

MPV Communications Director Condemns Islamophobia at West Hollywood City Council

Delivered by Crystal Keshwarz on October 17, 2016

Madame Mayor & City Council Members, my name is Crystal Keshwarz and I am the Director of Communications for Muslims for Progressive Values. MPV is a grassroots, faith-based human rights organization that advocated for women's rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, freedom of expression, and freedom of and from religion.

As a grassroots organization we hear the stories of individuals who have faced islamophobic hate crimes. So we organized a solidarity march & rally in Downtown LA on September 11th entitled, #illwalkwithyou. It was a call to our allies to join us in remembering 9/11, and to recommit ourselves to stand united in love and solidarity as Americans. I'm proud that we were joined by dozens of Angelenos from a myriad of backgrounds, because that's what LA is all about: excellence through diversity.

Today we implore you, as elected leaders, to walk with us on this path towards unity and respect of our inherent humanity, because today, your muslim constituents are living in fear. According to the LA Times, anti-Muslim hate crimes in California rose 122% in 2015. The report also concluded that statements by political leaders result in distinct changes in hate crime incidents.

So we call upon you as political leaders, not just to pass this resolution, but to make statements in public, in the news, and on social media, because what you say matters. What you say counts, and what you say changes the course of American attitudes and American Muslim lives.

I want to share with you a story of 22 year old Iranian American named Shayan Mazroei. On September 7, 2015 at a pub in Laguna Niguel, a woman named Elizabeth Thornberg targeted Shayan, calling him an "effing Iranian" a "terrorist" and spitting on him. Then her white supremacist boyfriend Craig Tanber stabbed him to death in the parking lot. That man had killed before Shayan, and he will probably kill again. He made a deal with the OC DA's office who refused to charge Tanber with a hate crime and let him go free.

I tell you this story because what happens in the OC can happen in LA, and it is crucial for you to understand that these crimes and those that commit them are right at our doorstep. The only way to stop it is by taking a stand here, today in this community, that this level of hate has no place in America, no place in California, no place in Los Angeles, and it most definitely has no place in West Hollywood. Thank you.

