



Social Change through Interfaith Understanding and Cooperation

December 14, 2011

Lowe's Board of Directors:

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RE: An open letter to the Board of Directors of Lowe's, Inc.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Interfaith Works is an association of congregations and spiritual communities of many of the world's great religions. We are Protestant and Catholic, Jewish and Muslim, Buddhist and Baha'i, and work to include and promote understanding of all who feel called to express the love, compassion and universality of the human spirit that these great world religions represent. We do so as part of a great American tradition.

Perhaps the single most powerful animating force that made us a nation, and continues to bind us, is our light to the world as a refuge of religious liberty. It is the reason that many of the original colonies came to be. In the earliest and darkest days of the American struggle for independence, Samuel Adams wrote, **"Our contest is not only whether we ourselves shall be free, but whether there shall be left to mankind an asylum on earth for civil and religious liberty."**

His words were echoed by George Washington, who, referring to religious liberty wrote, **"For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support."**

Thomas Jefferson celebrated his work for religious liberty as one of the three great accomplishments of his life, as his epitaph; Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed it one of the four essential American freedoms; Ronald Reagan exhorted Mikhail Gorbachev on its central importance to the creation of a free and prosperous society.

Corporate citizenship requires more than an occasional gift of disaster relief supplies or even jobs for disabled veterans, as important as those things may be. Corporate citizenship requires that the board and the officers look to the values of the nation that allow the corporation to exist and to prosper and – once in a while – requires a modicum of courage in acting on those values.

We do not quarrel with any company on its choice of advertising sponsorships, but having made a choice, it must not be bullied out of it by religious bigotry or the ignorance that spawns it. That is not only cowardly, but it is deeply painful to us as people of faith, it is profoundly un-American, and it is significantly damaging to the fabric of American society.

It is probably also a poor long-term business strategy.

Lowe's is a large and diverse company with employees of every faith and ethnicity. As a company, you are certainly aware that Muslim Americans are no more prone to anti-social or anti-American acts than Americans who follow any other faith or spiritual calling. In the end, you must know that acting on real knowledge rather than others' prejudice and ignorance is the better business decision as well as the moral and patriotic one. A strong nation with strong families, who act out of knowledge and a sense of optimism, rather than fear and paranoia, is truly the rising tide that lifts all boats.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barnett Kalikow".

Barnett Kalikow
Board President