

Beat: Politics

## **PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA MADE HIS FIRST VISIT TO A MOSQUE IN AMERICA SPEAKING AT ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF BALTIMORE**

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**USPA NEWS** - On February 3, 2016, the President Obama made his first visit to a mosque in America. Speaking at the Islamic Society of Baltimore, he said :

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On February 3, 2016, the President Obama made his first visit to a mosque in America. Speaking at the Islamic Society of Baltimore, he said :

'At a time when others are trying to divide us along lines of religion or sect, we have to reaffirm that most fundamental of truths""we are all God's children, all born equal with inherent dignity. So often we focus on outward differences, we forget how much we share.'

'If we're serious about freedom of religion -- and I'm speaking now to my fellow Christians who remain the majority in this country -- we have to understand an attack on one faith is an attack on all our faiths. And when any religious group is targeted, we all have a responsibility to speak up. And we have to reject a politics that seeks to manipulate prejudice or bias, and targets people because of religion.'

'We can't be bystanders to bigotry. And together, we've got to show that America truly protects all faiths.'

'I want to speak directly to the young people who may be listening. In our lives, we all have many identities. We are sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters. We're classmates; Cub Scout troop members. We're followers of our faith. We're citizens of our country. And today, there are voices in this world, particularly over the Internet, who are constantly claiming that you have to choose between your identities -- as a Muslim, for example, or an American. Do not believe them. '

'If you're ever wondering whether you fit in here, let me say it as clearly as I can, as President of the United States: You fit in here -- right here. You're right where you belong. You're part of America, too. You're not Muslim or American. You're Muslim and American.'

'We are one American family. We will rise and fall together. It won't always be easy. There will be times where our worst impulses are given voice. But I believe that ultimately, our best voices will win out. And that gives me confidence and faith in the future.'

The Muslim community is a relatively small one in America. For many people, the only ways they hear about Muslims and the Islamic faith is from the news, often after a terrorist attack, or from derogatory political rhetoric that blames the entire Muslim-American community for the violent acts of a few.

But that is not who Muslim Americans are. They helped build our nation. They teach our children, they take care of us as patients, they keep our homeland safe. They are laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery after they've given their very last to defend the country they loved.

Today, they work for President Obama in the White House. These are the stories of dedicated public servants who have faced discrimination and found hope in the people they work alongside and the work they do every day on behalf of the American people.

- RUMANA AHMED  
Advisor to Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes

'Hearing the political discourse and hateful language certainly has negative consequences, but it is also the spark that has empowered me and others like me to speak up and work together in ways we may not have before.'

- AADIL GINWALA

Assistant Director for Education & Telecommunications Innovation in the Office of Science and Technology Policy

'I have a three-year old boy and I had hoped, when I was growing up, that by the time he went through school, being Muslim would not feel so 'weird' and 'different' for him as it did for me -- that he would not have as much explaining to do.'

- ALEFIYAH MESIWALA

Senior Policy Advisor in Healthcare for the National Economic Council

'America gave my parents opportunity to give my siblings and me a better life. I was taught to value its freedoms and pay-it-forward. '

- MANAR WAHEED

Deputy Policy Director for Immigration at The White House Domestic Policy Council

'I've faced bigotry, stereotypes, and mistreatment in positions of employment, where I'm treated differently, mischaracterized, or my ability is questioned because of my faith or because of what I look like.'

- FATIMA NOOR

Policy Assistant for Immigration Policy & Rural Affairs at The White House Domestic Policy Council

'We all stood, raised our right hands and recited the Oath of Allegiance: 'I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same"'"

- RAHEEMAH ABDULALEEM

Associate General Counsel in the Office of Administration

'The heckler had no way of knowing that I was born and raised in Philadelphia to a family whose history in this country is as old as the nation itself.'

Source : The White House

Highlights of Barack Obama speech and summary of stories of dedicated public servants who have faced discrimination and found hope in the work they do every day on behalf the American people

Ruby BIRD

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