

Dr. Sayed Amjad Hussain
Speaker for the Morning Commencement Exercises

Dr. Hussain is professor emeritus of thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at The University of Toledo College of Medicine. He has published more than 50 papers in American and international medical journals, given nearly 80 lectures, and invented two surgical devices. He also writes an op-ed column for The Toledo Blade.

Since 1976, Dr. Hussain has visited Pakistan annually to teach at Khyber Medical College in Peshawar. He has been a visiting professor at the Post Graduate Medical Institute in Peshawar, the King Edward Medical College in Lahore, Benghazi University

So you see I am very cognizant of the transitory and fleeting nature of this exercise. I am

There is however a third choice, a difficult one I must admit, and that is to integrate with the host society and act as a bridge of understanding and a voice of reason between two disparate worlds. I have followed that path of integration as a South Asian Muslim. I did not find my religion or my cultural underpinnings to be contradictory to the idealism of America. It took me some time however to appreciate the full thrust of what it means to be an American even if I am what you will refer to as a hyphenated American.

I have been the recipient of grace, generosity and kindness by the people of my adopted land. I have received more than what I have given. A sense of justice in appreciation of one's ability has been the hallmark of this country. This is something that is uniquely American and is hard to find in the rest of the world; certainly not in Asia and not in Europe.

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and the West and specifically between Eastern and Western religious traditions. It has not been a cakewalk. Rudyard Kipling, the irrepressible champion of the British Raj, had said:

Oh the East is East and the West is West and never the twine shall meet.

Since the fateful day of September 11, 2001 my task as an op-ed columnist has taken on new urgency because I see the tendency in some of my fellow citizens to blame the entire edifice of religion for the misdeeds of some of its adherents. It is like throwing the baby with the bath water.

Nine-Eleven destroyed much of the amity that Muslims had developed with other religions in America. More than that it has critically silenced a meaningful dialogue between Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

Islam is under attack for the misdeeds and horrific acts of certain groups who call themselves Muslims and claim their nefarious inspiration from the same sacred text that I have cherished and followed all my life. So when I hear a blanket condemnation of my religion, and for that matter any religion, by those who ought to know better, it affects the very inner core of my being as it would, I am sure, affect you if the roles were reversed.

Through out history man has invoked the name of God to wage war agt EMC6a(m)-2k w/henib, bycogk

Christians and Jews and later Hindus in India- in the society. Pray, tell why the same religion that provided a milieu for such cooperation and collaboration is now being called the source of all evil in the world? No, there has not always been the clash of civilization as popularized by Samuel Huntington.

This leads us to the invariable question: What happened?

The simple answer is that colonization of the Arab and Muslim lands by the emerging European powers in the 15th century changed that dynamic.

In the post Colonial era in the Muslim and Arab lands a mindset has developed that tends to blame all their shortcomings on the effects of Colonization. Lost in this rhetoric is the fact that we the Muslims have also lost our intellectual and scholarly pursuit to be preeminent.

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam had famously said that the ink from the pen of a scholar is more sacred than the blood of martyr. In a macabre reversal of that noble saying, for some, the blood of a terrorist has become more sacred while our inkwells have run dry. Add to that the political injustices that have been meted out, from Palestine to Kashmir to Chechnya to Kosovo to Afghanistan and you have a perfect milieu for disenchantment, extremism and terrorism.

Now what, and the question begs for an answer, all this geopolitical turmoil has to do with you, the newly minted graduates of this university?

I respectfully submit that it does.

It would be an understatement to say that the world has changed and has become much smaller in the past 50-years. What happens in one corner of the world affects us all. But we have lagged behind in our approach to and understanding of the world that once used to be remote, distant and somewhat exotic. The world we used to access through the pages of the National Geographic or BBC Radio is no more. Now it is in the face, real life and in real time.

All of us are given choices in life. Many times the choices we make determine our

All of you have worked extremely hard to earn the diploma that you are about to receive. This first rate education will open the world for you. But you have reached this milestone with the help of many people who helped you climb this difficult ladder. You ought to remember the fable of queen's illness and the pitcher of milk when you are asked to help your alma mater. America is great because of its institutions of higher learning and institutions thrive when alumni become part of their future.

Last but not the least you should also apply the parable of Queen's bath when it comes to