

Dear Friend,

Many of you have seen hateful emails, blog postings and reports circulating on the Internet and in the media questioning Senator Barack Obama's commitment to this country and his religious upbringing. The anonymous messages claim that Senator Obama attended a radical Islamic school, that his parents raised him as a Muslim, and some are absurd enough to claim that he's running for President in a plot to overthrow the government.

These false and slanderous claims first emerged as Senator Obama's campaign was just beginning, and have since swirled through cyberspace with a vengeance and were even picked up by right-wing pundits at Fox News and some partisan commentators.

To be clear, all of these charges have been thoroughly debunked. A CNN reporter who visited the Indonesian middle school Obama briefly attended as a small child saw boys and girls dressed in neat school uniforms playing, and teachers dressed in Western-style clothes. In an interview, the school's principal said: "This is a public school. We don't focus on religion. In our daily lives, we try to respect religion, but we don't give preferential treatment."

To read or view the CNN report, go here:

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/01/22/obama.madrassa/>

Or watch the video here: <http://thinkprogress.org/2007/01/22/cnn-obama-debunk/>

This reporting matches what Obama wrote in his book decades ago – that he lived in Indonesia with his mother and stepfather from age 6-10 and attended two years of public school and two years of Catholic school. Obama never attended an Islamic school, and he was not raised a Muslim.

In fact, Senator Obama is a committed Christian who found Christ long before entering politics, and has been outspoken about his faith ever since. While working as a young community organizer in the mid-1980s with a consortium of churches in a depressed neighborhood of Chicago, he found salvation at Trinity United Church of Christ. He, his wife and daughters still worship at Trinity today.

We have deep respect for people of the Muslim faith, but we feel compelled to write because the things being written about Senator Obama aren't true, and it's time to speak out against these deceptive, negative tactics. We've all had enough of the slash and burn politics calculated to divide us as children of God.

Our faith informs our values – values like honesty, caring for the least of these, and a commitment to family. Senator Obama shares these values, which is why it's critical that we all speak out about this man we trust and support.

So today, we ask you to join us in taking a stand against these willful, malicious attempts to mislead and inflame - and against any further attempts to use political attacks to divide the religious community. We ask that you share this letter widely, and help us beat back these tactics, whatever their source.

It's time for us to come together and unite around this man of faith and finally have an election that's about hope instead of fear.

Signed,

Reverend Henry Thomas
Des Moines, IA

Reverend Howard Milton Cole
West Des Moines, IA

Elder Kenneth Adderley
Waterloo, Iowa

Reverend Matt Perkins
Decorah, Iowa

Sister Pat Johnson
Sioux City, Iowa