

Confessions of an 'Islamophobe'

Travis Huisken
Staff Writer

By now, all of us have heard the often repeated homily that the Islamic faith is a religion of peace, and that the radical Muslims who inflict terror on innocent people are perverting an otherwise peaceful religion. We are led to believe that any fear of the Islamic faith is as irrational as my own fears of pressurized tanks, good looking women and any amusement park ride that goes upside down. Lately, however, I find myself wondering if my fear of the Islamic faith is really all that irrational.

The Middle East has been in the news so frequently lately that many of us are finding ourselves newly capable of something we should have been able to do since Junior High: being able to recognize the shapes of countries on the globe that are not our own.

Consider the leadership of these countries: Saudi Arabia, pre-war Afghanistan, Syria, Iran and other neighboring countries. While many countries have shown a great capacity to overcome the many struggles we know exist in obtaining freedom and liberty, some countries uniformly find these struggles insurmountable. Surely it cannot be irrational for me to wonder why it is that Muslim states are so consistently ruled by corrupt and brutal hands.

On a worldwide scale, some of the most influential spiritual leaders seem sincere in their

belief that the Quran instructs them to bomb crowded public places. And it is not just the spiritual leaders who are the radicals. Multitudes of followers cheer upon news that a bus bombing killed more than twenty people, including a four-month-old baby. Whether it is true that the Quran explicitly teaches these acts or not, the most intellectually honest conclusion we can draw is that this is very different from an Amish person's peaceful intentions simply being misunderstood.

We have all seen the media footage of the area we refer to as Palestine, showing eight-year-old children in the streets firing military rifles in the air as they scream about Allah's desire for them to push Israel into the sea. Have they no parents? Of course they do. That is where they learn their hatred and get their guns.

If the religion is being perverted by a minority viewpoint, we should wonder how this minority manages so consistently to get itself placed in positions of such great power. This winter, at an Islamic Summit Conference, the Prime Minister of Malaysia rallied anti-Semitism with the battle cry that "1.3 billion Muslims cannot be defeated by a few million Jews."

There are reportedly more than 1 billion Muslims in the world, and it is true that an overwhelming majority of them wish no harm upon the Israeli people or the western world. Aside from simply wondering how this minis-

cule minority faction manages to consistently acquire prominent seats of power in Islamic states, we may also do well to wonder where the majority is positioning themselves in all of this controversy.

Usually where there is a distinct difference between the minority and majority group, one never has to question where the majority stands. However, when we contrast the radical Muslims with the peace-loving Muslims, we find that the peace-loving Muslims seem not to speak out as loudly, or as often, as their more violent counterparts.

Great praise is owed to UWF's Muslim Student Association for resisting any temptation to go with the flow of the silent majority. Last November, the MSA brought in Dr. William Baker, the founder and president of Christians and Muslims for Peace (CAMP), to speak on campus. In doing so, UWF's MSA offered comfort to local 'Islamophobes' by embracing non-Muslim friends while multilaterally condemning acts of terror.

While this 'Islamophobe' appreciates and commends the efforts by MSA, it is not enough to alleviate the concerns I have for the faith as a whole. With the world's most prominent Islamic religious leaders preaching that hatred and violence to non-Muslims is commanded of Muslims by Allah through their scriptures, any distinction between fear of Islam and fear of the radicals who follow Islam seems blurry.

Stop and smell the roses

Earl Newton
Contributing Writer

This past week brought us something to celebrate. It's something that has inspired joy to many people, and it's only right that we take a moment to reflect upon what it means for us today. It's an anniversary that asks all people of every race, place and face, to pause and consider the legacy of the man we remember this week.

That's right. This is the second-week anniversary of my column.

What a road it's been! Don't you remember the good ol' days during the first week of my column? Oh, how we laughed! And those late nights staying up until one in the morning, talking about our hopes and dreams, our secret crushes and my column. Oh, we were young in those days, but we were free. We had a dream, and we were pursuing it day by day, all under the flag of 'my column.'

Well, those days are past now. But as we flock to the streets, as we raise our voices together in harmony in a spirit of love and unity about my column, let us not forget the other men who have gone before us. For example, during this past week, students were given a holiday in celebration of another special day: Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

I thought it would be wonderful to discuss the big events that happened in connection with MLK day. But you must realize that represents a great deal of patience and effort on my part, which my doctor has warned me to avoid. So instead I turned my attentions to how the common man celebrated this recent holiday.

I must confess to you that I have a fierce admiration for this kind of romantic, Clark Kent style of on-foot reporting. Talking to the people! Working the reporter's beat! Shouting, "Stop the presses!" I do it all the time. Which is why I can no longer live at home.

In the spirit of this kind of journalism, I took a tape recorder around campus and interviewed several students about how they personally celebrated the man, the myth, the legend and the legacy during the three-day weekend. Here is one such interview.

Me: Tell me, during your three-day weekend for Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, how did you personally celebrate the man, the myth, the legend and the legacy?

Student: Well, my family has always preferred to gather together in the evening and swap stories of Dr. King. This year, my sister recited a poem about his life and work. Later, we all sat together and constructed a scale model of the Million Man March from pipe cleaners and paper mache. (Pause) Is that a tape recorder?

Me: Yes, but don't worry, it isn't on.

Student: Oh, then I spent the day drinking.

As you can see, people choose to celebrate the man, the myth, the legend and the legacy in many different ways. My family is an excellent (read: easy) example. To my father, Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday is a special day reserved solely for taking down the Christmas lights.

And what a festive occasion it is! Each year, we gather beneath a decaying Christmas tree, drinking leftover eggnog from the back of the fridge. Meanwhile, my father tries not to strangle himself in 12 miles of blinking lights, which the tree has now incorporated into its root structure.

And the songs, the taking-down-the-lights carols! The old standards are still the best ones, songs such as "Jesus Didn't Have to Do This, Why Should I?" and my father's favorite, "Oops, That's Not the Ground Wire," which is always followed by "The Twelve Days of Intensive Care." Oh, the memories!

But MLK day has now passed, and we must add the family photos (and hospital receipts) to the album, where we can laugh about it all next year, when the burns have healed. For now, we have to get shopping! The third anniversary of my column is right around the corner, and you don't want to be stuck buying presents on "My Column's Day Eve!"

I mean, that's just tacky.



Earl Newton
Commentary

Southside parking abusers should be ticketed

Amber Gay
Assistant Sports Editor

Almost every college student complains about the parking on campus. Commuters complain there aren't enough spaces close to their classes. Martin Hall and Pace Hall residents complain they can't park anywhere closer than at their resident halls without fear of getting a ticket.

The real problem, however, lies within the Southside resident parking. They have the closest and fewest parking spots on campus. Their spots are perfect for late-coming students to pull in to and run to class. Southside parking spots are already limited and when students who are not assigned to those spots park there, it causes problems for the Southside residents.

Granted, their parking is closer to all main campus buildings than anyone else's, and the distance from the parking lot to some of the resident buildings is far.

Take the halls located near the John C. Pace Library for example. Imagine having to park a half-mile away with your hands full of groceries only to then climb a small spiral staircase up to your room.

On the other hand, there are positive aspects to the situation. The Southside residents have the best parking spots on campus, and they are closest to where most of the events on campus are held. They also get special privileges when it comes to moving in and out of the halls.



Photo by Megan Kohr

Jennifer Bruno tickets an offender in the Southside parking lot Tuesday afternoon.

These students are able to drive right up to their front door to unload their stuff as well. Students living in the Village Apartments, Martin Hall and Pace Hall don't have this luxury.

One possible solution for the parking situation is to start ticketing violators more aggressively. Every time someone parks in the wrong

spot, they should get a ticket, which is a task that the student patrollers are hired to do.

The worst time of day for students to park in these spots is at night when they go to the Commons, the library or to see friends living in the dorms. Most students don't read the booklet that comes with their parking decal, which says students are allowed to park in the yellow and green spots after 3:30 p.m., and after 4:30 p.m. they can park in meter parking without having to pay. Many students ignore the parking spot's color distinctions, thinking they can park anywhere at night because the student patrol isn't watching for violators.

Another solution would be to add more orange parking spots. A prime location for these spots would be where the white parking spaces are located near the police station. There are already numerous white-painted parking spots empty on campus, especially over by the tennis courts. These spots are usually left empty because commuters are too lazy to walk.

Parking has always been an issue and will always be an issue no matter whether you live on or off campus. The difference with this situation is that it is fixable without having to build an expensive parking garage.

This is not another whiny complaint that the residents have to park far away and walk. It is a complaint that other students are taking their designated spots and leaving them to handle any violations that occur because of people's laziness and disregard for rules.

Students should stop complaining and start acting

Christina Tilton
Features Editor

The No. 1 thing that I think students like to do on this campus is complain. And the most common complaint that is in the paper every semester is parking.

Well people, parking is a problem at every school and just about every business. Get over it. It can't really be fixed.

No matter how many parking spaces are added or how many shades of paint are changed, the vast majority will still have to park far away and walk. Short of putting parking spots where landscaping now resides, there is not much that can be done about it. And even if they did that, people would complain about the tearing down of

the trees and the total destruction of the environment. Then they would compare the University of West Florida to President Bush and his anti-environmental plans, which would get them started on a whole other soap box. Just take a trolley, and let it go.

Instead of complaining about all the negative things on campus, maybe someone should praise all of the great things this University strives to provide for its students. To help relieve the parking situation, UWF provides a trolley that no one ever uses, including me. But I don't blame the school because I choose to park miles away and walk.

The University pays for many renovations and services to serve the students better in the Field House, the library (did you take the

survey?), housing, landscaping, student activities, the food court (now open on Saturdays), in the Information Technology Department and so on.

So the next time you are walking around thinking about all the things this University is doing wrong and how if you were in charge it would be so much better, consider making a change and taking one of the following suggestions. Why not look at what this University provides to you, as an individual and a group, and think to yourself, "Wow they really try. Every time we complain loud enough, they strive to fix it. What other University does that?"

Thank your president for trying to get more money to expand your school and provide you with bigger and better facilities (I'm sure we

would all like to see the trailer park demolished) and an up-to-date IT Department.

Thank Career Services for working so hard to provide events and services that you don't take advantage of. Thank the Campus Activities Board for providing entertainment when you are stressed out and need a break. Thank the Student Government Association for working so hard to distribute money to the appropriate places to make us all happy. Thank the Volunteer Center for trying to get you involved in the community and making you feel guilty if you don't, because you should.

And thank your newspaper for voicing your complaints and keeping you informed on all that goes on, so you can complain about that too.

VOYAGER

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