

Muslims reflect upon Sept. 11

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Freelance Reporter

Editor's note: On the anniversary of Sept. 11, an Emerald freelance writer was in New York City. He spoke with some Muslim Americans there and filed this story on Sept. 12.

NEW YORK — A year ago on Sept. 11, the streets of Manhattan were relatively empty, and the city was in shock after 19 hijackers slammed two commercial airliners filled with people into the World Trade Center in the name of Islam.

One year later, those same streets are packed with again with people of all nationalities and religions. President Bush and Arab delegates speak at the United Nations while little Italy prepares for the feast of San Gennaro. A pictorial memorial by Joe McNally at Rockefeller Center is filled with teary-eyed visitors still trying to understand.

After these atrocities were committed under the pretext of a Muslim jihad, there was widespread concern in America that Muslims might be mistreated or singled out on the basis of religion. One year after the attacks, American Muslims in New York City have differing opinions about the American response to and war on terrorism.

"Everybody was nice, and I had no fear (of retaliation) because of my background," said Said Bendarkawi, a 40-year-old Moroccan American Muslim. "Islam doesn't breed terrorists. Islam shows you how to be compassionate. Those people are crazy, and they are not Muslims."

President Bush agrees with Bendarkawi that these men do not rep-

"Islam doesn't breed terrorism. Islam shows you how to be compassionate. Those people are crazy and they are not muslims."

Said Bendarkawi
New York City resident

resent any religion. "The terrorists despise other religions and have defiled their own," Bush told LIFE's "The American Spirit."

However, not all American Muslims share these same feelings. Some men, like 42-year-old Pakistani American Rizwan Khan feel disenfranchised by the radicalism of a religion that is supposed to stand for peace.

"There are Islamic priests that teach hatred. They're preaching immorality," Khan said. "I try not to (bring my son to Islamic mosques) because first of all, they don't preach in English. I want him to learn the morals and not the hatred. I want him to be a gentleman, and that's why I put him in a Catholic school."

When discussing the war on terrorism, the views differ as well.

"I really don't think (Osama bin Laden) did it. Barking dogs don't bite," Khan said. "We made Saddam the monster. We gave him billions of dollars (to fight Iran and for oil). It's good for the country to go into Iraq."

Bendarkawi's views were more reserved and in line with that of the United Nations.

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from various guests and featured a moment of silence at 7:45 p.m.

At 7:52 p.m., Springfield Fire Chief Dennis Murphy introduced the ringing of the fire bell. It was rung 25 times to honor the firefighters' lives lost in New York.

Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey explained his observations of the community's reaction of the past year.

"Each of us during this past year have found hope and healing in our faith, family, and friends."

For some attendees, last year's events could have a positive outcome, with work from everyone.

"I want to tell everyone to never forget how special our freedom is, and that God allowed this to happen to increase people's humanity," LCC student Angela Grabow said.

Springfield Mayor Sid Leiken suggested that a loving world is a safer world.

"Lasting homeland security begins and ends, my friends, with love," he said.

While many thought it was time to move on, Lane County Commissioner Bill Dwyer doesn't believe the tragedy will ever vanish from memory.

"We will never forget them. We will never abandon the American we love."

— Jenni Schultz

Commemorating peace

Dozens of people spent Sept. 11 away from their televisions, apart from the flag-waving and official ceremonies commemorating the one-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington D.C.

Instead, they stood in front of the federal courthouse at Seventh



Greg Bae for the Emerald

Members of the Eugene and Springfield fire departments use a fire truck to erect an enormous American flag at the Sept. 11 memorial in Springfield's Island Park.

Avenue and Pearl Street and held handmade signs, talked quietly among themselves or spent hours in prayer and meditation.

"I disagree with our government's war policies," said Sarah Charlesworth, a member of the Green Party of Lane County and one of the event's organizers. "Being out in public and communicating with fellow activists who love peace and justice helps people to think."

People at the 24-hour protest didn't all share the same viewpoint. Some held signs with anarchists symbols. Others showed pictures of fallen firefighters from Sept. 11 and said they wanted to end terrorist activities without the bloodshed that had been wrought in Afghanistan.

The event was organized by several groups with a University presence, including the Justice Not War Coalition and Eugene Peaceworks, and organizers estimated that several hundred people came to par-

ticipate or watch the protest as it unfolded over the day.

Some attendees came from overseas. Reinhard Seyer of Austria and Klara Solk of Sweden were passing by the courthouse and stopped to munch the free food offered by the protesters.

"Anything to support a movement that tries to end the cycle of violence that we've witnessed since Sept. 11 is good," Seyer said.

Many participants would not give their names or be quoted, for fear of what they called "government retribution." John, 82, declined to give his last name, saying he did not want to be on Attorney General John "Ashcroft's list".

"I think we should have a visible presence here and not let George Bush and his accomplices start another war," he said. "But we also need to respect the people who lost their lives a year ago."

— Brook Reinhard

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