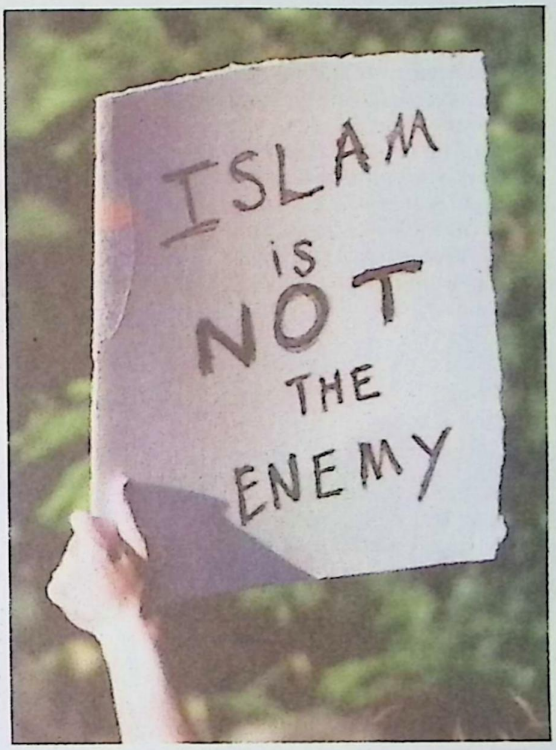
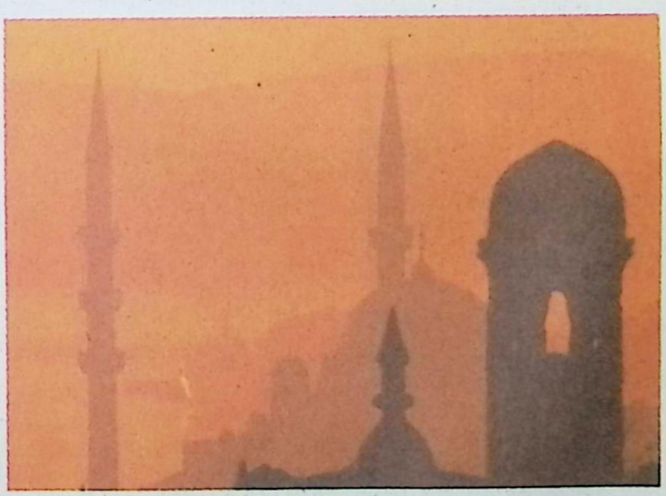
ceptions associated with Islam. I don't subscribe to the term 'Islamic terrorists', to me they are just terrorists and I would rather they do not drag my religion into their political agenda or their hate mongering and further tarnish the name of Islam.

Ignorance is truly a dangerous phenomenon. The recently crowned Miss America 2013, Nina Davuluri was subjected to a barrage of racist comments on various social networks such as Twitter. Some accused her of not being American, many called her an 'Arab' and others were outraged that a Muslim woman won the title. They even went as far as saying that she looked like a terrorist. If only those people had taken the time, they would have found out that Miss Davuluri was born and brought up in New York, is actually of Indian descent so not even remotely Arab and is Hindu and not Muslim. Not that any of these facts should have any bearing on the outcome of the contest. What is apalling is that these vitriolic remarks and prejudice seemed to be based solely on what she looks like.



Another fallacy that has on a few occasions had fatal consequences is the view that 'Islamic terrorists' have beards and wear turbans. Sadly this is a mental image and a stereotype that some misguided people have of what a terrorist looks like and since the September 11 attack, the Sikh community have frequently been targeted and become victims of hate crimes as they are mistaken for Muslims. Earlier in September, Columbia University professor Prabhjot Singh was assaulted by a group of young men and verbally abused because he was wearing a turban and had a beard as do many Sikh men. They called him a "terrorist" and referred to him as "Osama". Obviously they had no clue that the vast majority of Muslim men do not wear turbans nor do they all sport long flowing beards.



If I said to you that the Klu Klux Klan originated in America and therefore most Americans must be cross burning, racist bigots who find it acceptable to murder non whites and believe in white supremacy, you would tell me that I was spewing a load of nonsense and was being offensive and ignorant. Or at least I hope that is what you would say. I am sure it sounds like am stating the obvious but just because a group of individuals have certain beliefs and carry out acts that are unconscionable does not mean we can tar the entire population with the same brush. The problem is that there are people who just don't scratch beneath the surface and are happy to accept things at face value or buy into some sort of misperception i.e. Islamic fundamentalist carry out acts of violence therefore Muslims and terrorists are synonymous.

What is encouraging is that leaders of Muslim communities and even the communities themselves around the world are becoming more vocal about condemning the continuous acts of violence committed in the name of Islam and distancing themselves from these organisations. Maybe with a little more exposure to the true teachings of Islam and a social awareness of how the majority of Muslims live and what they believe, it will help to dispel the myths that surround the religion and its followers.