

INTERFAITH INSIGHTS

Shootings by, of police bring call to confession, action

By Dr. Aly Mageed

Many fear our country is approaching a tipping point in the relationship between its constituents.

The recent police shootings in Minnesota and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, as well as the terrorist's shooting of police in Dallas, have brought up some jitters regarding the stability of the fabric of our society.

These fears also have been heightened by this year's unique election politics. These events, however, are not the products of a recent or a surprising new trend. Rather, they represent a long-standing and deepening divide that for so long has characterized minority-majority relationships.

Never before has a society included such a vast array of ethnicities, cultures and religions as the U.S. does today. While this can — and should — be a point of strength for our nation. It also can prove to be a liability if not properly managed.

We need to admit that we have not properly prepared ourselves for this level of diversity at many levels.

It is time the majority population of this country admits there are major hurdles in the day-to-day realities all minorities face.

While these hurdles are obvious to

all minorities, they still are denied by the majority.

We also need to admit that slavery is still alive and well in the U.S. in the form of a debilitating economic slavery that is faced by significant segments of our society.

We all need to admit that our well-being is dependent on helping these segments to have a dignified life which meets their basic necessities as well as provides a real hope to achieve the American Dream for themselves and their children.

We need to admit we have given this issue only lip service and have failed to take serious actions to solve it.

IT STARTS WITH EDUCATION

We need to admit the beginning of these hurdles starts with the very education system that does not prepare minority children to compete for jobs and careers. We have stacked the cards against them from the day they were born and then have looked down on them for not being able to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps."

We need new visionary leaders who can utilize the diverse resources we have in order to come up with innovative solutions.

We need to admit that our govern-

ment — at all levels — has failed through the years to lead us.

Instead, our elected leaders have constantly engaged in political maneuvers to block each other's efforts to move us forward.

Locally, however, there are grassroots efforts to effect real change. For example, the group Advocates and Leaders for Police and Community Trust works to bring police officers and citizens together to achieve common goals.

Interfaith organizations and efforts should be at the heart of this effort. This is especially true here in West Michigan, where religion and family are heavily valued. We still need much more thought, locally and nationally, to address the roots of these social ailments.

Until then, we all need to put our hands together and stand against all forms of injustice and bigotry. We must show our collective resolve: When one hurts, we all hurt.

— Dr. Aly Mageed is director of the pediatric blood and bone marrow transplant program at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital. He is an active member of the At-Tawheed Islamic Center in Grand Rapids.

A prayer against division

This prayer was given at Sunday's service at Westminster Presbyterian Church:

"Holy God, our hearts are breaking as we learn of the tragic deaths of your beloved children, each and every one created in your image — in Baton Rouge, the Twin Cities, and Dallas, Bangladesh, Baghdad and Istanbul, and all the places we too quickly forget or never even notice — even in the streets of our own community.

"We lament the violence and the seeming links to race and class and gender and belief and all the differences among us that we allow to divide us. In your compassion, receive our tears and our anger, our shock and our frustration that these cycles of hate and violence continue.

"Come to us now with your great strength and your healing power. Help us to know what to do in our own lives, in our communities, in our nation, and in our world. Be present to each of us in our own needs and of those here among us; and help us to be your presence in our community; to be part of your reconciling presence in the world.

"Help us to grieve when we need to grieve, to confront when we need to confront, to confess when we need to confess, and to change when we need to change."