

**LA Jews for Peace**  
**Statement on the**  
**Proposed Islamic Center in Downtown Manhattan**  
**August 16, 2010, modified August 17**

LA Jews for Peace supports the Cordoba Initiative in their project to build Park 51 (formally Cordoba House) an Islamic Center in downtown Manhattan. The Cordoba Initiative is dedicated to bridging gaps between Muslims and the West, and has received legal permission to build on the site in question.

We agree with President Obama who said on Friday, August 13, 2010:

"As a citizen and as President I believe that Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as everyone else in this country. And that includes the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in Lower Manhattan, in accordance with local laws and ordinances. This is America. And our commitment to religious freedom must be unshakeable."

The fact that the Cordoba site is located two blocks from the World Trade Center where the September 11, 2001 attack happened is of lesser concern than maintaining the guarantee of the U.S. Constitution, specifically the First Amendment, to "the free exercise" of religion. In balancing freedom of religion with the possible pain the proposed Islamic Center may have for families of victims of the September 11 attack, LA Jews for Peace firmly comes down on the side of the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion.

Finally, we note that the controversy about the Cordoba Initiative is an artificial distraction from the serious problems that the United States must confront.