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THE BLOG

Muslims! Are You Awake Yet?

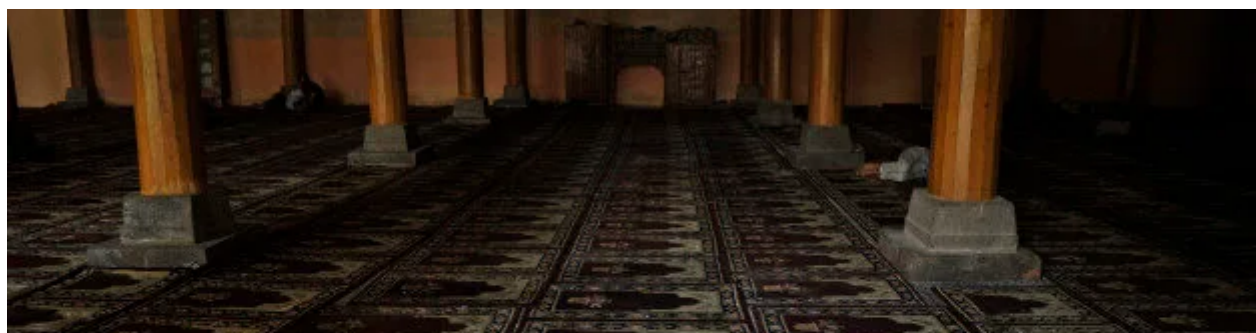
To my Muslim community, no matter how you interpret or live out your Islam, I appeal to you for us all to work together. We've been complacent and all of humanity is suffering for it. Not just us in America, but look at the mayhem radicalism have spawned.

By Ani Zonneveld, Contributor

Founder, president Muslims for Progressive Values

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A Kashmiri Muslim takes a nap at the landmark Jamia Masjid in Srinagar on August 2, 2011. For Muslims across the world, the beginning of the ninth month in the Muslim lunar calendar which marks the start of Ramadan is a time for spiritual reflection, prayers and fasting. During Ramadan practicing Muslims do not eat, drink, smoke or have sex between sunrise and sunset. AFP PHOTO/Tauseef MUSTAFA (Photo credit should read TAUSEEF MUSTAFA/AFP/Getty Images)

Step aside Islamophobes, this is between me and my Muslim community.

Now that the Boston Marathon bomber has been captured and the backstory has come to the forefront, Muslims are again reminded of the problem of radicalism conflated with Islam. We are again caught between radical Muslims and the Islamophobes who are relishing this new act of terror. And though moderate Muslims condemn terrorism at every opportunity and collaborate with law enforcements, what they are not doing is getting to the root of the problem.

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The problem: There are so much radical, hateful and extreme interpretations of Islam on-line. They target the youth, they dumb it down, they appeal to the ego and to the exclusive notion of supremacy. (This is not that much different from White Supremacy, or any supremacist ideology, but as a Muslim I want to talk about Islam.)



and yet with a few exceptions, we continue to sweep the issue of radical theology under the rug. Yes, it is embarrassing; it is easier to deny and to get defensive about it than to look it straight in the eye and call it out for what it is. Instead of beating around the bush, why not speak up against it. What are you afraid of?

Let me help. Here's a laundry list of all the miss-guided interpretations of Islam: Leaving Islam is an act of apostasy punishable by death; Sharia is a set of laws that brutally punish women, chop peoples' hands off for stealing (thanks Saudi Arabia); child marriages are permissible after all Prophet Muhammad married a child; homosexuality is punishable by death; Muslim women can't marry outside the faith; the status of women is below that of a man; only Muslims go to heaven; and the depiction of Prophet Muhammad is prohibited. The list is longer, but it's a start.

The premise: Caught between two worlds are the Muslim youth of foreign born parents who insist on sustaining their cultural and therefore their religious expression of Islam. Many of these parents have low tolerance for their Americanized children. As a result some of our kids are learning to live double lives. There lies the conflict, the identity crisis within the Muslim communities in the West.

Look at the radicalism and the identity issues of the Muslim youth in Europe. I have said this before and I will say it again, America will experience the same problems down the road if we don't reinterpret Islam for our kids, one that is relevant for the [21 century and one that is rooted in justice for all](#).

When conflicted youths are forced to find their own identities [without the guide of a loving adult](#), as in the case of Tamarlan Tsarnaev, then we as a community are to blame. There are plenty of progressive Muslim scholars out there who have written and lectured against



ONE READS!

The solution: The way to reach our youth is through video, and under five minutes at that! [Be Notorious](#) is a webseries targeting the youth, countering all the false teachings mainstream Muslims have assumed to be truth, or are afraid to address.

Radical theology in Islam is a new phenomenon because remember 30 years or so ago? We didn't have a radical bone! Go to YouTube and type in any subject matter and you will find plenty of conservative Muslim evangelists preaching hard core intolerant interpretations of Islam. As someone born and raised Muslim, these interpretations is an alien concept to me. I equate this to having a plethora of Islamophobes such as Pat Robertson and Terry Jones preaching when we should be having thousands of Desmond Tutus!

Where is the Muslim Desmond Tutu?

To my Muslim community, no matter how you interpret or live out your Islam, I appeal to you for us all to work together. We've been complacent and all of humanity is suffering for it. Not just us in America, but look at the mayhem radicalism have spawned.

"God changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts" (Quran 13:11).

And if you're into Rumi:

Forget Safety

Live where you fear to live

Destroy your reputation



So for all the Muslims out there who are sitting on the sidelines, thinking, wishing, praying that the next attack is not going to be in the name of Islam, wake UP! It is time to [Be Notorious](#).

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