

# Suffolk NYCLU

Representative Peter King  
1003 Park Boulevard  
Massapequa Park, NY 11762

February 16, 2004

Dear Representative King:

We would like to note in the strongest terms, our concern and disagreement with your comments made about the contributions and character of the American Muslim community during the February 11th episode of The Sean Hannity Radio Show. Although the NYCLU strongly supports the right of free expression for all Americans, sweeping generalizations that disparage and vilify entire groups are dangerous, hurtful, and wrong.

In addition to being baseless, your comments divide Americans at a time when we must work together. Our collective security requires collective enfranchisement, and singling out one group of Americans as under the control of an "enemy," unwilling to protect our security and unable to think for themselves, is entirely counterproductive. Furthermore, there are already numerous documented cases of violence directed at Muslim Americans made in ignorance, prejudice and hate. For example, shortly after September 11th, Dallas, Texas was the site of three incidents of firebombing attempts of Islamic mosques during a two-day period. Your remarks can only add fuel to this very unfortunate fire.

The reality, of course, is that Americans Muslims care as deeply about our security as other Americans; but much more importantly, American Muslims have no greater burden to prove their innocence than any other group of Americans. Your remarks harken back to the era when Japanese Americans were declared to be an enemy within -- blindly following anti-American leaders in their community. The mass suspicion directed at Japanese Americans resulted in violence, internment camps, deep divisions in society, and remains one of the dark spots in our history.

American leaders, like yourself, have a responsibility to secure our collective and individual liberty; your words carry authority and power, and you must be aware of their impact. It is our recommendation that you commence dialogue with the American Muslim community, that you observe that America is made of individuals of diverse faiths and ideologies, and that you remember that each one of us is to be valued on our own merits. We also recommend that you heed the following remarks of President Bush:

“America rejects bigotry. We reject every act of hatred against people of Arab background of Muslim faith...Every faith is practiced and protected here, because we are one color.”

Sincerely,

Jared Feuer  
Director, Suffolk NYCLU