

Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady

Line 54

By stangers honored and by strangers mourned.

And bear about the mockery of woe.

To midnight dancers and the public show.

I. INTRODUCTION:

I was raised in a stable two parent home in an upper middle class Muslim-American family. I am Asian-American (e.g. Pakistani descent). I had all the priviledges and advantages in life and all the opportunities to succeed. Around my teens I started experiencing mental health problems. I graduated from Richland High School in Richland, WA and had dreams of making it big. I moved to the East Coast and attended prestigious colleges. My mental health condition steadily worsened. I managed to graduate from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY in 1998 with a B.S. in Biology. I then got accepted to dental school at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA. In Philadelphia my mental health completely fell apart. I was diagnosed with Bipolar disorder and put on medication. By 1998 I was admitted to a mental hospital. I would drop out of dental school the next year. After this failure I moved back to Washington State with my family and managed to achieve a B.S. in Electrical Engineering degree from Washington State University in 2004. I intermittently worked as an Engineering Technician but had trouble holding down a job. In 2005 I would be admitted to a

mental hospital a second time. I was urged to go on disability and give up on my dreams. I ignored this advice and applied to numerous Engineering companies, was granted many interviews, but never was hired. In July of 2006 as my marriage failed, career collapsed, debt mounted, and my mental health was shattered I decided to end my life. I concocted a plan to commit a high profile crime and die in the process. This is the story of a desperate crime, the lives shattered and the hope I developed in incarceration. This work is a collection of accounts and writings woven together to bring this tragedy and redemption to life.

II. STATE OF WASHINGTON V. NAVEED AFZAL HAQ

COURT OF APPEALS OF WASHINGTON

DIVISION I

No. 64839-0-I

Published Opinion by Cox, J.

We Affirm the Judgement and Sentence

WE CONCUR: ELLINGTON AND GROSSE, JJ.

III. RELIGION NEWS SERVICE ARTICLE

<https://spokanefav.com/murderer-makes-repentance-in-new-role-as-prison-imam/>

Article written by Tracy Simmons who extensively interviewed Naveed Haq over a 5 month period.

Murderer makes repentance in new role as prison imam

by Tracy Simmons. May 18, 2018.

AIRWAY HEIGHTS, Wash. (RNS) - Naveed Haq remembers July 28, 2006, well, even if he doesn't want to.

He packed two handguns, ammunition and a combat knife into a laptop case and drove to McDonald's for what he thought would be his last meal: Hotcakes, a cheese McMuffin and a Coke.

Then, filled with fury, Haq began his three-and-a-half hour drive to Seattle from central Washington to open fire on the Jewish Federaton of Greater Seattle, where later that day he shot six women, leaving one dead and five seriously injured, including one who was 17 weeks pregnant.

He was convicted of murder, attempted murder and a hate crime. Now 11 years into his imprisonment, Haq is the new imam for the Airway Heights Correctional Main Facility in Airway Heights, Wash. In his new role, he's trying to lead by example in conveying remorse to those he hurt.

"I have to make some right out of my terrible wrongs," Haq said via email after an in-person visit from Religion News Service.

"I have deep regrets for killing and maiming innocent people. I will spend the rest of my life trying to rectify my misdeed as much as possible."

Despite a no-contact order that prevents Haq from contacting his victims, he wrote eight "accountability letters" to his victims last year. Over 37 pages, he apologized to individual victims and to the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle. Victims can be notified when an inmate leaves a letter, according to the prison system's victim services program. None of Haq's victims have asked to be notified, however, and none have asked to read the letters he's submitted.

"To really make amends I have to be innovative," he said. "For me, it is the right thing to do."

Shooting victim Cheryl Stumbo declined to comment. Others either could not be located or did not respond. The Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle did not respond to RNS queries.

Forgiveness might not be forthcoming. Rabbi Joshua Stanton, founding co-editor of the Journal of Interreligious Studies and rabbi at East End Temple in Manhattan, said when it comes to forgiveness, Judaism focuses on actions rather than words.

"The burden is on Mr. Haq to demonstrate a genuine and profound

change of being through his deeds in an ongoing way," Stanton said. "Even when a perpetrator genuinely does change, the burden is not placed on victims or their families to forgive."

Haq told his story recently in a two-hour interview with RNS while prison guards stood watch and other inmates visited nearby with parents, girlfriends and children. What he recalled was a troubled man's journey into hate-filled terrorism.

When Haq opened fire on the Jewish Federation in 2006, it was at the height of the Lebanon War. He had grown up feeling isolated, he said, as his family was one of the few Muslim families in the Tri-Cities area of Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland. He said he only understood Jews in the context of a cultural rivalry.

"I didn't understand that Jews were people too," he said.

Perusing the internet one day, he learned that the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle had sponsored a Walk for Israel.

"I thought, 'Women and children are being killed by the Israeli military in Lebanon and Palestine and this group is sponsoring a 'Walk for Israel'" he said.

Haq was eager to kill, he said. And with mounting debt, a failed marriage, a collapsing career and severe mental health issues, he was also eager to die.

"I had completely failed at society," he said. "I had given society my best shot."

On his way to Seattle that day, he pulled over and hiked down an embankment to practice shooting the .40- and .45-caliber handguns he had loaded the night before. Then he reloaded his weapons and continued his journey, praying for forgiveness as he drove.

When he got there, the doors to the Jewish Federation were locked. He hit the buzzer, ducked out of sight from the surveillance camera and with his .40 Ruger in hand, and waited. Within minutes, a 13-year-old girl walked to the buzzer. Haq pointed the gun at her.

"This is a holdup," he said. "Let me in." She obeyed. Haq made her lead him up the stairs to the federation's newspaper office. He asked to see the manager, then began shooting. After the rampage and trial, he was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole, plus 120 years.

L. Gregory Jones, professor of theology and Christian ministry at Duke Divinity School, said it's common in most religions for someone to eventually become motivated to seek forgiveness and acknowledge their wrongdoings.

"After enough time, the pangs of the conscience begin to work on

someone to repent," he explained. "Most commonly they seek forgiveness from those wronged and from their relatives. It's understandable that he (Haq) would seek it. I think the yearning for reconciliation is a natural human desire."

Haq said he wasn't truly ready to seek forgiveness until now because he had to "unlearn the hate" he had in his heart.

He became the facility's imam in April when his fellow Muslim inmates agreed he was the most qualified. Among his peers, he had the most Arabic memorized showed good character and demonstrated remorse for his crimes.

"I have interacted with Jewish prisoners and I learned about their community," he said. "I now understand that my thinking was deeply flawed. I no longer feel the desperation and hopelessness that I felt, which led to my crime. I am no longer the same ignorant man I was 11 years ago."

He spent the first six years behind bars sleeping his life away, he said, before a prison psychiatrist adjusted his medication and diagnosed him with schizoaffective disorder, bipolar type. Since then Haq has earned 35 prison educational certificates as well as a paralegal certificate.

"After wasting so many years, I became a man in a hurry," he said.

However, Jones said Haq's victims may not be ready to forgive. He noted the passage from C.S. Lewis' "Letters to Malcom: Chiefly on Prayer," which reads, "Last week while at prayer, I suddenly discovered- or felt as if I did - that I had really forgiven someone I had been trying to forgive for over 30 years."

"It took 30 years for someone as good of a person as C.S. Lewis to forgive," Jones said. "There's a timefulness that people need to reach that ... but there shouldn't be pressure put on the victim to do it on anybody's timetable other than their own."

However, Jones noted, if someone isn't working toward forgiveness, the anger they hold can "corrode their own soul."

Haq is trying to make amends by writing to his friends and family about forgiveness, the beauty of other religions, and gun control. He's been delivering similar sermons to the prison's Muslim community and speaking at it's Toastmasters club.

"I am thankful I still have much to offer the world," Haq said. "Even voices among the lowest among us can change people's hearts and minds."

Haq knows he has a long road ahead of him and that he may never be forgiven for what he did, but he said he won't stop trying.

"In all my studies of mental health, self-improvement and religion, I can now say with certainty that hate is the worst mental illness," Haq said. "I had to lose my freedom to learn this."

IV. VICTIM TURNED GUN CONTROL ADVOCATE

A speech given at TED talks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-vEwZCt2c>

V. ACCOUNTABILITY LETTERS

8 Accountability Letters written and sent to as well as accepted by the victim services program of Washington State Department of Corrections. Including the following:

To the Employees and Former Employees of the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle:

I have waited 11 years to write this letter and I have thought often about what I would write if given the chance to offer my sincerest apologies. It is true I was raised in an Anti-Semitic culture. A lot of people of my background are. But they don't do the actions that I did. Those terrible actions on that summer day of 2006. A beautiful summer day turned into tragedy due to my terrible actions. I have done much reflecting over the last

11 years. I have really contemplated about whether what I said on the jail telephone calls is true. That "Jews are the Enemy." I have come to the conclusion that I made a lot of assumptions which were not true. Jewish-Americans, much like Muslim-Americans, are just trying to make a living in this country free from harm. I want to extend my deepest apologies. I have tremendous regret for what I have done. I hope some of you may read this letter. I want nothing in return but the insight of the healing process. On that summer day of 2006 I had reached a point in my life where I did not care if I lived or died. My life had lost meaning. I latched on to a cause which really was not mine. In trying to find meaning for my life I did harm to innocent people. All of you did not deserve the actions which I performed. You deserved peace and security just like everyone else.

I have worked hard over the last 11 precious years on the healing process and reforming myself. I have taken mental health classes, self-improvement classes, and moderate religious classes. I have distanced myself from radical Islam. I have really undergone a radical transformation that my family is pleased with. I know it may be too late for me in terms of gaining my freedom again but I will try in my life to make right what wrongs I have done. Part of that is writing these "Accountability Letters" and to let everyone I harmed know the healing process is important to me. I know you are all probably angry at me, and rightfully so. All my life I stood for peace.

Until that dramatic departure on that summer day of 2006. Since then I have gravitated towards peace again. I know our people are at odds. I know all too well being raised in the Muslim-American community. I know the vitriolic Anti-Semitism. I have talked to many Jewish prisoners since my incarceration and have come to a greater understanding about your community. I have grown as a person these last 11 precious years. My second chance at life, even under incarceration, has been very insightful. It has given me satisfaction that I lived long enough to really learn the true meaning of life. For me, that is progress, self-development, and helping others. Part of that progress is to extend my deepest apologies to your organization. I will forever feel the burden and gravity of my terrible actions on that summer day of 2006. I will remember the horror and trauma. I will also remember how your organization conducted yourselves so gracefully at every court hearing, two trials, and the sentencing phase. Not only do you have my apologies, you have my respect. Your people are a strong people and can overcome any adversity. History has shown this. I hope you can accept this heartfelt letter.

Sincerely,

Naveed Haq

VI. LETTERS TO PUBLICATIONS

a) National Prison Strike:

<https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2018/sep/21/prison-strike-got-us-talking/>

In the U.S. today there are 2.2 million prisoners, 19 million felons, and 70 million people total with an arrest and conviction record. The era of mass incarceration is alive and well. The Prison Industrial Complex is an \$80 billion annual industry.

The national prison strike which went from 8/21 to 9/9 is prompting dialogue across the country. It has been covered by such media as Democracy Now and on a website theconversation.com. Prisoners at Washington State Penitentiary were participating as well as others at other prisons (in at least 17 states) including myself at Airway Heights Corrections Center. I boycotted the chow hall and halted spending. Many prisoners nationally went further refusing work assignments and organizing sit-ins.

A list of ten demands were made, such as improved conditions, an end to prison slavery, prevailing wages, more rehabilitative services, and voting rights for prisoners and felons. At the very least the national prison strike has started a conversation in the public as to how to treat such a large segment of our country more humanely. Let's move to make the criminal justice system a more just place.

b) My Mental Health Rehabilitation:

A struggle with mental health has become increasingly common in our nation. I myself have undergone this struggle. I began

having problems in my teens, but managed two college degrees before things really fell apart.

In July of 2005 I was committed to a mental hospital in Richland, WA due to a bad reaction from some psychiatric medications. I was then put on another regimen of medication and slowly deteriorated over the course of a year until my murderous crime in July of 2006. After pleading insanity and achieving a mistrial in 2008, I won a claim against the Social Security Administration which then stated I had been disabled due to a mental health condition from the year 2004 onwards. To make things more clear according to the Social Security Administration I had been mentally disabled during my crime. Unfortunately, I was convicted during my second trial in 2009 and sentenced to life without the possibility of parole plus 120 years.

I began my prison sentence in 2010. In 2012 I met a caring prison psychiatrist who diagnosed me as schizoaffective, bipolar type and prescribed me a regimen of medications that turned my life around. Over the course of the next 6 years I would achieve 50 prison educational certificates as well as a Paralegal Certificate from Blackstone Career Institute and achieve Competent Communicator in Toastmasters. I would repair relationships with family and friends. Since then I have reduced my medication by over 50% and lost 32 pounds. The moral of this story is mental health rehabilitation is very possible. One is not necessarily down and out forever. Whether they are mentally

ill or incarcerated. It is important to not give up on ourselves. Opportunities arise to turn our lives around as I did mine.

c. Overcoming My Incarceration:

In 2009 after being convicted following my second trial for murder and subsequently given a life sentence I could have easily thrown in the towel and chose a path of destruction during my prison term or worse (e.g. just end it all). I spent the first few years of my incarceration sleeping my life away. I then met a caring prison psychiatrist who changed my medications and I had an epiphany. My life was still not over. I could choose to overcome my limitations and do the best I could with the situation I was in.

In the next 6 years I achieved 50 prison educational certificates and a Paralegal Certificate from Blackstone Career Institute as well as achieved Competent Communicator from Toastmasters. I worked hard on my mental health rehabilitation, reducing my medications by over 50% and lost 32 pounds. I became a prisoner advocate and began a writing career. I repaired relationships with family and friends. I also got on the wait list for parenting classes just in case I got married again and became a stepfather.

I worked three years in Correctional Industries at Washington State Penitentiary and at my new prison, got on the job list

again. I have made a commitment to pay back as much restitution as possible. This is in line with my making amends for my crime. I found a new meaning and purpose for my life. I chose a new life of tolerance and am working to repair the terrible damage of my past bigotry.

If someone like myself who is in such a bleak position in life can turn his life around, just imagine what a person with greater resources and all the advantages of a civilian life could do. The possibilities are endless.

VII. CONCLUSION

"God helps them that helps themselves. Dost thou love life, then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of." - Benjamin Franklin