Dr. Mike Ghouse is blessed to have stood up for the rights of people of every faith from Atheists to Zoroastrians including Native Americans, Pagans, immigrants, Wicca and LGBTQ communities across the globe. He has a solid record of work for each one of these communities and a book is being written chronicling this work as an encouragement to people to enjoy the joys of “standing up for others”.

Mike is committed to building cohesive societies and offers pluralistic solutions on issues of the day. As we learn to respect the “otherness” of others and accept the God-given uniqueness of each one of us, Mike believes that conflicts will fade and solutions emerge. He has dedicated his life for this purpose and offers programs to bring about the positive change—to create cohesive societies.

Mike@MikeGhouse.net | (214) 325-1916
www.CenterforPluralism.com | Washington, DC
MIKE’S ORIGINS
How else would you know then?

Mike was born and raised in Yelahanka, a suburb of Bangalore, India. Yelahanka’s Chieftain, Kempe Gowda, laid the foundation of the city of Bengaluru, India. Now, the Bengaluru Airport is named after him. The house Mike was raised in was the house that Kempe Gowda lived in during the early 16th century, which is 14 miles from the Airport.

Mike’s father, M. Abdul Rahman, was a Mayor (President of the Municipal council) of the town of Yelahanka in the early 50’s and remained a council member through the late 50’s. His Mother Khairun Nisa counseled women of all faiths. Both of them had friends from several different faiths. Mike’s Paternal Grandmother was ahead of her time, fiercely independent and a liberated woman. Mike’s Maternal Grandfather was an exemplary volunteer, he was also a council member and President of the Muslim organization.

His parents had “malice towards none” and raised him and his siblings to respect every faith tradition. Though they were Muslims, the celebrated Hindu and Christian festivals as their own and had good relationships with Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians, Dalits, Tribals and the Zoroastrians. Unfortunately, there were no Bahá’í or Jews in the town.

Mike’s father vigorously fought all the prevailing customs of the segregation of the Dalits (shamefully called as Untouchables once). Indeed, Mike’s family members ate food and drank from the same utensils which was frowned upon at that time. Similarly, Mike fought with others to give equal space for Dalits at the street corner water faucets.

As a kid, Mike appreciated the civility with which dialogue between Shia and Sunni Muslims, and between Hindus and Muslims were carried out in the most civil terms. He has been a part of Interfaith dialogue since he was 14.

His first volunteering work began when he was a teen, and he formed a group of volunteers for the purpose of burying the homeless when they die. In his town, there were many who died on the streets. The group was named “Mauta (burial) committee”.

CENTER FOR PLURALISM
http://www.CenterforPluralism.com

We define Pluralism as “Respecting the otherness of other.”

The Center for Pluralism is committed to building a cohesive America where no American feels excluded. If we can learn to respect the “otherness” of other and accept the God-given uniqueness of each one of us then conflicts fade and solutions emerge. Our vision is to see each one of us live securely in the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness.

We bring Americans Together in social, religious, cultural, political, civic and other settings. The more we know each other, the fewer the misperceptions there will be. At CFP we have programs in place to achieve this mission.

Washington, DC | (202) 290-3560
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RESEARCH | LEADERSHIP | ACTION
When we live as neighbors, fellow workers, students, players, activists and inhabitants of the same city, it behooves us to learn about each other’s beliefs, motivations, moments of celebrations, devotions or commemorations. The more we know about the other, the less “mythical” they would become, creating a friendly environment for all of us to function effectively in whatever we do. Knowledge leads to understanding and understanding to acceptance of the “otherness” of others leading us into tension-free and sustainable prosperity.

Program produced by Dr. Mike Ghouse (214) 325-1916
& Hosted by the Church of Scientology National Affairs Office

Much of the work listed in this handbook pertains to Pluralism in religion, politics, society, and culture. The work done exclusively on Islam will be in a separate book, Mike has published over 1500 articles on Islam covering the entire gamut of the faith from Allah, Prophet, Quran, Islam, Hadiths, Sharia, Jihad, Apostasy, Blasphemy, Hijab, women’s rights, human rights, denominations, justice, and free speech. There is a blog for each one of these topics, and the main site is www.WorldMuslimCongress.org | MuslimSpeaker.com

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Mike owes his pluralistic nurturance to his parents. They “pounded in” three verses from the Quran: “respecting the ‘otherness’ of others,” “There is no compulsion in religion” and “You alone are accountable for your deeds on the day of accountability”.

Mike also credits his Urdu Madrasa (school) and his favorite teacher Abdul Hakeem. In his Middle School, the social studies book carried a page on every major religious world figure and his religion. Mike recites the names of most of the religious leaders in one single breath. That is what a school ought to be that book and that teaching has contributed towards his pluralistic attitudes.

One of the most influential events of his life happened when Jabalpur (India) riots broke out in the early 60’s. Hindus and Muslims were killing each other. Mike’s father gathered the family and simply said, “you know the culprits are Ram and Rahim, not Hinduism or Islam. If they were punished for their crimes as individuals, the issue would not have become a Hindu Muslim issue and riots could have been prevented.”

That thought has become Mike’s philosophy in conflict mitigation and goodwill nurturance, and Mike has articulated this on Fox News on Hannity show several times. Blame and punish the individual and restore trust in the society, because you cannot punish an intangible like religion; nor can you restore trust in the society. Why then “bark” at religion?

Mike is one of the most fearless leaders out there, he is polite and civil but firm and assertive in his approach toward offering pluralistic solutions on issues of the day.

Dr. Mike Ghouse is a community consultant, speaker, thinker, writer, newsmaker, organizer and a mediator committed to building cohesive societies, offering pluralistic solutions to the media and the public on current issues. He is available to speak at places of worship, workplaces, schools, seminars, workshops, conferences and public events.

Mike has been a frequent guest on Fox News, “The Hannity Show”, and on nationally syndicated Radio shows, print and local radio networks.

He has spoken at international forums including the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions in Melbourne, Australia and Salt Lake City, Utah. the Middle East Peace Initiative in Jerusalem; and the International Leadership Conference in Hawaii, Chicago and Washington and many Universities in the US and India.

Dr. Ghouse is a member of the Texas Faith Panel at The Dallas Morning News and writes about issues facing the nation every week. He writes for The Huffington Post regularly, and occasionally for Washington Post and other periodicals around the world. Mike has published over 3500 articles on a variety of subjects. Three books are in the making for a while and hope 2017 will see them published.

Mike was a Commissioner for the City of Carrollton and President of many organizations including Home Owners Association, North Texas Cricket Association, and a board member of several non-profits such as the Dallas Peace Center.

Mike is a collaborator and much of his work revolves around the subjects of pluralism, interfaith movement, politics, justice, cohesive societies, Islam, India, Israel, Palestine and world peace.
Sean Hannity is the most watched TV talk show host in America. Most people hate him and don’t want to go near him. Mike believes in engaging with people if we want a change. A verse from Quran has motivated him to take this stand, “Don’t let your bias make you unjust towards the other.” in this situation, don’t just agree with me, but look at the results produced from engagement.

In February 2013, Sean had called in 25 individuals for his show that included Representatives Peter King, Louis Gohmert, Ambassador John Bolton and others including me, Mike Ghouse. In the middle of taping another segment, Sean asked him to join him on the stage, while 23 others were sitting across on the bleachers. To paraphrase him (short version), “You are the only Muslim friend I know... and today I will do something for you that you have been asking for in the last three years.... From now on I will not use the word “Muslim terrorists” and instead call it Terrorists among Muslims, would that make you happy? Mike responded, “Hell yes!” and gave him a big salute while others cheered on. By the way, Stuart Varney of Fox News made the same commitment in November 2016 and has lived up to it. Sean has not. However, Sean has quit “bashing” the Quran, I have given him a copy of the “right, “ most accurately translated Quran by Muhammad Asad.”

The Boston Marathon bombing happened in April. The CNN camera went to Peter King, and this is what he said, “96% of Muslims are good people, and it is the 4% we have to worry about.. That is a 180 Degrees turnaround! The same man had called in to investigate every Muslim and every Mosque a year ago. That is a reasonable change! Thank you, Sean!

Personally, it is a mission accomplished - we place the blame where it belongs; the individuals and not religion.
STANDING UP FOR OTHERS
Why should anyone stand up for you?

Security hinges on the security of people around us and our freedom depends on the freedom of people around us. “Injustice to one is injustice to all.”, as Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. had said. It makes sense to stand up for the rights of others. Indeed, no one should live in apprehension and fear of the other.

Freedom to think and speak is the most fundamental of all human rights and it behooves each one of us to defend, protect and guard that God-given right. Standing up for others is the right thing to do; every human goes through a period of invincibility to vulnerability, and if we don’t stand up for those who are vulnerable, then why should anyone stand up for us when we become vulnerable?

Dr. Mike Ghouse is blessed to have stood up for the rights of people of every faith from Atheists to Zoroastrians including Native Americans, Pagans, immigrants, Wicca and LGBTQ communities across the globe. He has a solid record of work for each one of these communities and a book is being written chronicling this work as an encouragement to people to enjoy the joys of standing up for others.

Google search the following:
  Standing up for Ahmadiyya
  Standing up for Atheists
  Standing up for Christians
  Standing up for LGBTQ
  Standing up for Hindus
  Standing up for Immigrants
  Standing up for Jews
  Standing up for Native Americans
  Standing up for Sikhs

INTERFAITH MARRIAGES
It amounts to building one nation under God

Marriage is indeed an expression of a commitment to a relationship between two individuals. The individuals who take the bold step to become one regardless of their origins, faiths, races and ethnicities must be applauded. They are setting an example of how to live in harmony despite their differences. They are indeed contributing to the idea of one nation.

Look at the universe; everything is programmed precisely! The moon revolves around the earth and the earth goes around the sun accurately. The seasons are programmed and the plants and animals have a determined cycle of birth and death. Within the human body, different organs work cohesively for a normal functioning (with of course built in anomalies) of the body. However, he did not program us how to relate to each other and live with each other. He gave us complete freedom to chart our own course of harmony with the other. God is happiest when two people can rise above their differences and live in harmony.

Interfaith marriages are becoming the new norm of the society. In a few years, one out of two marriages would be of interfaith. Yes, this is across the board, whether you are a Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Baha’i, Atheist or the other. According to the Pew survey, 40% of people of faiths will be marrying a person of another faith.

Mike is blessed to have officiated secular ceremonies as well as religious ceremonies for Jewish-Christian, Hindu-Christian, Bahai-Jewish, Hindu-Jewish, Atheist-Jain, and several other combinations. Being a Muslim, he has officiated weddings for Muslims in a variety of combinations. The sermons reflect the essence of Bride and Groom’s religious and cultural traditions. The couples who embrace genuine humanity by respecting the otherness of other, and accepting each other’s uniqueness must be lauded as Patriotic Americans.

continued......
**PEACE TIME INITIATIVES**

Best time to strengthen relationship among fellow Americans

When nothing is happening, we take it easy and do nothing. This is actually the best time to build relationships for peace.

1. **Unity Day USA** | Bringing Americans together as one people  
www.UnityDayUSA.com

2. **Thanksgiving Celebrations** | Celebrating Cultural diversity  
www.ThanksgivingCelebrations.org

3. **Holocaust and Genocides** | Developing empathy for fellow humans  
www.HolocuastandGenocides.com

4. **The Amin Model**— A model of good citizenship  
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-ghouse/american-muslim-agenda-a-_b_5528706.html  

5. **The power of Engagement** - Fox News, shaping the future  
http://theghousediary.blogspot.com/2014/06/youre-dangerous-sparks-fly-between.html

6. **Standing up for others**, if you don’t stand up for others, why should any one stand up for you?  
www.Standingupforothers.com

7. **Intrafaith Conference**—Shia, Sunni, Ahmadiyya and others  
http://worldmuslimcongress.blogspot.com/2013/02/muslims-talk-with-muslims-at-boniuk.html

8. **Remove all the barriers for** women to be fully contributing members of the society.  
http://genderpluralismcenter.blogspot.com/

9. **Ramadan Intra faith** and Interfaith Iftaars—http://ramadannews.com

**FREEDOM IS GOD-GIVEN**

Defending freedom is a sacred duty

Freedom of expression is the God-given right of every human being. When God told Adam of the consequence of eating or not eating the fruit, Adam chose to eat and was ordered out of the heaven. The angels probably protested and said, “God, you could have stopped Adam from eating... and the poor chap would not have had to face the world and all its issues....”

God responded, “Look, I offered the choice to Adam and he chose what worked for him. I am God. If I don’t honor my own word, then who will?

The angels looked for answers. God said, “Let’s upload “free will” in the DNA of all humans.” That’s where the inalienable rights to free speech come from.

Evil (violation of one’s rights) persists in the world, not because of bad people, but because good people do nothing about it. We have to tell the “bad guys” that the world is not with them. When enough people speak up, it begins the process of weakening the bad and strengthening the good. For the common good of all parties, the world would become a better place to live. The idea of alms, charity, taking care of the elderly, weak, sick and the children is a common theme in every religious tradition. It is indeed the insurance for everyone’s well being.

**Google Search continued**

Standing up for Baha’i  
Standing up for Buddhists  
Standing up for Church of Scientology  
Standing up for Jains  
Standing up for Muslims  
Standing up for Pagans also Wiccans  
Standing up for Phalun Dafa  
Standing up for Unificationist  
Standing up for Zoroastrians
Mike has comprehensive experience in: business management, in turning ailing operations around, in home building, property management, and real estate investments. He has worked for Fluor Corporation, Lewis Fire equipment, and major Home Builders. He currently manages the Center for Pluralism and runs World Muslim Congress, a think tank.

Whatever he does, he does it wholeheartedly;

1. Religious Freedom
2. Media Relations
3. Public Relations
4. Community Relations
5. Operations Management
6. Human Rights
7. Conflict Mitigation and Goodwill nurturance

Skills set: Precise communicator, Public Speaker, thinker, writer, Organizer, the initiator, go-getter and a conflict mitigator.

Citizen: American
Ethnicity: Asian Indian | Born in Bangalore, India
Family: Single | Two Married children living their own lives.

Education:
Doctor of Divinity (Hon) conferred by Trinity International Seminary
MBA, University of Dallas, Texas – Operations Management. (1984)
Master’s Degree in cost accounting from Bangalore University (1974)
Bachelor’s Degree in Banking from Bangalore University (1971)

MIKE’S IDEAL JOB
He executes it wholeheartedly

1. Anti-Semitism—Not a week goes by without someone making an anti-Semitic remark, and shame on us for not saying a thing about it. If each one of us can stand up against Anti-Semitism, we will individually contribute towards a better society that we really want to live in.

2. LGBTQ—It is embarrassing to watch the fundamentalist vitriolic against LGBT’s, yet they subscribe to our constitution where all men are equal. It is time to have a heart to heart talk.

3. Racial issues —We are developing the content for understanding racism and hope to make short documentaries and find solutions to this evil. It will not go away for a few generations. All we can do is to make an effort to reduce it and bring awareness to the society, how it hurts and affects the overall society.

4. Stereotyping—This is the most common form of ignorance that surfaces every minute of the day in our lives. Our freedom to think is lost when we stereotype people and fall in a ditch when we justify it. If we want others to treat us fairly, we have to do it too.

5. Women’s rights—Women are 51% of our population, yet they are not fully represented in the government and leadership of the nation in civil and religious corridors. This has got to change for the sake of creating a better society. Misogyny has to go!

6. Native Americans—As Americans, we have not honored the treaties we made with the Native Americans. We continually violate their rights, just because we are powerful, this injustice will eat our spirituality. One way or the other, we have to change.

7. Islamophobia, Xenophobia, Extremism, Sharia and other issues have to be resolved as we move towards perfecting our union.
As we become one with the nation, most of the attitudes towards Muslims, Hispanics, Blacks, and others will dissipate. What does it take to be one nation? We have to be a part of it.

We are not a perfect union yet, but a perfect union we will be, as we can continue our efforts to be an inclusive society. The Fourth of July should not simply come and go; we must make it a remarkable day. It should be a great happening to augment National Integration, where Americans of all faiths, or no faith, races, ethnicities, nationalities, political, sexual and other orientations come together to celebrate the oneness of our nation.”

Muslims have been contributors towards the wellbeing of the United States of America from the very beginning.

Not only did Muslims acknowledge the new state, the treaty signed with Morocco and the United States is one of the oldest operating documents.

Per Wikipedia, Morocco’s Sultan Muhammad III was the first world leader to recognize the sovereignty of the United States followed by Netherland’s Johannes de Graaf and Tipu Sultan of Mysore (India).

According to Dr. Range Gowda, an authority on Tipu Sultan, “That Tipu Sultan had firecrackers going up in Sriranga Patna, his Capital, cheering America’s independence. He faced the same enemy that the United States had faced- Lord Cornwallis.”

July 4th means freedom, understanding, and unity. It’s a time to once again reflect on what it means to be an American—the spirit to be creative, generous, and proud to, “extend a hand”. The program will change your relationship between yourself and all other Americans; No American regardless of background will be on the sidelines anymore, but a part of the American Story. Let’s come together and celebrate. Don’t forget to bring your own flags and chairs!

Mike’s dream job is to be the Secretary of State. But his commitment remains steadfast: building cohesive work places and societies through religious and political freedom.

No family, community or a nation can have undue advantages over others. Such benefits are temporary and deleterious to lasting peace.

A healthy balance has to be maintained between our communities within the United States and with the community of nations. What is good for America, has got to be good for the world and vice versa to sustain peace and prosperity.

His life mission is to open people’s hearts and minds towards fellow beings by mitigating conflicts and nurturing goodwill. He is a pluralist, peacemaker, collaborator and an educator.

Mike’s civic Mission is to influence the policy makers of our country, to put our nation on the path of fairness, justice, and equity in dealing with our domestic and foreign affairs. "Just" dealings have the power to take us, and the World into the next century with relative peace and prosperity.

Mike has a dream, a dream to strengthen the pluralistic values of America, and the desire to encourage the community of nations to review our values of liberty, justice, free speech, responsible capitalism and co-existence as catalysts in the individual’s pursuit of happiness.

Establishing the Center for Pluralism is his dream and he hopes to nurture pluralism through the center’s programs in shaping a better world for the future.
The world population today is 7.6 Billion, at the turn of the century it was 6 Billion, one hundred years ago it was 1.6 Billion and 200 years ago it was 1 Billion. If we keep going back to 2000 years the world population when Jesus walked the earth was a mere 200 Million. I cannot get figures when it was just two people by any name including Adam & Eve, but it must have started with two at the very beginning. We are all a product of that couple spread into many races, religions, and regions. Dharmic faiths call it Vasudhaiva Kutumbukum, the whole world is one and the Abrahamic faiths say we all came from Adam & Eve. We are all one people. The God-gene (system of reproduction) is embedded in all life forms.

We are indeed one world “under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.” We are represented by every race, nationality, ethnicity, language, culture, and religion. We see God as one, none and many and in every form; male, female, genderless and non-existent, being and non-being, nameless and with innumerable names. Together, we are committed to preserving this pluralistic heritage of the universe.

God has created each one of us to be a unique being with our own thumbprint, eye print, taste bud, and DNA. Nothing in the universe is alike, diversity is creator’s intention and we need to respect that.

Religion is about humility and not arrogance. Humility builds enduring relationships and sustains peace, while arrogance kills the relationships and creates chaos. No matter what your faith is, to claim it to be superior is sheer arrogance.

Chief Seattle, a Native American said this perfectly, “All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the webs, he does it to himself.”

Religions are systems designed to build cohesive societies where no human has to live in apprehensions or fear of the other. A continual equilibrium is sought with an environment, ecology, physical, emotional and social element of life. It gives room to re-establish the equilibrium of the functions.

Let’s pray that the creator gives us the sense to respect the “otherness” of others and accept the God-given uniqueness of each one of us. As we do that, conflicts fade and solutions emerge.

At the Center for Pluralism, we have crystallized the definition of pluralism, “respecting the “otherness” of the others and accepting the genetic uniqueness of each one of us”. Pluralism is nothing but an attitude of living and letting others live, and it is applicable in every aspect of life including: culture, society, religion, politics, food, ethnicity, race and other areas of uniqueness.

In cultural terms, it is recognizing your culture as a beautiful expression of life to you, just as our own culture is to us. When it comes to food, it is recognizing that you will almost always enjoy what your taste buds are trained to enjoy. You might enjoy a well-done steak while some may relish the medium rare, or vice-versa. Religiously, it is learning to honor the way you worship or bow to the creator in gratitude. Mike says that, “Your faith is divine to you just as my faith is divine to me and “Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder”, faith is in the heart of the believer.

We need to prepare ourselves for those eventualities to prevent possible conflicts and lay a good foundation for nurturing goodwill and effective functioning of the societies.

Pluralism is our future, and as a futurist, based on the trends, Mike foresees that two generations from now, we would be comfortable in saying, “My religion, culture or lifestyle is my personal choice.”; and further down the road, a significant number will proclaim that my way of life is not superior or inferior to any.

The ideal society is where, no individual has to live in apprehension or fear of the other and can live his or her own life and let others live theirs. Mike says that If we can learn to accept the “otherness” of others, and respect the God-given uniqueness of each one of the 7 billion of us, then conflicts fade and solutions emerge. Indeed, that is the work of all spiritual masters including Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He had a singular determination - for (all) people to live in harmony. The common values of justice, truth, trust and respect for the “otherness” of others, were the foundation for building such societies.
INTRA-FAITH DIALOGUE
First time in history—Sunni, Shia and Ahmadiyya Muslims talk

This is an extraordinary event in the Muslim World. If not the first in the world, it certainly is a rare event of intra-faith dialogue among Ahmadiyya, Shia, Sunni and WD Muhammad Muslim groups.

The Intra-faith Dialogue on Islam is a presentation of Boniuk Center’s Bridge-BUILDER Series held at the Asia Society Texas Center, Rice University, Houston, Texas 77004 on Thursday, Feb. 21st, 2013.

Present were: Imam Azhar Haneef, Vice President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of the US, Silver Spring, Maryland; Imam Wazir Ali, Masjid Warithud-Deen Mohammed and Masjid Al-Qur’an, Houston, Texas; Imam Moustafa al-Qazwini, Founding Director of the Islamic Education Center of Orange County, California, and Imam Dr. Zia Shaikh, Author and resident scholar of the Islamic Center of Irving, Texas.

This event was critical to setting the tone of dialogue among Muslims, and as a pluralist activist Muslim who regularly interacts, speaks, writes and visits Mosques of every denomination with no prejudice, Mike Ghouse says, “This is a God-given opportunity for this organizer and a moderator of this event to make intra-faith dialogue a reality.”

Full video— https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNGfBUXGm4I

IN DEFENSE OF ISLAM
Pursuing a Civil Dialogue

Mike has stood up for the rights of every human from Atheist to Zoroastrian and every one in between including Native Americans, LGBTQ and other communities, here is a sample of standing up for Muslims.

By Steve Blow sblow@dallasnews.com Published 19 September 2010

Over and over you hear it said: If Muslims oppose terrorism, why don’t they stand up and say it? If that has been you, Mike Ghouse ought to be your hero.

It is hard to imagine that anyone has worked harder than the Carrollton resident to demonstrate the peaceful and moderate side of Islam.

And that effort includes personally visiting Dallas’ First Baptist Church last Sunday just to put a friendly face on the “evil, evil religion” that the Rev. Robert Jeffress denounced a few weeks before.

“It was wonderful,” Ghouse said of the visit. “We were so warmly received.” He hopes a quick chat with Jeffress will be the start of deeper discussion about Islam and the importance of respect between religions.

“I want to have a dialogue with him, not to say he is wrong but to share another point of view,” Ghouse said.

The 57-year-old Muslim was born in India and has lived in the United States for 30 years. He owns a small property management firm. But most of his day is devoted to building bridges between people of different faiths. “It is my passion,” he said in his distinctive raspy voice.

He has been a guest a dozen times on Sean Hannity’s TV and radio talk shows. “I don’t like the way Sean cuts me off, but I have to honor him for giving the American public a semblance of another point of view.”

Ghouse said he can understand fear and criticism of Islam because he went through a time of similar feelings.

On Sunday, December 18, 2016; a model for a cohesive America was unveiled with a handful of volunteers at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC, the nation’s capital. Eventually, this model can become an antidote to prejudices against people of different faiths, races, cultures, and ethnicities.

America is going through a major crisis at this point in history, and each one of the 322 million of us is stressed out. There is always a “silver lining” to such a crises: Whenever one is pitted against the other, we have an opportunity to choose to come together and find solutions to live with each other.

Right now, white Americans are concerned about the erosion of their way of life. The African-Americans are equally apprehensive and so are the Muslims, Jews, Sikhs and undocumented aliens. They are worried about the possibility of their families being torn apart; they are concerned about doubling down to correct the first wrong. The list is all-inclusive. Shall we wait for President Trump to put the derailed train back on-track? Mike says, “No, we have to take the responsibility to shape our lives on our own.”

The American spirit is not to ask the Government but do it ourselves. Here is what we can to do restore America.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/america-will-always-be-a-great-nation_us_585d91b2e4b014e7c72edc45

13 Signs representing 13 religions—12 songs were played, yes there is a song on Atheism too. Check it out at the Festivals of Faiths tab at www.centerforpluralism.com.

What exactly do the majority of Americans want? They want a just society, where everyone feels safe and secure without the fear of other. How do we convince those cashing in on hate and fear mongering? How will we make the change? Can we find a way to make peace lucrative and redirect our energies towards creating a cohesive America?

Our Founding Fathers lay the groundwork for such a society, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Martin Luther King Jr. expressed this in his speech, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

Chief Seattle, a Native American said this perfectly, “All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the webs, he does it to himself.” What are we doing to preserve that delicate web?
What is sacred? Holy books, Mother, Prophet, Flag, Freedom of Speech and...?

It is a successful real-life story set in Mulberry, Florida coupled with a compelling romantic saga woven around the Quran burning event, filled with human aspirations, relationship issues, suspense, humor, action, and disappointments. It has all the ingredients of a successful Hollywood film.

The film is an embodiment of conflict mitigation and goodwill nurturing based on teachings of Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). While Pastor Jones chose to avenge the deaths of 2,998 fellow Americans on 9/11, Mike said, “We prayed together as Americans as well as Muslims of many denominations, and donated the blood to honor victims of 9/11.”

Sacred is an exemplary story of ordinary Muslim Americans working with fellow Americans in forging a new paradigm; a cohesive America.

It’s a civic adventure in skillfully managing conflicting issues such as: upholding Freedom of Speech ie: Quran Burning, Safety of Americans overseas and Muslim reactions, radicalism and pluralism, Jihad and jihad, perceptions about Muslims and Islam, preserving the sanctity of religions and freedom, and establishing a new model for building cohesive societies, particularly a Pluralistic America where no American has to live in fear of the other.

Hopefully, the world will see a new paradigm in the making of what Muslims ought to be and how they will respond to future incidents of Quran-Burning, and criticism of Islam or to cartoons of the Prophet.

We also hope to firmly communicate the value of freedom of speech that is the foundation of democracies and free societies. What is good for Muslims has got to be good for the world and vice versa to forge sustainable harmony. Blessed are the peacemakers!

Mike is passionate about Pluralism and believes, “If we can learn to respect the “otherness” of others, and accept the God-given uniqueness of each one of us, then conflicts fade and solutions emerge.” Indeed, 20 years of research and studies have enabled him to crystallize the definition of pluralism as an attitude of respecting the “otherness” of others.

As an Indian American Muslim, his contribution to America would be to strengthen America’s pluralistic heritage, which he learned from his upbringing in Pluralistic India.

Mike was a Commissioner-at-Large in the City of Carrollton. He was president of North Texas Cricket Association, Charity for fashions, Indian Creek Homeowners Association, and several other organizations. He was on the Board of Dallas Peace Center, Founding Director at Memnosyne Foundation, and several other organizations.

Pluralism runs through Mike’s veins, during the college days, he visited Mahabodhi Society every Thursday to listen to sermons on Buddhism, prayed in a Mosque on Fridays and sat down in the Hindu temple and sang Bhajans (Hindu Devotional Songs) on Saturday nights and considered himself a pluralist.

This “dare devil” is out front demonstrating, speaking and writing to remind us whenever our leaders go “off-track”. He is committed to building a cohesive America where no American has to live in apprehension, tension or fear of the other. All his actions, writings, talks and discussions are geared towards building one nation with, “liberty and justice for all”.

Blessed are the peacemakers!
**FIRST AMENDMENT**

Free Speech is most enduring value of a society

The First Amendment is the basis for Mike’s work in defending the freedom of faith, freedom of assembly and freedom of speech around the world. Mike defends that freedom with all his heart, mind, and soul.

He is guided by our immortal declaration, “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Mike is committed to teach and conduct workshops on Free speech around the world in general, and to the Muslim world in particular, referencing the Quran and Prophet Muhammad’s example (pbuh).

There are innumerable situations that Mike has dealt squarely on free speech to his detriment — Professor Gannouchi was denounced by Sean Hannity at Fox News wanted to prevent him from speaking at Yale University, Mike vigorously defended free speech on his TV show.

Pamela Geller was banned from speaking in the United Kingdom. Mike defended her free speech even though Geller is known for giving hate speeches.

The Arab League proposed to bring restrictions on speech about religious figures, particularly Prophet Muhammad, (pbuh) who is Mike’s mentor as well; but he stood against any restrictions on free speech and wrote about the need to preserve free speech which is an enduring value he believes in.

Pastor Terry Jones was not criticized for his Quran Burning announcement. Instead, it was countered by a non-violent peaceful method—Muslims prayed for his well being, the well-being of American soldiers all around the world and for all Americans. There is a movie planned about free speech.

Pastor Robert Jeffress was not condemned for denigrating the Quran. Instead, he was asked to study the difficult verses of the Quran. There is an extensive blog written on the conference held to honor free speech.

CFP also includes workshops on First Amendment in their work. It is free speech that has been instrumental in preserving one’s freedom.

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**SACRED: A DOCUMENTARY**

The exciting story of Free Speech and Quran Burning

The film is about non-violent positive Muslim response to Quran burning. God willing, the perceptions about Muslims will change, and hopefully Muslims will become conflict mitigaters and goodwill nurturers.
Our Mission at World Muslim Congress is to work for a world of coexistence through inclusiveness and participation. As a member of the diverse family of faiths, the efforts of WMC will be directed towards justice and equity to attain peace for humankind with a firm grounding in commonly held values. We cannot have advantages at the cost of others. Such benefits are temporary and deleterious to lasting peace. We believe what is good for Muslims has got to be good for the world, and vice versa, to sustain goodness.

Indeed we aspire to promote goodwill amongst people of different affiliations, regardless of their faith, gender, race, nationality, culture or any other uniqueness blessed by the creator.

Muslims forget that Prophet Muhammad was the first man on the earth to initiate the women’s liberation movement. He was also the first spiritual master to have commenced Interfaith Dialogue. No one had ever done that before. He practiced the idea that we are all equal.

“Our short-term goal”, Mike says, “is to understand different faiths and let the values of Islam be understood as well. We know very little about other faiths just as others know almost nothing about Islam. The idea is to know each other so we can be kind to each other. When we learn about each other, myths disappear and solutions emerge.”

Our Long term goal is simply to bring a realization that the purpose of all religions is to bring peace and tranquility to an individual and further create balanced relationships between the individual, society and the environment.

www.WorldMuslimCongress.org
Related websites: ShariaLaws.com | Quraantoday.com | RamadanNews.com QuraanConference.com | BlasphemyLaws.blogspot.com |
What is the need to have diversity and how does it benefit you?

Every organization is made up of people who are loyal and committed to the prosperity and profitability of the organization. While a majority of the board members, associates and employees stick to the guidelines for smooth sailing, a few don’t and pull down the productivity of the entire group.

The old-fashioned method was to fire the one who do not conform, and that turned out to be expensive in keep replacing employees. The smart ones have figured out the answer: Pluralism—i.e., respecting the otherness of the other. Best teams are built upon this principle.

This purposeful workshop would be beneficial not only to the corporate executives but also to the Ambassadors of many countries who are housed in Washington DC. All of us want members of our family, fellow employees at our offices, nations, workplaces and places of worship to function cohesively and effectively.

Inclusion is good for business, it turns any organization into an effective and productive and it is a joy to work.

We need to welcome every criticism of Quran, Islam and the Prophet and deal with it with grace. Let freedom of speech be the cornerstone of Islam. Islam is not going anywhere; the Prophet is not going anywhere, and by opening ourselves up to criticism, we will learn a lot more about our faith than we ever would have known. We need to move away from intolerance to acceptance of a different point of view without having to agree with it. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) lived through it and Muslims can learn from his example.

Criticism can fade away or rain upon us depending on how Muslims respond to it. Lack of conviction in one’s faith breeds intolerance towards criticism; whereas firmness in faith can lead us to learn from criticism, explore infinite wisdom and realize the strength of our faith (Imaan); a worthy feeling to have, instead of living in doubt and shooing criticism away.

Criticism of Islam
Free speech triumphs

One of the most powerful sentences from Prophet Muhammad’s (pbuh) last sermon is, “I leave behind two things, the Qur’an and the Sunnah and if you follow these you will never go astray.” The responsibility to know was placed directly on us. It was not assigned to a University or a Spiritual leader to interpret for us.

We cannot compromise on free speech, however much a few may abuse it, but free speech is an enduring value and the hallmark of civilization. Muslims need to seriously consider the gains they have had, that far outweigh the tensions given by a handful of loonies.

The purpose of Islam was to inculcate the values of accountability of one’s actions to preserve the harmony of the universe with which God created the universe. The role of Muslims is to mitigate conflicts and nurture goodwill. That is the primary duty of Muslims.
The words of Pastor Jeffress generate fear, anxieties, hate and ill-will. It is because of him and not the fault of his Church; even if the congregation sheepishly claps and gives a standing ovation when the pastor calls out with full passion, “Islam is an evil, evil religion and the Quran is a book written by a false prophet.” The chronological sequence of the events from that day Pastor Robert Jeffress called Islam “an evil, evil religion” to the Quran Conference has been documented on Television and “Dallas Morning News” at www.QuraanConference.com

Myths are manufactured and perpetuated without any substantiation. It is an old business to malign others to have a momentary gain. The challenge was simple: I will present the right translation of the Qur’an to Rev. Robert Jeffress and his congregation, challenge him to find 3 evil things about the Quran. If he does, I will go to work for his ministry. If he does not, I will ask him to retract the thoughtless and cavalier statements he has made about Islam and the Quran, and take up the challenge of becoming a peacemaker.

The unique thing about the Quran Conference was that, through audience participation, we were able to reduce 60 difficult verses down to 10, to be read by 10 non-Muslim clergy representing different faiths. The conclusion was that it is not the Quran that is the problem; it is the misunderstanding of the Quran. They then understood this to be the same problem with some misguided Muslims.

This formula is successful and Mike is strengthening the model to make it work on its own in every city in the world. Mike would be happy to facilitate and conduct discussions using this formula all around the globe. The many details could fill a book: http://quraanconference.blogspot.com

We are deeply committed to education and relentlessly pursue building cohesive societies. We hope to create a model for the world to emulate.

There is a shameless cruelty in us. We shy away from or refuse to acknowledge the sufferings of others, worrying that it will devalue us or amount to infidelity towards our own cause. We cannot justify massacres arrogantly believing that the victims deserved it or asked for it.

We have to learn to acknowledge and to reflect upon the terrible things we have inflicted upon each other; and we have to commit to resisting the temptations to be prejudiced or to stereotype others. We cannot demand peace unless we are peaceful ourselves.

Our safety hinges on the safety of others around us, and it behooves us to work for the safety and security of others on this little planet of ours. We have to be continuously aware of the Holocaust and Genocides and prepare to avert such tragedies.

Continued on Page 23
The idea for Unity Day USA was first conceived on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, and took its current form on Sunday, September 11, 2005. It is an initiative to bring Americans together to stand up for the safety, security, and cohesiveness of America.

On this Unity Day, Mike said, “We the people of the United States of America of every faith, race, ethnicity, culture, and background will gather to express our commitment to co-existence, in unity, in prosperity and in the well-being of our nation.”

He went on to say, “Our civic leaders including Mayors, Council Members, State Representatives/Delegates, Senators, Representatives and other officials will honor us with their presence. Additionally, our men and women in uniform including police and fire chiefs will be honored for their outstanding service to our nation.”

“Leaders from various faith communities will share a few words of wisdom from their respective scriptures, beliefs or oral traditions. Unity Day USA is about re-affirming our faith in the goodness of humanity, and the longing for peace.”

When Pastor Jones announced burning 2,998 copies of the Qur’an on Wednesday, September 11, 2013, one for each American life lost on September 11, 2001, Mike decided to bring a closure to that sacrifice of our men and women in the most honored way, and not by burning Qurans. He set out to achieve a few clearly defined goals:

To communicate to the Muslim World that our God-given right to freedom of speech is a value we treasure and hold dear. Ultimately, it is freedom that uplifts all of humanity. Indeed, Islam is one of the greatest beneficiaries of this freedom.

To offer an alternate Muslim behavioral model to become the standard for future conflicts, indeed, we can call it a genuine Islamic response based upon the Quran and the example of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

To be instrumental in the safety of fellow Americans serving in the armed forces, and of Americans traveling overseas in conflicts zones.

To build cohesive societies where no human has to live in apprehension, discomfort or fear of the other, we need to create this model to mitigate conflicts, nurture goodwill and offer pluralistic solutions on issues of the day.

The support from fellow Americans for this initiative has been encouraging in establishing this new paradigm. Muslim support from around the world has, indeed, also been encouraging. Just about every Muslim Newspaper has published our press release and many have endorsed this to be the right thing to do.

This is a new paradigm in bringing a change, a critical milestone for Muslims in the United States and around the world.

The Mulberry event planted the seed of change about how Muslims are perceived, and how they would react to a future Quran burning, should it happen, and to criticism of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and Islam. We have decided to make a film about this.
Mike Ghouse, welcomed the initiative by Congressman Peter King, the then chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security to hold the hearings on Islamic radicalism.

It is our duty to keep law and order and faithfully guard the safety of every citizen. Hate is one of the many sources of disrupting the peace in a society and it is our responsibility to seek the source of such hate and work to mitigate it.

We have to identify the criminals who are individually accountable for their actions and need to punish them expeditiously, according to the law. As a civil society, we must also resist the temptation to blame their family, nation and religion.

Indeed, the last few attempts to mess with our nation’s security has come from men flaunting the Muslim label; and as Muslim Americans, it becomes our individual and collective responsibility to participate in ensuring the safety of every American so we welcome the hearings. We hope they lead us to finding the sources and causes of such erratic behavior; and perhaps, point out areas of concern to be addressed and find lasting solutions.

We hope to separate realities from myths to help find these solutions.

The good news is the King Hearings did not produce what he was looking for. Indeed, they fell flat. Although we should resist random ‘checks’ in future, we welcome them now. It is for the safety of all citizens and the safety of all is our individual and collective responsibility as Muslims.

Mike proudly mentioned, “This is our oldest running annual event since being established in 1993. The purpose for celebrating this event is to thank the Creator for helping us learn: to give thanks for the blessed life we all enjoy in these United States; to celebrate the diversity of creation; to enjoy the cultural heritage of each group that makes up America; to appreciate and recognize outstanding volunteers; and to bring new immigrants into our fold.”

In the last 25 years, spiritual groups including Native Americans, Apache, Atheists, Baha’i, Buddhist, Cherokee, Choctaw, Christian, Hindu, Hopi, Jain, Jewish, Maya, Muslim, Shinto, Sikh, Tao, Wicca, Oriya, Zoroastrian and communities from different races and ethnicities have come together to celebrate this event.

Five cultural dances are presented as a part of the evening;

The uniqueness of the program is highlighted with the Turkey Carving Ceremony. In previous years, several dignitaries have performed the symbolic Turkey Carving. This year, yet another dignitary will be honoring us with his/her presence.

“We salute the Native Americans for nurturing survival and we salute Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Jewish Community for their outstanding contributions in making us all proud of the United States of America. We admire the Muslim and Sikh communities for withstanding all the difficulties and humiliation that was unleashed on them after 911, and their courage to continue to remain steadfast in their loyalty and patriotism in contributing towards the growth of this great nation.

As a society, it is our duty to recognize and appreciate the people who have made a difference in the communities we live in, and it is our pleasure to honor and encourage these individuals and organizations.

www.ThanksgivingCelebrations.org
Mike has a deep interest in foreign policy and has spoken and written extensively on the topic. He offers pluralistic solutions on issues of the day and believes that our nation can be better represented with the greatest product we have; freedom. One of the values that people around the world disagree with is free speech. If they knew the good it does in the long haul, they would subscribe to our ideals.

No family, community or a nation can have undue advantages over others. Such benefits are temporary and deleterious to lasting peace. Mike’s life mission is to open people’s hearts and minds towards fellow beings by mitigating conflicts and nurturing goodwill. He is a pluralist, peacemaker, collaborator and an educator.

Mike has appeared on Fox News regarding foreign policy issues.

ISRAEL-PALESTINE- Mike has visited and toured Israel and Palestine and has spoken at the Middle East Peace Initiative in Jerusalem. He has written over 60 articles and also published over 300 articles on his blog: www.IsraelPalestineDialogue.com

INDIA - There are nearly 3,000 Articles on his India blog, of which nearly 1500 are his own writings on India’s politics, society, religion, foreign policy and conflicts – http://MikeGhouseforIndia.blogspot.com

Mike has made many TV appearances and written occasional articles on PAKISTAN, BANGLADESH, SRI LANKA, EGYPT, IRAN, SAUDI ARABIA, LIBYA, and the MIDDLE EAST.
Education makes all the difference in the world and I want to bring to the World what I learned in the Social Studies book from my 6th grade. It is etched in my mind, heart, and soul forever.

There was a page for each one of the spiritual Masters: Jesus, Krishna, Rama, Gautama, Mahavira, Moses, Nanak, Muhammad, and Zarathustra. “I learned about them.” Mike remembered, “As the public spiritual Masters, not as Christian, Hindu, etc. Masters. Their message was universal and each one had a distinct message. “

So we have started the series here in Washington DC, Mike Says, “Beginning with Prophet Muhammad’s birth celebrations. Throughout the year, we will be celebrating one religious people and talk about their contribution in making our world a better place for all of us to live.

These celebrations would be the birth of the religious founders who were committed to building cohesive societies or major festivals to represent every American. It is all about inclusion!

Ten years from now, you will not find a place of work, worship, playground, school, restaurant, theater and other places of public gatherings where you will not find people of different faiths, races, and ethnicities interacting, working, studying, intermingling, playing and marrying together. This is bound to create conflicts.

A vast majority of us have heard things about others from our friends, news, social media or our own knowledge of others; and we instantly form opinions about others. As responsible individuals, we must strive to stop stereotyping and build pathways to ensure smooth functioning of our society, whether it is the workplace or our neighborhoods.

We need to reassure each other, particularly the disconnected ones, that together, as Americans, we are committed to safeguarding the American way of life. No American needs to worry about losing his or her way of life. Together, as Americans, we uphold, protect, defend and celebrate the values enshrined in our Constitution; which assures our way of life.

CFP will continue to bring non-stop actions in practicing pluralism in religion, politics, society, and culture and be a catalyst for a safe and a secure America for each one of us, as we move through this transition.

Bottom Line—We will train individuals to speak about Pluralism in Religion, Politics, society and culture. Each one will be familiar with at least 12 different faiths, the politics of Republicans and Democrats, cultural and society in general.

Please visit our website and participate as a volunteer, sponsor or a donor. We are a Washington based non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization.
Every religion and every form of Government has one underlying theme—to build a society with the least conflicts, and utmost security for each individual, those invincible as well as vulnerable.

Arrogance is the root cause of all conflicts and it is a killer of relationships, the antidote is inculcated by religions by injecting the values, of humility and equality, which build bridges and harmony and add to the cohesive functioning of societies.

Often Mike has posited, “As we learn to respect the otherness of others and accept the God-given uniqueness of each one of us, then conflicts fade and solutions emerge.”

Towards this end, Mike has done an incredible amount of work in forging relationships between different faith-based communities.

Within the United States, Mike has worked on reconciliation by boldly confronting the conflicts within the communities through his programs, articles, speeches, and workshops.

Mike has written to Pope Frances to help him organize global conferences to put the conflicts out between Christians and Jews, Muslims and Jews, Christians and Muslims, between Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

Many initiatives and difficult conversations have taken place rather than shallow superficial conversations. For the benefit of these communities, a whole binder full of writes ups will be compiled into a book. There are a few Imams, Pundits, Rabbis and Pastor have made reckless statements that need to be addressed because there is no basis to make such incendiary statements.

This work will continue, and God willing we will train enough people to carry this work forward. Many more programs will be unveiled in 2018 and the years to come.

Each one of us is conditioned with certain beliefs whether we are Theists, Atheists or agnostics. We took the challenge to communicate the message to the general public in the most generic way we can. The idea was that every listener gets what Jesus meant, “Follow me”, Krishna Says, “Surrender to me” or Allah says, “Submit to my will.”

How does each religion, its values and practices contribute towards the well being of the society? As Chief Seattle, a Native American said this perfectly, “All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the webs, he does it to himself.”

Each one of our audience member had Mr. Spock listening out for them. A scholar from each faith and Mike Ghouse presented the following program to make Religion easy to understand.

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<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
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<td>Islam</td>
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<td>Hinduism</td>
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<td>Atheism</td>
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<td>Zoroastrianism</td>
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A total of 728 Hours in addition to 24 hours on New Years Eve about joint program with all religious leaders.

26 hours on Festivals of the world, all the festivals of the world. You can Google the name of the festival with the name Mike Ghouse to view the results.
Muslims owe it to fellow Americans to clarify the myths about Sharia, and propose fixing this problem through a conference, to make it credible, with the Islamic scholars and those who are opposed to Sharia.

Americans, who are not familiar with American Muslims, get tense when they hear the word Sharia – it has come to mean stoning a raped woman to death, chopping off one’s hand for small theft, beheading, hanging for apostasy, death penalty for Blasphemy etc.

American public deserves to know the truth, and they must be assured that the draconian Sharia Laws practiced in three out of 56 Muslim majority nations is the law of those nations, only, and not a law practiced in the Muslim majority nations.

No American Muslim Organization has asked for it, nor have a majority of Muslims sought Sharia Law be applied. They have subscribed to laws enshrined in our constitution and they believe it serves the justice fairly and equitably. Our goal is to bring clarity to the American Public.

We have plans to hold two conferences this year. Check out the Events and Conference Calendar at the www.CenterforPluralism.com and www.ShariaLaws.com

The Department of State has many outstanding programs, one of them is bringing religious leaders from across the world to orient them how America deals with multiple faiths, cultures, and ethnicities. When the Muslim contingent visited, invariably they were assigned half a day with Mike to share the religious landscape of America and how interfaith works through a power point presentation or a booklet like this for them to take home.

The program is beneficial to the United States as most of the visitors wanted to emulate us. In the long haul, it ensured America’s influence and respect for the American way of life. It assured us long-term economic relationships and security for every American anywhere in the world.

Mike was sorely disappointed that this program was not capitalized to build upon the relationships. He has met Muslim groups from nearly 50 Muslim majority nations along with Muslims from Russia, China, UK and other nations. Invariably each group was excited when we talked about Pluralism, indeed, some of them start quoting Quran and Prophet’s examples in support of Pluralism. Many of them were state ministers and major clergy and were willing to sign joint declarations whenever an uneventful thing happened like cartoons of the Prophet.

We the people, the Americans are fanatic about free speech and Mike is one too (Page 10). We have conflicts with others because most of the people around the world do not understand free speech that we cherish. When Mike quotes Quran and Prophet’s examples to the Muslim visitors, they flip but love it, as they had not seen that perspective deeply rooted in their faith.

America has the led the world in science, technology, medicine, and culture, it is time we lead the world by example with the American brand of Pluralism. Live your life and let others live theirs.
**FREEDOM OF FAITH**
If we don’t seek freedom, who will?

Mike is blessed to have taken up the most difficult issues of the communities around the world. A few examples are: forced conversions by ISIS and Taliban in India and Pakistan, banning conversions in India, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia; forcing women to wear Hijab in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan or the opposite—compelling women to remove their Hijabs in France, the persecution of Falun Dafa in China, and the Unificationist in Japan and other causes as well. India is regulating what one eats, drinks, wears and believes. These crimes are committed in the name of the religion which, ironically, abhors such practices. Assertive Education is the key and we need to allay the fears of these insecure self-appointed guardians of religions.

A lot of work is done, a few prominent ones that Mike took a stand are:

Asiya Bibi in Pakistan—A petition was drafted and articles were written and challenging Muslims to present the Prophet as Mercy to mankind, and now how he is perceive by the acts of a few.

Nadirkhani in Iran—Another petition and constant comments were written urging the Iranian government to release this gentleman. Islam guarantees freedom of faith and what Iran is doing is not in line with Islamic principles of freedom.

Toyota Super Bowl Commercial — was a good step forward but not inclusive enough. If you were ever excluded and ignored in a party, you would understand. Toyota needs to remake this spot. Check the Petition.

Mike has written to a Siberian town to lift the ban on Bhagvad Gita, wrote about apostasy case of Lena Joes in Malaysia, Abdur Rahman in Afghanistan. He wrote to the Minister in Indonesia to stop persecuting Ahmadiyya Muslims. The list is endless, he has not attended to every atrocity, but done what is humanly possible. Thank God for giving Mike 67 years of life to do this work. We hope Mike has many more years to continue.

**ARE MUSLIMS A PART OF AMERICA?**
A critical self examination of ourselves

The following are Mike’s thoughts about the need for critical self-examination: “Muslim are not a part of the society, indeed, they are apart from it. They are not connected enough with the mainstream society for a vast majority of Americans to stand up for us, empathize with us, or even understand the truth about us that we are no different than them in our endeavors and aspirations of life. We must, however, express our gratitude to the millions of Americans who have stood up for us, compelled by their sense of justness and fair play during the crises.”

Professor Sherman Jackson observes, “Thus far, however, Muslims remain outside the American story, which is why despite their positive contributions to society; they seldom enlist empathy when they are jailed or discriminated against.”

Mike continues, “As good citizens it is not only our right but it is our duty to be self-critical of our society; the Muslim as well as the American society. I hope that the conservatives among us will get beyond the self-righteous criticism and value the freedom that we are endowed with to exercise with pride and care.

“We must learn to re-examine our attitudes towards others and push the refresh button to understand the essence of Islam. We must do our inner jihad against the temptations to reduce Islam to rituals, we should not only be identified as Muslims by the ritual aspect of our religion but also be recognized by the spiritual and social aspect of ‘being a Muslim’.”

“Being a Muslim is volunteering one’s time and effort for the general well being of the society, and serving it with blinders. Prophet Muhammad said your responsibility is to yourselves, to your family members, to your relatives, to your neighbors around you and beyond. He did not advocate exclusion: “A neighbor is a neighbor is a neighbor.”

“We are Americans, indeed, but need to be Americans “in spirit” to seamlessly connect with fellow Americans.”

The American Amin Award is instituted for the first time in the world, to recognize and encourage individuals who follow the “Amin model” of the prophet. What is Amin? It is an Individual who reaches out to every human regardless of his race, religion, region or other uniqueness. Jesus embraced everyone, and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) continued that same tradition. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was committed to peaceful societies and he knew one cannot build peace in the vacuum; one has to earn the trust of the society. One has to be truthful, reliable, and trustworthy and be someone who people feel safe and secure being around. So, he lived his life by example and earned the title of Amin from the Jewish, Christian and Pagan and other tribes. 

http://centerforpluralism.com/awards-the-american-amin-awards/

Mike says, that, “The next birth celebrations of the prophet falls on Friday, December 1, 2017 and we hope to recognize two individuals – one who has no bias towards others and the other who has most friends from Atheists to Zoroastrians and every one in between. The idea is to develop inclusive societies by encouraging interfaith relationships—a prophetic tradition.”

ASK NOT THE GOVERNMENT
It is our individual responsibility to bring change

Ask not what the Government can do to remove the ill-will, divisiveness, hatred, and anguish that Americans are going through now. If you look for others to hand a “harmonious America” on a platter for you, it won’t happen until “hell freezes over.”

Instead, Mike says to do your share of work in knowing fellow humans around you. He says that, that is the foundation for building a tensionless America; that you can bring about harmony at least around you and counsels that it is long-term work.

Center for Pluralism facilitates research, recommendations, discussions, and actions geared to build a secure America through knowing each other.

Our programs are designed to bring everyone from Atheists to Zoroastrians, and every one in between, to get to know each other. We are in this together and we have to work at it. Each event is an experience in itself. We sponsor

- Monthly Workshops on religions to understand others
- Interfaith experiential dinners
- Interfaith bus tours for youth
- Radio and Television appearances
- Publications
- Conferences on: Anti-Semitism, Racism, Xenophobia, Homophobia, Idolatry-phobia, Misogyny and Islamophobia

HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDES—FROM PAGE 16
“The most difficult and influential scene of my life, “ Mike painfully recalled, “was watching Jews inhumanely herded to a huge pit, and were shot into it during the Holocaust. The hurtful looks in their eyes have been very painful to me. I connected with their plea,” He went on to say, “In my college, I helped a friend with answers during the exams and was caught red-handed and taken to the Principal’s office. None of my friends stood up for me, I was looking at them, perhaps even for an acknowledgment, and they walked away as if I did not exist. I can never forget my helplessness and I said, ‘Never again.’”
By the end of 2020, there will not be a major city in America, and perhaps in the world, where you will not find people of different faiths, cultures, ethnicities, races, nationalities and social backgrounds working, eating, playing, interacting, marrying, and participating in activities together.

This is bound to create social and personal conflicts, harming the smooth functioning of the corporations or of your local community.

We need to prepare ourselves for those eventualities, and to prevent possible conflicts, lay a good foundation for nurturing goodwill and effective functioning of the societies.

Exclusive workplaces will become a thing of the past. If you live amidst others, you must make an effort to know each other.

Each one of us tunes into a radio station called WIFM: “What’s In It For Me.” Diversity is beneficial to any organization.

You are who you are, and I am who I am. As long as we don’t interfere with each other’s space, sustenance and nurturance, and mind our own business, we all will do well.

The Center for Pluralism is committed to organizing effective events to promote the idea of knowing each other. Knowledge leads to understanding and understanding to acceptance of the otherness of others.

We will be happy to do a workshop for your organization. As we learn to “Respect the otherness of the other” and accept the God-given uniqueness of each one of us, then conflicts fade and solutions emerge.

We thank our veterans for their patriotism, service and sacrifice to our nation, and express our gratitude by paying homage to the places dedicated to our veterans.

It is a tradition among many faiths to pray for humanity and seek blessings for those who sacrificed their lives for the benefit of all, and many a American will be visiting the cemeteries around the country to pay their homage.

Members of Muslim community will be visiting the Veterans Cemeteries including Arlington National Cemetery to pay their respect to the Veterans.

The freedom that we cherish today came to us through the sacrifice of our men and women right from George Washington down to the last soldier fighting for our freedom.

YOUTUBE- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DoWLyVXH6Ek
MEMORIAL DAY
Binding with fellow Americans

Mike counsels, “The freedom that you and I cherish did not come to us on a platter, and was not ‘a given’ either; it was earned for us through the sacrifices of men and women who fought for it. It is particularly an important day for all the immigrants who enjoy the freedom and all the opportunities America offers, and owe that gratitude to our veterans.

The tradition of Memorial Day observance began after the American Civil War to commemorate the Union and Confederate soldiers who died in the civil war. Indeed, it was the civil war that abolished slavery and was the stepping stone for passing the Civil rights Act of 1964 which allowed all immigrants to be equal citizens.

Given the alienation Muslims and others may feel with the current political rhetoric, the Memorial Day facilitates an opportunity to bind with each other, and to be one with all.

It is an incredible feeling; it is like being in a mother’s lap.

“Since 2010,” Mike reminisces, “I have been visiting every National Cemetery and paying tributes to our men and women. Google check Memorial Day Mike Ghouse to find many stories. You can also plug in Memorial Day in the search box at www.TheGhousediary.com

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUCHWggiwqw

COMMITMENT TO 9/11
A day to bring Americans together

Mike has dedicated this day every year to serve the nation.

Mike’s recollections of 9/11:

“Dallas, Texas. About 10:00 in the Morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001, I was called in by AM Radio 1150 to address the situation; and 950 AM also joined in to simulcast the program. The great tragedy had left everyone speechless and had paralyzed everyone from doing anything. I was shaking but was committed to make sense out of the chaos and bring coherence to the day, and pave the way for relevant action.

At the end of the day, we got people to focus on these five things; 1) Donate Blood, 2) Donate Funds, 3) Hold interfaith prayers, 4) Understand that Bin Laden is the Terrorist and 5) Everything is going to be alright and we will be safe now.”

“I was on the air for 7 hours straight, standing on my feet and getting just about every community, religious, civic and business leaders and the general public on the air to talk about the situation. Many of them read prepared statements, and one by one they condemned the attack. I did not even get to eat or take a break. The calls were pouring in and I was completely absorbed in the situation.

“Among many who jumped on the idea to hold interfaith prayers were Mr. Joel Brooks of American Jewish Congress, Ms. Vinoda Kumar of the DFW Hindu Temple, Mr. Mohammad Suleman of the Islamic Center of Dallas, Mr. Poras Balsara of the Zoroastrian community and Kevin Rafraf from the Baha’i Temple, the list was endless... every faith tradition was involved!”

While this was going on, my late wife Najma had called in to announce about the blood drive and, sure enough, hundreds of people were lining up at Wadley Blood center.

This is a long story and I hope it offers insights into what it takes to build a cohesive America, a genuinely free America where no one has to live in apprehension and fear of the other.

Read the full story: www.TheGhouseDiary.com—Over 2 Million reads.
At an Interfaith Conference:

We are about Pluralism Studies and action in Politics, Religion, Culture, Society, Cuisine, Costumes and other Uniqueness. This uniqueness can be a source of conflict or harmony. Mike remembers an Interfaith Conference when he said, “Tonight, you will walk out with new experiences to cherish:

“We will call on individuals to join us on the floor and organize 10 teams of 2 each. You will be randomly given a verse from any faith—i.e., if you are a Christian you may be called to become a Hindu for the next few minutes, and if you are a Muslim, you may get the assignment to be an Atheist, if you are not comfortable, sit back and enjoy others do it.”

“Each team will be asked to read the verse and explain to the guests as to what it means to them. We hope through actually reading the verse, each one of us will be less biased toward the other and contributes to the idea of one nation.”

No one wanted to get off the stage, they wanted to learn more, they enjoyed the freedom it gave them from bias and for the first time loved a religion they detested once, for example Hinduism and Islam. We have done over a dozen such experiments and will continue to do.

We will explore if misogyny is religiously sanctioned or men took it upon themselves to make things to work for themselves, and in the process, there was unintended consequence was making a villain out of God and of religion.

A few Men tend to be insecure about their own worth compared to women, and devise ways to feel secure (what a false feeling) by causing women to be insecure. I am not talking about the Taliban in a far-off land, but our own Taliban mind set right here in America denying women the right to choose what she does with her body, rejecting and expecting them to completely obey the husband or beat them up. We need to raise boys to respect women.

"A woman should behave like a woman" "Her place is home" echo the conservative religious men from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and other traditions.

Mike says, “Women have put up with this way of thinking by men for far too long, it's time we feel, act and talk like equals. Should silence by the good people considered an endorsement of bad behavior? If not, we need to speak up. We need to be good for some good values and not good-for-nothing people.”

A good functional society strives to be just to every citizen with “justness” becoming a norm in every aspect of life - be it between spouses, family members, members of the community, town, state or nation. Then people would trust each other and mind their own business.

“Don't look to anyone to blame,” Mike says, “look at yourselves first. A sentence that I have been repeating lately is "for every Muslim ass, there is a Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh or other ass" (add “hole” if you need).

Eventually, we need to realize that individuals must be held accountable for their wrong doing, and not their religion.
Pluralism Awards were instituted in 1996 to recognize individuals who reach out and serve others. Their service is not limited to people of their faith or their country of origin or their race, but for all humanity without reservation. Over the years we have recognized and appreciated 45 individuals by presenting them a plaque during our public events—Unity Day USA or Thanksgiving Celebrations and Awards Night.

The “Community Service Award” is in the same light for those communities who have gone beyond and stood up for others or have set an example of inclusiveness. The first such awardees were the African American Community and the Jewish community for their contribution in bringing about Civil rights and keeping the secular public space respectively. The other communities are the Muslim Community and the Sikh Communities for their exemplary display of patience and prayers for those who had wronged them.

These awards are based on the idea of encouraging the good and creating role models in the society of people who are inclusive in every aspect of life. Exclusion destroys the smooth functioning of a nation and a people, whereas, inclusion buoyed up people to be productive and happy and contributors to the greatness of a nation.

### Our Programs

We do research, conduct seminars and organize symposiums on burning topics of the day that affect Americans. We are all about Research, action and leadership. Please visit the tabs at [www.CenterforPluralism.com](http://www.CenterforPluralism.com)

#### I. Religious Pluralism

- Understanding the Essence of Religions, all the beautiful religions
- Wisdom of Spiritual Masters—A talk series
- Festival of Faiths—an annual event Celebrating all faiths

#### II. Political Pluralism

- Ad-hoc Seminars with Republicans and Democrats
- Issue based Seminars

#### III. Cultural Pluralism

- Thanksgiving Celebrations & Awards Night—20 years
- July 4th—Annual Event
- Gender Pluralism—Seminars

#### IV. Social Pluralism

- Unity Day USA—14th Annual Event
- Holocaust and Genocides - 13th Annual Event
- Memorial Day commemoration—Annual Event
- Veteran’s day—Annual Event

### Pluralism News

- Essence of Festivals—write-ups on major festivals
PLURALISM SPEAKERS
A new breed of speakers to build a cohesive America

The more we learn about each others’ faith, politics and culture, the easier it would be for us to get along with least conflicts and suspicion. Freedom from fear and tensions is what builds successful societies.

A decade from now, there will not be a work place, hospital, community center, playground, theater, school and college where you will not find people of different religions, races, and regions working, studying, and even marrying together. This is bound to create conflicts, and as a member of a responsible society, Mike is planning to roll out programs to make life easier for everyone. No one should feel left out and a sense of belonging adds to one’s happiness and productivity.

We trained a group of people to speak about Islam and how it contributes towards the well being of the society at large, and eventually with the funding; we hope to train individuals to speak about different religions as well as different forms of political ideologies and governance.

The speakers on Islam (anyone from any faith is welcome to learn) will talk about twelve Islamic values that contribute to a cohesive society. They are: accountability, truthfulness, justice, forgiveness, caring, humility, equality, pluralism, freedom, harmony and civil dialogue based in Quran and in the practices of Prophet Muhammad. Eventually, we will be training people to speak about each religion by non-practitioners of that religion.

It is the time we emphasize on Islamic values, rather than the rituals. Rituals are an integral part of everything we do, however, where those rituals achieve is the key to understanding Islam. These values contribute towards creating societies, in our case a cohesive America where all humans feel respected and no one has to live in apprehension or fear of the other.

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HOLOCAUST & THE MUSLIM GUY
A day to bring Americans together

Frequently, Mike is introduced in the following manner, “He is the first Muslim guy to commemorate Holocaust, and perhaps the first non-Jewish person to commemorate the Holocaust as well.”

Every year commemorating Holocaust and also raising awareness of Genocides, since 2006, is the fulfillment of a lifelong desire.

“The most difficult and influential scene of my life”, he said, “was watching Jews inhumanely herded to a huge pit, and then shot into it during the Holocaust. The hurtful looks in their eyes have been very painful to me. I connected with their plea. At my college, I helped a friend with answers during the exams and was caught red-handed and taken to the Principal’s office. None of my friends stood up for me, I was looking at them, perhaps even for an acknowledgment, and they walked away as if I did not exist. I can never forget my helplessness and I said, ‘Never again.’”

If we justify massacres arrogantly believing that the victims deserved it or asked for it, we need to re-examine our thoughts, for this thinking is criminal and will eventually interfere with our lives.

Read the full Story at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-ghouse/holocaust-and-the-muslim-guy_b_4629509.html