation, disconnected from its purpose to form a more perfect union, disconnected from its purpose in the Constitution to see that the rights of all are protected, disconnected from the Bill of Rights which protects peoples' First Amendment rights and Second and Third and Fourth and Fifth and Sixth and all those Amendment rights, which are being undermined by the Patriot Act, disconnected from its purpose which is stated at the base of the Statute of Liberty: "Give us your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shores. Send these, the tempest-tossed, to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

America must remember where she has come from as a nation and recover that lamp that we lift beside the golden door and light once against the lamp of democracy so that all our citizens may once again enjoy democratic freedoms.

The words in our "Star Spangled Banner", our national anthem, speak to us at this moment: "Does that star spangled banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave." Francis Scott Key challenged Americans for centuries to come, with the connection between bravery and freedom, courage and democracy. This is the moment when we need to call on our brothers and sisters around this country to step forward in courage to reclaim our basic rights and to challenge a government that has the audacity not to trust the American people.

Much has been revealed about this government as to how our Muslim brothers and sisters have been treated in the wake of 9/11. We have seen a climate of fear, almost as a pall

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dropped on this nation. We have all felt this fear that has produced paralysis, this fear that has produced suspicion, this fear that has produced hatred, this fear that has produced grave misunderstanding. Because this fear that was promoted, in some cases was deliberate - because Iraq had nothing to do with 9/11, with al-Qaeda's role in 9/11, with the anthrax attacks on this country. There were no weapons of mass destruction. And this country went into a war that was immoral and illegal!

In the wake of 9/11, I held meetings with our brothers and sisters in the Muslim community in Cleveland and heard the heartache, the stories of scapegoating, the harassment, the abuse, the denigration, the lies. We must work our way out of America's dark period, we must make peace with our brothers and sisters here at home and around the world and lift up America once again.

After 9/11, the heart of the world was open to the United States. This Administration lost the opportunity to embrace the world and to work with the world for the cause of security for this country and for security around the world. Instead, it promoted fear. We must move from fear to hope. We must move from a response of isolation to one which reintegrates with the world.

America must rejoin the world community, confidently and courageously. We must move from a condition where we have this Patriot Act to a condition where that is lifted from this country. One of my first acts as president will be to have the Justice Department file suit in federal court to nullify the Patriot Act as being unconstitutional. And out of respect for my Muslim brothers and sisters, within the next two week I will be introducing legislation in the Congress of the United States to cancel the Patriot Act [ed. note: Kucinich fulfilled this promise by introducing HR3171, the Benjamin Franklin True Patriot Act].

We must move from "homeland security" to hometown security, to make sure that our communities have the resources for police, fire, and EMS protection that will help strengthen our local communities. We must make sure that we challenge this build-up of the Pentagon, where the Pentagon budget has increased to 400 billion dollars, a 13% increase, while funds have been cut for health care, funds have been cut for veterans, funds have been cut for the education of our children. We must remember that it is only peace which protects genius in this country, not military spending that causes America to separate from the world. We can protect our country by the strength of our military but also by the strength of our morals, by the strength of what we believe in. As members of a democratic society, we must therefore let go of policies of unilateralism and pre-emption, policies which inspire a nuclear arms race against others. We must re-engage with the world community, and as we do that we will reclaim our nation.

The fear that I spoke of is something that we know well, because now the federal government under the Patriot Act has obtained the ability to look at our records at our libraries, our doctors, our schools. This government has permitted the most intrusive reach into the American peoples' lives, and they're preparing to expand it with Patriot II, going into peoples' credit reports, gathering genetic information, letting foreign governments conduct surveillance on American citizens, permitting political spying, expanding the death penalty. We must recover from 9/11, we must regain the spirit of this nation.

And how can America recover from 9/11? Not with weapons, not by shutting down our democracy, but as we celebrate our liberties and reconnect with the world, we must remember the experience of our Muslim brothers and sisters, because only heartfelt reflection will cause us to understand where America went wrong after 9/11.

The path towards repair, towards reconciliation and justice - that's your position today, the power that you have, to help create that. You have political power, you demonstrated that in the past. You helped elect a president in 2000. And you can do it again in 2004 to set America on a new path. You can make all the difference in the Democratic primaries. The bloc vote of this community can change the outcome in any election, can help take America on a new path, for this country and the world, to take us away from war, to take us away from discrimination.

In a larger sense, it is the America Muslim community which has the power to forgive the

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abuses which have occurred on this community, and as such has the power to create a new world, the power to transform fear into hope, the power to transform hatred into love, because this world needs love today and America needs our love, to trust again, to hope again.

This is what has inspired legislation which is now supported by 50 members of Congress to create a federal Cabinet-level Department of Peace, to make non-violence the organizing principle in our American society, to work with other nations of the world to make war itself archaic.

Yusuf Islam, whom I had the opportunity to meet a few minutes ago, once wrote a song that had these words: "Out on the edge of darkness, there lies a peace train. Peace train, come take this country, come take me home again." America must get on that peace train once again.

And I see this, I see a new world, a world where America leads the way with the vision of a world as one, as interconnected, as interdependent, a world at peace, a world where our children are protected, a world where we believe in the power of love and the power of the human heart.

This is the direction America can take the world, and with the leadership of the American Muslim community, this is the direction we SHALL take America and the world, inshallah!

Thank you.

Remarks by Dr. Ingrid Mattson, Vice President of ISNA, following Kucinich's speech:

I want you to understand that what just happened now is a sign from God, because Shaykh Hamza and none of us knew that we were having this guest tonight and when Shaykh Hamza tonight was talking about the good people of this country, he didn't know that we were having this guest tonight but Allah Subhana wa Ta'ala brought him here as proof, as a witness to what he said, and this is a mercy for you and for me, this is a mercy from Allah Subhana wa Ta'ala to strengthen your faith, to understand that these words that are being said here are not rhetorical and if you have faith in your heart, you'll realize that these are true words and you'll believe that anything is possible and that when we listen to Allah Subhana wa Ta'ala and He tells us that truth will win over falsehood, that if we believe that, the miracles will come one after the other. And this is a small sign of that.

Posted by Al-Muhajabah, a Kucinich supporter, at August 30, 2003 11:27 PM in [Speeches and Columns](#) | [Permalink](#)

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