

back to the faith's true path. The khatibs and imams have a religious responsibility to negate the distorted stereotypes of Muslims. There are many controversial issues that need to be addressed in order to give direction to the Muslim youth and to create a better understanding of Islam in the West. So-called jihad, suicide bombers, Middle East conflicts and world affairs, the veil (hijab), the face veil (niqab) and the Muslim way of life are the issues that need to be addressed. Perhaps the most important thing that needs to be stressed is the tolerance promoted in the basic tenets of Islam.

The antagonism between Islam and the West has to end. We all are neighbors in the same global community, and we all have to start acting like neighbors instead of enemies. To some extent, it is up to our leaders to try and find the proper solutions to these issues of conflict. But it is also up to our religious leaders—Muslims, Christians and Jews—to create an atmosphere of tolerance that promotes proper solutions instead of meaningless slaughter.

Religious scholars in the West and Muslim scholars should work together to find things that unite them rather than engaging in divisive confrontation. They should unite to protect humanity and adhere to the values of justice, respect for human rights, decency and tolerance. Politicians, civic leaders, academics and the media should support religious scholars on both sides who work together to confront what is becoming a clash of civilizations as opposed to those who fan the flames of intolerance with sensationalism or propaganda for some petty gain.

I conclude with an optimistic note from a recent BBC poll that questioned some 28,000 people in 27 countries; the overall majority believes that there is no inherent incompatibility between Islam and the West and that problems arise from intolerant minorities on both sides. Maybe those intolerant minorities need to be reminded that they are minorities and that the majorities want peace and prosperity for all the peoples of the world.

These majorities will stand up and make the noisy purveyors of death