

MY NEIGHBORS ARE MUSLIM (continued)

In being asked by the Women's Issues Task Force to write articles about Muslims as their neighbors, I was affirmed as to how necessary this education is after I read an article in the Cincinnati Enquirer (8/5/16). It was about a Muslim couple (US citizens for 16 years) who were returning from their anniversary vacation to their home and three children in West Chester, Ohio. After sitting on the plane for 45 minutes, they were asked to leave the plane and return to the terminal for questioning. "A flight crew member had complained to the pilot that she was uncomfortable with the couple in the second row of economy class. The woman was wearing a head scarf and using a phone, and the man was sweating, she allegedly told the pilot. The pilot contacted the ground crew and would not take off until the couple was removed."

The flight attendant claimed that Faisal Ali tried to hide his cell phone and that she had heard the couple use the word "Allah". If she had read my article in Community News from August, she would have known that Allah is the Arabic word for God. Perhaps he was saying God (Allah) be with you as we may say at the end of our phone calls. A couple of days later two American-Muslim women who work for the federal government were removed from a flight at Miami International Airport when a flight attendant felt threatened by their presence. All of this convinced me that we do need an education and perhaps the airlines needs to educate their employees. **So, here is a little more education:**

- **Greeting:** Many Muslims do not shake hands with members of the opposite sex.
- **Dress and Appearance:** The Islamic dress code is prescribed to be modest. The wearing of head coverings, like the hijab and head scarves are common. Wearing *niqab* (face covering) is not obligatory but practiced by some.
- **Food, drinking and fasting:** Islamic tradition does not allow the consumption of alcohol. During Ramadan, Muslims do not eat or drink from the break of dawn to sunset.
- **Photographs:** At events where photographs or video footage is taken, prior permission should be obtained.
- **Family:** In Islam, the strong bond between parents and children is expected to be maintained. Children are not expected to live on their own until they are married.
- **Medical:** Where possible, female doctors should be made available for consultation and treatment of Muslim women, and male doctors for Muslim men.

Keep in mind: Not all Muslims live out their faith or practice in the same way. The best way to ensure cultural sensitivity is to simply ask. Starting a conversation and a meaningful interfaith dialogue is the first step toward vibrant community.