

## Prejudice feeds on fear and ignorance

**Mark Pavilons]**

Fear and ignorance are two of the most volatile components of our species' shortcomings. They are largely responsible for some of humankind's violent history

Almost every civilization, world regime, military power not



only fostered both of these human frailties, but exploited them for their own agendas. Political leaders, dictators and tyrants of all makes have fear and ignorance in their arsenals. They're much more effective than guns and tanks.

From Egyptian pharaohs and Roman emperors, to Atilla the Hun and Hitler, leaders turned average citizens into pawns and soldiers for the evil flavour of the day.

How much have we learned from our bloody history in the past 3,000 years? Not much it appears.

The current fear is Islamophobia, and recent protests and angry exchanges reveal that both ignorance and fear are alive and well.

Just recently, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association launched a unique nationwide campaign to provide Canadians an opportunity to learn about the true teachings of Islam. This cross-Canada campaign ? titled ?Islam Understood? ? includes exhibitions in over 100 Canadian cities and using social media to engage millions of Canadians online.

In light of the recent tragic events in Quebec and the recent controversy over anti-Islamophobia, the campaign comes at a time when curiosity about Islam is at its peak and the public desire for more information is rapidly increasing.

?This is a really exciting project because thousands of Canadian Muslim youth have come together to launch the Islam Understood campaign and online platform in response to the heightened public curiosity about Islam,? says National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association, Mr. Kashif Danish.

This is much needed and I?hope others glean something from this campaign.

Some criticize President Trump for apparently condoning anti-Muslim behaviour, but the world didn't need Trump's approval for acting badly. Extremists have, for decades, played on those very fears and ignorance of the west to be reticent of Islam. Groups like ISIS, while brutal and barbaric, play on human shortcomings to further their cause. From 9-1-1 to daily killings and suicide bombings, the world builds anti-Muslim sentiments.

Islam is considered one of the simplest doctrines of religion, rigorously monotheistic, where God is all mighty. Family is central to a community's well being, and other main parts of Islam include strict prayer, charitable giving, angels, prophets and judgement day. Sound familiar?

Islam is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion which professes that there is only one and incomparable God and that Muhammad is the last messenger of God. It is the world's second-largest religion and the fastest-growing major religion in the world, with over 1.7 billion followers or 23% of the global population.

Muslims believe that Islam is the original, complete and universal version of a primordial faith that was revealed many times before through prophets including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. As for the Quran, Muslims consider it to be the unaltered and final revelation of God.

Islam began in the early 7th century, originating in Mecca. By the 8th century the Islamic empire was extended from Iberia in the west to the Indus River in the east.

Islam is the dominant religion in the Middle East, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, Central Asia and some other parts of

Asia. Sizable Muslim communities are also found in Europe, China, Russia, and the Americas. Converts and immigrant communities are found in almost every part of the world.

What many in the west forget, or chose to ignore, is that the Middle East is known as the "cradle of civilization" as it's the birthplace of some of the earliest cultures and civilizations ever recorded. Pre- and post-Islamic civilizations have been integral to human evolution.

The earliest human migrations out of Africa occurred through the Middle East, with the pre-modern Homo erectus about 1.8 million years BP. One of the potential routes for early human migrations toward southern and eastern Asia is Iran.

This mini-history and religion summary serves to help reduce ignorance and therefore, fear.

The more we know about one another, the less weary we are. For some reason, instead of devouring as much information as we can about Islam, we've tended to ignore it, and carried on with our hectic, seven-day-a-week lives.

Many of us Christians are less involved in our churches and religion than ever before. We don't take it seriously, and we've pushed faith and prayer out of our lives, unlike our Muslim brethren.

With the influx of Syrian refugees (even locally) we have an ideal opportunity to meet some Muslim newcomers, get to know them and ask questions. I'm sure they'd be happy to oblige.

As Bob Marley once said:

If you know your history ...

?Then you would know where you coming from ...

?Then you wouldn't have to ask me ...

?Who the heck do I think I am.?