

On Receiving the Award from the Indianapolis Medical Society

Written by Dr. Shahid Athar

I have come here today, not to receive an award which indeed is a great honor for me but to thank you all, especially those physicians who have served our community for 50 years or more, those distinguished physicians who have received this prestigious award in the past and those of you who are here who are more deserving than I to receive this honor. I salute you all.

I have lived in the USA for 33 years more than I have lived in any other country, in Indianapolis more than I have lived in any other city. I am proud to be what I am, a U.S. citizen, a Muslim, a Hoosier, a physician and a volunteer. I thank all those organizations which provided me with the opportunity to serve fellow humans, my mosque, Genessaret Free Clinic, Interfaith Alliance and many other organizations locally and nationally, and I thank my wife for giving me the time to do so.

I am a Muslim physician who has practiced at a Catholic Hospital for last 28 years. Observing the compassionate care being rendered by these practicing Christians and physicians and nurses of other faith traditions, has made me grow in love and compassion.

Two weeks ago I was in Washington , D.C. in the company of Rear Admiral Kenneth Moritsugu, the Deputy U.S. Surgeon General and the keynote speaker at the IMANA Convention. He, in a passionate speech urged the medical community to uphold the sanctity of life and promote organ donation. I, too, endorse his appeal.

On September 9th, this year, two days before the September 11th, tragedy anniversary , still heavy on my heart, I sent the following message to President Bush and the Indianapolis Star. The Star published only half of it, so allow me to read it to you.

“I am weak in strength, because of my recent surgery, but strong in my resolve to tell my fellow Americans, patients, colleagues and friends, of all faith traditions, that I am with them in my thoughts and prayers, with the victims of the September 11th tragedy, their relatives and all those who suffered world wide by the actions of the few misguided men and their misguided leaders.

September 11th, 2001 should always be remembered annually as a day of unity against

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terrorism, against all those who misuse religion, for all those who uphold the sanctity of human life and for all those who respect fellow humans in spite of our differences. The Quran says, "God cannot be questioned for His decisions but humans will be questioned for their actions." On September 11th 2001, if an earthquake had hit New York City and 3000 people had died, it would have been indeed a great tragedy, but could not have be compared to what actually happened last year on Sept.11. We will never allow this to happen again."(published in Indianapolis star 9-11-02)

This award is about volunteerism. So I urge you all to do more volunteer work for fellow humans. You are the instruments of God's Healing. God's Care and Compassion encompasses all. He feeds even those who try to deny His existence.

To conclude I will read a quotation from George Bernard Shaw:

"I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no 'brief candle' to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to the future generations."

In peace I came, in peace I leave. With love I came with love I leave. Shalom, Salaam, Peace. God Bless America God bless the World. Thank you and good night..