



American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
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In Memoriam

Hala Salaam Maksoud, PhD
(1943-2002)
Alex Odeh
(1944-1985)

July 23, 2008

The Honorable Kevin L. Bryant
606 Gressette Building
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Via Email: BRYANTK@scsenate.org

Dear Senator Bryant:

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) is the nation's largest and oldest organization dedicated to protecting the civil rights and promoting the rich cultural heritage of Americans of Arab descent. Established in 1980 by a former US Senator, ADC is a non-sectarian, non-partisan grassroots organization representing an American community which consists of people of a variety of faiths, including Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Coptic, Jewish, Hindu, and others who don't identify as religious. ADC has members in every state, thirty-eight volunteer-based chapters, headquarters in Washington, DC, and five regional offices. ADC is an executive board member of the nation's premiere civil rights coalition, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR). As such, ADC is quite disappointed with a recent post on your official website.

On your website, you posted a photo of a t-shirt juxtaposing an image of Osama Bin Laden, the world's most notorious terrorist, with an image of Democratic Presidential Candidate Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) dressed in traditional Kenyan clothing on a diplomatic trip to that East African nation. The t-shirt reads, "The difference between Obama and Osama is just a little B.S." and highlights those same letters in both names.

Despite assertions that your intent was to provoke a discussion about Senator Obama's foreign policy credentials, the posting of such an image was meant to be divisive and it espouses cultural and religious stereotypes. You are seeking to equate the very act of wearing certain articles of clothing with an acceptance of a philosophy of hate perpetuated by those who commit some of the most abhorrent acts against humanity.

Your actions are reminiscent of the ignorance of a by-gone era when people questioned the loyalty and patriotism of other American communities such as Japanese and German Americans. While disagreements over policy matters are expected in such a hotly contested election, using racism, Islamophobia, or anti-Semitism is unacceptable and un-American. This tactic is detrimental to your standing, your personal integrity, and the image of our nation around the world.

As a community leader, your constituents should be able to expect a more mature and nuanced debate on policy matters from their representative. ADC requests that you reconsider your action and publicly disassociate yourself from such fear-mongering tactics.

Sincerely,

Kareem Shora, JD, LL.M.
National Executive Director