

## BRIDGES cautions against Obsession DVD

Recently, many local residents received unsolicited in the mail a DVD entitled *Obsession - Radical Islam's War Against the West*. In our opinion, the contents of this film are misleading, biased and of potential harm to our Muslim neighbors. We urge viewer caution.

Cincinnati is not the only community to have experienced a mass distribution of the *Obsession* video. The distribution numbers are staggering: an estimated 28 million copies have been distributed as inserts in some 70 newspapers around the country, including the New York Times.

The group that financed and is distributing the *Obsession* DVD is The Clarion Fund, a New York City-based nonprofit whose stated mission is "to educate Americans about issues of national security."

*Obsession* features a series of suspect speakers whose comments could easily be interpreted as insinuating that radical Islam is representative of all Muslims. In spite of the producer's disclaimer to the contrary, *Obsession* misleadingly portrays a great religion's 1.2 billion adherents as anti-Western, bent on our destruction. This video is alarmist, incites fear, and after a solid hour of continuous anti-Muslim propaganda one has forgotten the opening disclaimer.

Someone may ask, "But isn't this film, in fact, factual?" The answer is that presenting a partial truth is always partial, rarely truthful.

What is the harm of this video? The harm is this: If *Obsession* is believed by the viewer, susceptible by his or her ignorance of Islam and Muslims, it could affect bigoted attitudes or worse, hateful actions.

In May of this year BRIDGES published its regional survey of the relations among eight different social groups. The *BRIDGES Progress Report on Human Relations in Greater Cincinnati* revealed that local Muslims are presently experiencing here (like elsewhere) the greatest social distance from other groups, and in their relative isolation are the most vulnerable to inter-group prejudice and violence.

Of course we should be vigilant against extremism from any and all groups. Our national security unquestionably warrants it. However, if in the process of alerting a citizenry to a danger, we create a greater, more insidious danger, specifically the targeting of an entire religious group with prejudice, suspicion and irrational fear, we must challenge it. We owe it not only to our Muslim neighbors, but to our community's sense of fairness and decency.

When The Cincinnati Enquirer was approached by The Clarion Fund to include the *Obsession* DVD as an insert in the newspaper, it refused. To its credit, its “obsession” was not with hate or revenue, but with fairness. We commend and thank them!

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