

Center to grow understanding

A proposed Islamic center near Ground Zero is opposed by right wingers and some families of 9/11 victims, claiming insensitivity to them and dishonor to the victims. Actually, the community center (not a mosque) would be two blocks away from Ground Zero, serving not only Muslims but also the public's interfaith understanding by including a performing arts center, gym and meeting rooms. The First Amendment protects freedom of religion and speech. Resentment of this center reveals wider problems: fear of immigrants (as if we were not all immigrants), Muslims in particular; and lack of acquaintance, breeding ignorance and prejudice. Some people brand all Muslims as fanatics; however, every faith tradition has fanatical adherents whose violent protests draw media coverage. The vast majority of Muslim believers and leaders has repeatedly and emphatically spoken out against violence, but sadly, this has not been widely reported. Rochester is blessed with active interfaith involvement by many dedicated, informed individuals and groups.

—**M. GRATIA L'ESPERANCE**