

I write these words from sunny Gillette. The sun is not out right at the moment, but it has been very warm during the day. Over the past couple of days I have been involved in the Annual Meeting of the Wyoming Interfaith Network, since I am the current Chairman.

Gillette is the place the Queresha Masjid\* is, and also the place where an anti-Koran burning protest was held a few years ago. The mosque is still in existence, and the family of Muslims still live and work in town.

Besides the business aspects of the meeting where a number of resolutions were approved and networking with some of the local religious leaders, there were two educational sessions. The first was a method of sensitizing people to ongoing prejudice and the realities of the move to America for different ethnic groups. The small larger group was divided into three even smaller groups, and given either a Russian Jewish family, an Irish family, or an Italian family. We were given a bio of the family and three Identity Cards (three aspects of their ethnicity). There were then three historical checkpoints, each of which had a particular prejudice card. After receiving the prejudice card, an Identity Card had to be given back so that a survival and success/assimilation card could be received.

Fortunately I was at the table that became the Irish Family, the Gollughers (who later changed their family name to Green) so I learned a bit about somebody else's compromises on the pathway to becoming Americans.

This educational program had been developed by Pastor A.J. Bush and one of her friends (our hostess for the event) after she discovered that most of her community had never been directly exposed to the experiences of others, as all of their family and friends came from the same background.

The other educational experience discussed the incident last year at Sheridan College, where a racial slur had been written on the door of a couple of Native American students, and the way in which this was, and is still being, dealt with.

The resolutions we passed (which will help inform which educational programs we present and which potential laws we follow the development of) are on the topics of:

Education concerning various religions and working to become a supportive presence in case any of them are the subjects of attacks; Vulnerable Children and Adults; Health Care in Wyoming; Juvenile Justice Reform; Mental Health; Immigration Reform; Discrimination; Native Americans; Equality.

\*I did some googling and discovered that the word Mosque is a transliteration routed through various European languages of the Arabic Masjid. Masjid is reported to mean "where we bow" [I have not yet learned Arabic, although I have tried some self-study several times in the past, so I cannot verify the accuracy of this translation; Mohammed Salih had the flu so I could not ask him directly] and the Queresha tribe were merchants when Mohammed the Prophet was born (and he was born into one of their clans). So it seems a perfect fit for a spot where a family of financially successful Muslims would hold worship services.

I apologize for any parts of the above that might be unclear. I am still working on getting over the cold I picked up about 8 days ago, and am not sure how much medicine of which kinds is still floating around. May this next week be a safe one for all of us, and may we practice tolerance and potential acceptance of the other.

