

## MUSLIM FAMILY HURTS WITH REST OF AMERICA

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Three years ago, Abdul H. Qazi spotted a small American flag on the ground. Someone had left it there. He picked it up, dusted it off, pressed out the wrinkles with his hand. He kept the flag on his car's rear dashboard for a while, then put it away.

This week, the flag is flying from his car's radio antenna.

Qazi and his wife, Parween, live on a cul-de-sac in Cross Lanes. They are hurting with the rest of America.

They have attended several prayer services and candlelight vigils in the Kanawha Valley. They want to educate others about the Islamic faith.

"The terrorists had no place in Islam," said Abdul, a retired occupational safety inspector. "Islam is a place of peace and harmony. God is the one who gives you life. God has the sole right to take it away."

Abdul and Parween, who moved to the United States from Pakistan 30 years ago, haven't faced the hate experienced by other Muslims in America - though a Muslim friend in Charleston received a crank telephone call in the middle of the night last week.

In fact, Parween, who teaches math at Riverside High School in Quincy, said teachers and administrators have comforted her since the attacks. They ask her if she's scared. "Yes," she tells them. They ask her whether she needs a hug. "Yes," she says.

"She came into my office and told me, 'I support this in no way,'" recalled Riverside Principal Richard Clendenin. "She's very torn, very upset."

At 9:30 a.m. Sept. 11, a teacher walked into Parween's classroom and told her a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center in New York. Parween couldn't move, couldn't say anything. She hunkered down and watched the tragedy unfold on television with her students.

"I was so quiet. I crossed my arms. I started to cry," Parween recalled. "A person in a right mind can't do such a terrible thing."

Parween wears a traditional Muslim headscarf called a hijab at home and work. Her students let her know when it slips from the top of her head and falls to her shoulders.

A year ago, she spoke out against a proposed Kanawha County school employee dress code that would have required her to provide written justification for the hijab. She said that was nobody's business but her own. The school board voted down the dress code.

On some afternoons, if she knows she won't be home until late, Parween slips into the teachers' lounge with her prayer rug. Muslims pray five times a day.

She has taught math in Kanawha County schools since 1982. Everywhere she has gone - Clendenin Junior High, Cabell Alternative, George Washington High and Riverside - she has won over teachers, parents and students. Her mother was a math teacher and principal in Pakistan.

This spring, she received an "Outstanding Teacher Award" from West Virginia University's Health Sciences and Technology Academy.

"Everybody told me I wouldn't survive," Parween said. "But once the parents realized their children are learning math, they're really good to me."

Like many Americans, the Qazis are searching for answers.

They said the United States should not bomb Afghanistan, which borders Pakistan. They said the United States should not send in troops. Such an invasion would incite more terrorist attacks in the United States, they said. They want the killing to stop.

The Qazis said U.S. policymakers should rethink America's unbridled financial support of Israel. They understood the reaction from Palestinians - some were celebrating in the streets - after the attacks.

"They live in terror every day," Parween said. "How can you expect sympathy from them?"

And the Qazis also worry about their family in Pakistan.

They have a daughter in Lexington, Ky., and another daughter and two sons at WVU in Morgantown. But their brothers and sisters and cousins live in Abbott Abad, a small town 70 miles north of Islamabad in Pakistan.

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers have warned they will attack any country that offers assistance to a U.S. attack on Afghanistan. U.S. authorities have identified Osama bin Laden, who lives in Afghanistan, as the "prime suspect" in the Sept. 11 attacks in Washington and New York.

Pakistan has already pledged wide-ranging support to the U.S. war on terrorism, including allowing the United States to use its airspace.

"I'm worried about my family," Parween said. "I'm worried about everyone in Pakistan."