

Poll: U.S. Muslims still perceived as safety threat

By Melde Rutledge
Special to Sentinel-Voice
GREENSBORO, N.C. (NNPA) – Last year marked the highest number of Muslim-related civil rights cases ever recorded in the United States, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).

As sad as that is, it's not surprising: A national poll from Cornell University found that almost one in two Americans feel that the U.S. should curtail Muslim-Americans' civil liberties — such as making them register with the government.

"It's understandable,

based on the climate of hysteria that has been whipped up by the Bush administration and fueled by the media," explained Khalid Griggs, the Imam of the Community Mosque of Winston-Salem.

While reports of mistreatment in passenger profiling and unfair arrests, search and seizure have considerably dropped since 9/11, incidents of hate crimes towards Muslims have more than doubled in the U.S., according to CAIR.

Griggs said that a major problem is that President Bush "trumpets" Islam as be-

ing a religion of peace, but does not condemn or correct people like Reverend Franklin Graham, who once said that "Islam is a very evil and wicked religion."

The Cornell survey also found that of the 715 people polled, respondents who classified themselves as highly religious Christians supported limitations on Muslim-Americans significantly more than the respondents who categorized themselves as less religious.

"In every culture and every religion, there is good and bad," said Bassam Allamadani, a Muslim who

resides in Greensboro. "This (terrorist attack) happened before when Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols did what they did in Oklahoma. It doesn't mean that all Christians are bad."

Allamadani owns a convenience store on Pleasant Garden Road. After 9/11, many of his usual customers stopped shopping there.

He blames that lack of business on the 2001 terrorist attacks.

"We don't feel sometimes that we are free in this country like everyone else, because of what happened on September 11," said

Allamadani. "Our religion is peaceful. It teaches us love and care. We believe that Bin Laden doesn't represent the Muslim community"

Sheik Badi Ali, of the Triad Islamic Center in Greensboro, also believes that the climate towards Muslims in the U.S. is the result of an "unfair campaign" against Islam by the "Bush regime."

"We've been scapegoated unfairly," he said. "We don't

feel like we belong in America." There is no scientific count of the amount of Muslims living in the U.S., according to the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance. But reportedly, the denomination is growing rapidly, with an estimated 1.1 to seven million. It is also estimated that over 40,000 live in North Carolina, with over 5,000 in the Triad area.

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Fantasy

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in the United States.

"We're not trying to outdo Las Vegas — many of the restrictions that apply to Vegas do not apply to Indian land," said Tribal Chairman, John A. James. "We are a self-contained group with our own public affairs department, power source and water supply."

The gala was black tie optional and began with a cocktail reception with musical entertainment performed on stage by Kool & The Gang in the gardens between the hotel and the Special Events Center.

Cabazon Elder Joe Benitez, began the brief program honoring the ancestors by the lighting of sage and walking to the farthest corners of the room in each direction. "The respect and courtesy we give each other and our Indian brothers please our Creator" Benitez said.

Guests were treated to a fabulous dining experience prepared by the resorts culinary team under the watchful eyes of Executive Chef Perry Mascitti, Executive Sous Chef Jamie Nicholas and Main Kitchen Chef Brion Flynn.

The meal began with chilled pouched Australian lobster medallions in sauce Americane, micro greens, mesclun, English cucumber bouquet with Champagne Pommeroy vinaigrette. The second course consisted of filet mignon, foie gras with black truffles on a crouton with pommard burgundy demi glace served with Gruyère potato gratin, baby asparagus bundles and a parmesan tomato with garlic and herbs. Dessert, created by Chef Patrick Sigaud, consisted of a chocolate nest with papaya and passion fruit and



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Pool-side view: Bell captain Tony Taylor stands on a balcony at the Fantasy Springs resort-casino. The Chino, Calif., property just opened its resort and restaurant operations.

crème anglaise sauce.

In comments to the audience, Gray Davis, former Governor of California, said that he was thankful to have had the opportunity to witness the tribe elevate themselves from poverty to economic self-sufficiency. Other notable guests included dignitaries: Mayor of Palms Springs Ronald Oden; Cabazon Elder Joe Benitez; Tribal Chairman John A. James; Mark Nichols, Cabazon CEO; James H. McKennon, Fantasy Springs Resort CEO; Tom Martin, East Valley Tourist Development Authority board member; along with actor/comedian Mickey Rooney and his wife Jan.

Balagen, a cirque-style extravaganza opened the new Special Events Center making its west coast premiere after dinner. This colorful and lively production is suitable for the entire family and combines an international cast of entertainers including aerial acrobats, clowns and some of the most unusual performers in the world. The show will run through January 23.

Guests at Fantasy Springs are not the only ones satisfied with the milieu. Employees also find the resort a great place to call a home-away-from-home. "I had worked this end of the hotel industry at another establishment in California before my department and was downsized. During that time, I had been denied advancement opportunities . . . after 8-years, I was not only unemployed, but homeless...I found out that they were hiring here. I came in, filled out my application for Bell Captain and, based on my previous experience, have been given this opportunity... I love this place and the people. They believe in diversity and in giving people an opportunity to grow and advance based on your qualifications — not the color of your skin" said Bell Captain, Tony Taylor.

Fantasy Springs currently employs about 1200 people and its team members medical and dental benefits, and tuition reimbursement is available

"Our team members go through our 'charm' course

where they are trained to meet the needs of our guests... Most of them [workers] are supplementing their college education . . . it is a rarity for us to fire a team member. If we find that a member is in a job that is not a good fit, we find another place for them that better suites them... We want our guests to leave this place with [smiles on their faces]," said James.

Originally, there were 600 tribal members when the Cabazon Reservation was defined as three parcels of raw desert totaling 2,400 acres. Southern Pacific Railroad later claimed 700 acres to create a railroad and interstate right-of-way.

Today, there are fewer than 50 members of the Cabazon tribe, but owing to perseverance and a diversified economic base, their future is bright. The reservation covers 1,450 acres in parcels spread over 16 miles. The largest parcel contains the tribal administration office, Public Safety Department and several business enterprises. Another parcel is dedicated to the Cabazon Resource Recovery Park, which includes the tribe's First Nation Recovery Incorporated tire-recycling operation.

The drive to Fantasy Springs Resort Casino is a relaxing, picturesque, open view experience with something for the whole family to see and enjoy. Take the San Bernardino Freeway (Interstate 10) to Golf Center Parkway, exit in Indio and you're there. You won't be disappointed. Room rates range from \$99 to \$299 per night, based on availability. For more information or to make reservations, visit their website at www.fantasyspringsresort.com.

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**Early Voting
Friday and Saturday
January 21 and 22**

**Meadows Mall
10:00am-6:00pm
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8:00am-5:00pm**

**Election Day
Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2005
Phone 768-2426**