

INTERFAITH INSIGHTS

Seeking unity in the middle of worldwide division

By Patrick Weisgerber

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There are so many atrocities going on in our country and in our world today. The paper you are currently reading probably has articles or briefs covering the latest on the Ferguson case, the Eric Garner case or other police brutalities, ISIS, health care issues, etc.

All of these have the ability to make us feel very exasperated with society and the world around us. These are humans causing physical and/or emotional pain to other humans. For what reason?



Weisgerber

The Pew Research Center came out with data earlier this year that showed Republicans and Democrats stand farther apart ideologically today than at any other point in history, emphasizing how it is even harder to come together over social and political issues. Yet, so much of the civil unrest going on is because of societal divides we have constructed.

So the question, then, is how can we break down these divisions we have created when our

understandings are farther apart than ever before? A professor I had in college once said, "What brings us together is far more powerful than what tears us apart."

That statement makes me think of unity. According to Merriam-Webster, unity is "a way of combining the parts in a work of art or literature so that they seem to belong together." I have found my work with the Kaufman Interfaith Institute has bonded more people together than anything else I have ever done. We had a large group of community and faith leaders come together to celebrate

how far we have come with our efforts on the 12th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Two weeks ago, almost 300 West Michigan community members from a multitude of faith traditions braved tough weather conditions to come together for the annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Celebration.

Next month will start our Year of Interfaith Service, which will provide opportunities for everyone to come together and relate to each other by serving others. What better way to boost one's morale than to selflessly give your time and energy with people of other faiths and secular

traditions who share in the value of serving others?

JOIN US IN UNITEA

In light of the season of gratefulness and hot drinks, the Kaufman Interfaith Institute will be collaborating with the Lantern Coffee Bar and Lounge — a coffee shop in the Heartside neighborhood of Grand Rapids — to host a tea, coffee and conversation night. It is at 7 tonight. We will have an open and inclusive conversation on how to come together seeking unity in light of all the disheartening events happening in our nation.

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