



"I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it." - Voltaire

"Would You Convert to Islam?"

Matthew Peak

Fox News correspondent Steve Centanni and cameraman Olaf Wiig were kidnapped in Gaza by Palestinian gunmen on August 21 and were released on August 27. With their release came a video in which both men proclaimed their conversion to, and embrace of, Islam. Accompanying their conversions were statements against President Bush and military actions taken by the United States in Afghanistan and other places. By the video, the two men looked to have been truly convinced that Islam had become their way of life, an open acknowledgment of Islam as the "religion of peace."

But Centanni later told Fox News, "We were forced to convert to Islam at gunpoint. Don't get me wrong here. I have the highest respect for Islam, and I learned a lot of good things about it, but it was something we felt we had to do because they had the guns, and we didn't know what the hell was going on."

What I wonder is how far will people go for peace. These two men seemingly faked a conversation to Islam at gunpoint in order to survive and we are all happy that they made it back alive. Then again, given the "highest respect" Centanni had for Islam and the "lot of good things he learned about it," I wonder if his conversion was not real.

Mark Steyn of the *Chicago Sun-Times* made an interesting observation when he said, "Did you see that video of the two Fox journalists announcing they'd converted to Islam? The larger problem, it seems to me, is that much of the rest of the Western media have also converted to Islam, and there seems to be no way to get them to convert back to journalism."

There is a real dynamic at play here and people in general seem to be unaware of it. We are scared of Islam, plain and simple. We can call it diversity, equality, or whatever, but the fact of that matter is that a minority of Muslims are willing to use deadly force for the cause of spreading Islam worldwide, including Iran's president who is currently ramping up his nuclear weapons program. We could be showing tremendous respect to the masses of "peaceful" Muslims because we are not sure just which Muslims will be the next to hijack a plane or attempt to smuggle liquid explosives on board with a baby being used as a martyr (an incident that really did happen). On September 11, 2001, not every Muslim was a terrorist, but every terrorist was a Muslim. And if we

are not approaching Muslims out of fear, we are hell bent on convincing them that as Americans, we keep Christians, Jews and Conservatives at arm's length because we are passionate about peace, tolerance and inclusion.

Since people fear Islam, many representatives of the religion are stepping up public relations and apologetics for the faith, making Muhammad more palatable to Christian tastes, just in case Americans decide to turn their fear into hatred. So while the peaceful Islamic organizations would never condone the use of terrorism to encourage conversion, they cannot deny that the terrorism has suddenly made Americans much friendlier to Islam.

Basically, when confronted with violence, a peaceful people will more likely appease or surrender than discard peace for a state of war. This is why I love individual humans, but loathe humanity as a whole. It tends to function like a herd of frightened animals. They are what Michael Savage calls Sheeple.

Because of the way terrorism functions (looking civilian while acting militarily), there seems no way to fight it because the people being killed in an air attack could be terrorists or civilians used as human shields. If we believe we cannot or should not stop Islamic terrorism, then the easiest way is to try to understand and embrace Islam so that the terrorist will not come after us. Remember that much of the complaints about American military action and support of Israel is that it angers Islamic terrorists and Muslims worldwide, inciting them to attack us. So, many of us, consciously or not, desire to make the terrorist happy by being willing to flirt with conversion.

What we must decide is how we are going to handle this. On one hand, we can have a distrust of Islam until the peaceful majority take an open stand against Islamic terrorists, which will probably not happen because they, too, may be frightened by the threat of violence, or have a sense of cultural loyalty. Or we can embrace Islam, terrorism included, and just eventually take on the culture and beliefs until one day we wake up and look around at an Islamic America.

The Dialogues

By: Bonnie Riehl

We've been in class for almost a month. As you've walked to and from class and everywhere else, maybe you've noticed the occasional white box with weird lettering on it in odd places: down by SAGA, near the Mosaic in LA, in the John Blue Laboratory entrance, even sitting up on a counter in Vardell 103.

What are these boxes, and what is that writing on them? These are the Dialogues, a group of boxes with Greek letters painted on them. They are the print equivalent of "The Wall", the most wondrous of places, where we are free to express ourselves in paint. But sometimes, "The Wall" is not big enough to hold all that we have to say. The Dialogues were started in the 70's as a printed forum for discussion of a myriad of topics, from the political to the philosophical and almost everything in between. Articles were submitted for publication, a sheet of articles were printed and left on top of the boxes for anyone to pick up.

So why not start them again? You choose the topic, write what you have to say, and send it in. As with any forum, there needs to be a set of rules and etiquette to follow. No personal attacks on anyone, bar none. Clean language, no foul language or slandering. Gossip is best left for the lunchroom. You must sign your article; if you feel strongly enough to say it, then you need to be able to back up what you write. Write it up, double-spaced is all we ask. Sign it, print it and slip it in one of the white boxes. Also, I am heading the Dialogues with Deihlia Nye, and we'd love a band of people to help us check the boxes regularly, read and edit the articles, and submit them for publication in *The Lance*.

The first edition of *The Dialogues* will be published in the October edition of *The Lance*. As soon as I know the deadline for October submissions, I will email everyone with that information. Cheers!