

WE STAND FOR LOVE: ON LOVING OUR MUSLIM NEIGHBORS DESPITE A COUNTRY'S FEAR

April 18, 2016

Click on Amanda's picture to friend her, message her, or read more of her blog posts!

'Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.' – Martin Luther King Jr.

On March 22, 2016, our world was yet again rocked with tragedy. In Belgium's capital city of Brussels, the hateful hearts of few took the lives of many, and incited an echo of fear in people of every nationality, color, and religion across the world.

In light of these events, I have heard one of America's leading presidential candidates say that there is 'no choice' but to put a temporary ban on Muslims coming into this country. This same man has also made statements about all of Islam being hateful. He has made statements saying that he would be open to wholesale surveillance on our Muslim citizens and open to searching their mosques without warrants.

A potential leader of this country is spreading a message that Muslim people are to be feared, are to be threatened, and are not to be held in the light while they watch terrorists destroy their religion and their chance at living in peace in this world.

Since this hateful message started to spread, it has taken off like wildfire. My Muslim neighbors and friends, who have lived peacefully and lovingly by our sides for as long as I have known them, are having knives pulled on them in parking lots. Demeaning and threatening messages are yelled at them in grocery stores. They are being forced to look at us, their neighbors, and feel fear rather than love and peace.

I am not an expert in politics. I am not a long-time advocate for social justice. I don't hold degrees in sociology and I've never felt a call to work in human rights. I am not Muslim.

I simply believe that the only way to drive out this darkness is with light.

Tragedies like the attacks in Brussels can incite light — light that seeps out of us with our tears and tells the hateful hearts of the world that though they can take our lives, shake our insides, and make us look over our shoulders, they can't make us forget about hope.

I've seen the photos: the ones of candles lit to form hearts, of nations lighting their monuments in the colors of the Belgian flag, of flowers in streets, and of people holding their hands together in prayer. This is the light.

To share this light, we must not turn on each other. We must stand for love, even amidst our fear. We must find a solution for the violence and tragedy in our world without turning on those who have not caused it.

My request for you then, is this: If you are a Muslim who has faced discrimination, hate, or fear in this country because of the hateful messages being spread, send me your story. Tell the world what it is you want them to know about you, and your heart. Give people who don't

understand your religion a chance to understand. Whether you send a paragraph, an essay, or a photo, I, amongst so many others, want to know your story and hold you in the light.

WE MUST NOT TURN ON EACH OTHER. WE
MUST STAND FOR LOVE, EVEN AMIDST OUR
FEAR.

If you are not a Muslim, send me your story of loving one. Whether your best friend, spouse, or someone you just sit next to in class is Muslim, tell others about the light you see in them. Tell the world why you don't believe they should be subject to the racism and hatred people are trying so hard to target them with.

Let me share these stories for you, and let us all, together, work to raise a voice that will be stronger than anyone spreading hatred.

I believe that the people who fear our Muslim community do so because they do not know them. They may not understand that there is a difference between what they believe, and what ISIS believes. My hope is that by sharing your stories, more people will come to know, understand, and accept your beautiful hearts.

Join me so that we can all stand together in the light.

Please send your stories to westandforlove@yahoo.com, and learn more at westandforlove.com.