

At the Islamic Association of Greater Hartford, Young Muslims Coached to Handle the Media

by Hugh Fitzgerald



A story some time ago about a mosque in central Connecticut with a 400-student Muslim Sunday school offered a house blend of victimhood and resilience.

More guards are on patrol these days. And for the older students in the transition class, talking about Islamophobia is not only welcomed, but encouraged. The teenagers are in their final years of high school and will be heading off to college soon.

In the first sentence, the theme of Muslim insecurity is introduced: "more guards are on patrol these days" around the mosque. Muslims are threatened, Muslims need to be protected. The next sentence supplies "islamophobia," that mendacious word used to great effect in order to inhibit all legitimate criticism of Islam.

So before they head out into the "real world," they aren't just learning the tenets of Islam, said Dr. Reza Mansoor, their teacher on a recent Sunday. He's coaching them on how to defend their faith from misconceptions.

"By the way, As-Salaam alaikum," Mansoor greeted them. "If you use an Arabic term and you don't translate, dinged one point, OK? So As-Salaam-Alaikum means God's peace be with you all."

Mansoor is president of the mosque, called Islamic Association of Greater Hartford, and he is big on translating Islamic phrases and words. Take jihad, for instance. It means a struggle – usually a personal, spiritual one – but if you hear jihad in the media, he said, it's almost always associated with extremists who commit violence in the name of Islam, like the 9/11 terrorists.

"If you use jihadist for terrorist, you unfortunately give the terrorists... a position much higher than what they are," Mansoor told his students.

Mansoor, like so many apologists for Islam, wants non-Muslims to believe that "Jihad" refers to a "personal, spiritual struggle." But 109 Qur'anic verses commanding Muslims to wage violent Jihad, and 1,400 years of many Jihads, conducted uninterruptedly somewhere in the world, against Unbelievers, suggest otherwise. He laments the fact that "when you hear jihad in the media...it's almost always associated with extremists." But why shouldn't it be? Since the Muslim terrorists themselves describe their attacks as Jihads, why

shouldn't we take them at their word? Are we to ignore how members of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, Boko Haram, Al Shebaab, Al-Nusra Front, Abu Sayyaf, Hamas, and Hezbollah all refer to their respective campaigns as "'jihads"?'

"People tend to fear what they don't know. And when Islam is viewed as a threat, that makes Muslims a target."

Mansoor's sympathy is limited to Muslims. It is they who are "a target"; it's so unfair that Islam should be "viewed as a threat." Possibly Reza Mansoor is unaware of the nearly 36,000 attacks carried out by Muslim terrorists since 9/11. Given that, it would be madness for people in the West not to view Islam as a "threat."

Mansoor's remark that "people tend to fear what they don't know" has it backwards in the case of Islam. People who know little about Islam – Merkel, Macron, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Pope Francis – are the ones who are most susceptible to minimizing its menace, and remain the most sanguine and the least anxious about the tens of millions of Muslims who have been allowed to settle in the West, deep behind what they have been taught to regard as enemy lines, the lines of Dar al-Harb. It is those who have taken the trouble to read and make sense of the Qur'an and the most important hadith, in the authoritative collections of Al-Bukhari and Muslim, who in addition have learned something about the 1,400-year history of Muslim expansion, who are most alarmed by the steady encroachments of Islam in the West. When it comes to Islam, the more you learn, the more alarmed you become.

"Just imagine someone calling you a terrorist and telling you to go home," Aissa Bensalem, 17, said during the class. "I had one of my friends say that they were scared to come to the masjid because they were afraid that they were going to be shot on." [sic]

Yes, Aissa has unwittingly used the most apposite verb – “imagine.” For how many such claims by Muslims of being the victims of Infidel hostility, from the microaggressions of a fleeting look of disapproval at a hijab, to physical attacks, have been made up, imagined, to win sympathy? Apparently Aissa Bensalem wasn’t afraid of attending the mosque herself; it was “one of [her] friends.” Had there been other fearful Muslims, she would certainly have mentioned them. And why should we believe her report about her friend’s fear of going to the mosque, given how many dubious claims have been made by Muslims about manifestations of “islamophobia” that turn out out never to have occurred? In the case of microaggressions – e.g., a prolonged stare, an oath muttered under the breath – there is often no way of knowing if such claims are real, or are merely claimed so as to deflect criticism from, and elicit sympathy for, Muslims.

Their mosque underwent an active shooter training just the other week. It’s part of a bigger security plan that has involved conversations with the FBI and local police, according to Mansoor, who said security was beefed up after the mass shootings at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh and the mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand.

That “active shooter training” is meant to impress on readers the very real physical dangers that Muslims face. You need to remind yourself that attacks by Muslims on non-Muslims far outnumber those on Muslims worldwide; that Christians are the most persecuted (almost entirely by Muslims) minority today; that antisemitism has increased horrifyingly pari passu with the increase in Muslim migrants, and that this phenomenon is even more pronounced in Europe than in the U.S..

But for Mansoor, a cardiologist by trade, a conversation about security is incomplete without talk of “changing the narrative.” After 9/11, he founded the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut to counter the anti-Muslim rhetoric that he says

is perpetuated in the media. Years after the terrorist attack, some Americans still see U.S. Muslims as anti-American.

Why, whatever could have caused “some Americans” to “still see U.S. Muslims as anti-American”? What oh what could explain that? 9/11 was so long ago: Reza Mansoor complains that it’s been “years after the terrorist attack,” but some Americans are apparently harboring a quite unnecessary antipathy to Muslims. He refers to 9/11 as “the terrorist attack.” Has he forgotten all the other attacks since then? Could American worries about Islam have something to do with the attacks by Muslims since 9/11, in New York, Boston, Minneapolis, Chicago, Seattle, Los Angeles, Fort Hood, Little Rock, Orlando, Chattanooga, San Bernardino? And could it be that Americans have also been alarmed by the spectacle of Muslim terrorists in Europe, where they have struck in Madrid, Barcelona, Paris (many times), Lyon, Toulouse, Nice, Montauban, Magnanville, St. Etienne-du-Rouvray, Brussels, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Munich, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, Malmö, Helsinki, Turku, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Beslan? Reza Mansoor wants Infidels to forget all that. Sorry, no can do. And from his point of view, what is even more deplorable is the increasing number of non-Muslims who have been educating themselves about Islam, and have been connecting the dots between these many acts of terrorism and what the Islamic texts, especially the Qur’an, inculcate. See, e.g., 3:151, 4:87, 8:12,8:60, 47:4 for verses about “striking terror” in the hearts of Infidels, and Muhammad’s boast in the Hadith that “I have been made victorious through terror.”

Mansoor tells his students that “islamophobia is driven by false information. So he encourages them to be media-savvy and to correct those misconceptions when confronted with them.

"Islamophobia" as a word and as a concept exists only to inhibit or shut down legitimate islamocriticism. We are supposed to believe that all such criticism constitutes an "irrational fear." Mansoor offers no examples of such "irrational fear" of Islam, nor any examples of "false information" and "misconceptions" about the faith that are circulating. It's enough, he thinks, that he makes the charge; evidence is not his strong suit.

He wants his students to be "media-savvy" – that is, to learn the art of dissimulation, so useful in correcting "those misconceptions" about Islam that islamophobes harbor. It's a public relations effort on behalf of a single client – Islam.

"This is your job," he said. "You are the next generation of Muslims to be able to show that Islamic values and American values are completely compatible."

What are those American values with which Islamic values "are completely compatible"? It can't be freedom of religion, for apostates from Islam are to be severely punished, even with death. Muhammad himself said in a hadith: "he who changes his (Islamic) religion, kill him." (Sahih Al-Bukhari 9:57). Historically, in Muslim societies, non-Muslim People of the Book, that is, Christians and Jews, could continue to remain alive and even practice their religion, as dhimmis, as long as they accepted a set of onerous conditions, most notably payment of the tax known as the Jizyah. Over time, many non-Muslims converted to Islam in order to escape from the dhimmi's burden. This coercion hardly corresponds to the American value of freedom of religion.

Another American value, perhaps the one most important to maintaining our democracy, is that of freedom of speech. But where, in what Muslim country, is there anything like the American guarantee of freedom of speech? Journalists and others attempting to exercise free speech in Muslim lands are

imprisoned (as in Turkey, which has the largest number of jailed journalists in the world), killed (Jamal Khashoggi), or driven into exile (the many Arab journalists now living in London and Paris). The despots of Islam are now, and always have been, hostile to free speech, and over 1,400 years, Islam never developed a culture of promoting and protecting free speech. The worst violations in Muslim lands of the right of free speech are the harsh punishments for “blasphemy” – that is, the perceived mocking of any aspect of Islam, and especially of Muhammad himself, which can result in a death sentence (the murder of the Charlie Hebdo cartoonists, the attack on Lars Vilks, the threats to Jyllands-Posten and Molly Norris, the death sentence – commuted – for Asia Bibi). How can Reza Mansoor have the chutzpah to declare that “Islamic values” and “American values” are “completely compatible”?

The equality of the sexes is another American value incompatible with “Islamic values.” In Islam, women are treated as inferior to men. Polygyny is legitimate in Islam; one husband, but many wives, naturally devalues women. So does the rules for divorce: a husband need only repeat the triple-talaq to be instantly divorced; a wife who wants a divorce, however, must return her bride-price or mahr, and provide a reason for the divorce that is deemed acceptable. Qur’an 4:34 declares that men are “superior” to women and must serve as their managers. The same verse gives a Muslim husband the right to “beat” a wife if he even suspects her of disobedience. A Muslim daughter inherits half that of a son. A Muslim woman’s testimony is worth half that of a man. Muhammad explains this last rule in a hadith where he insisted that it is “because of the deficiency in her [woman’s] intelligence.”

Another American value is the legal equality of minorities (this wasn’t always an American value, of course, but it certainly is now), which is enshrined in the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment (invoked against the states) and incorporated in the Due Process Clause of the 5th Amendment

(invoked against the federal government.) The equal treatment of minorities is not, however, an Islamic value. In Islam, Muslims are the “best of peoples” (3:110) and non-Muslims the “most vile of created beings.” (98:6). Non-Muslims in a Muslim state have restrictions placed on them as to the building of new religious structures or repairs to existing ones, and often they are required to be restrained in their religious observances. They can be punished severely for any attempts to proselytize, though Muslims may freely do so.

In the Islamic world, severe restrictions on freedom of religion and on freedom of speech, the absence of legal equality for women and for non-Muslim minorities, are sufficient to refute Reza Mansoor’s bizarre claim that Islamic and American values are “completely compatible.”

Students at a Muslim Sunday school in central Connecticut are being taught by Dr. Reza Mansoor to be “media-savvy.” In previous posts, we discussed their sadness at the way Muslims are too often mistreated by those who cannot get beyond 9/11, about their need, according to Dr Mansoor, to clear up “misconceptions” about the faith that some islamophobes still harbor, and to insist that Islamic and American values are “completely compatible” – in short, to be trained in the arts of exaggeration and dissimulation in order to be Defenders of the Faith.

“Students also raised the issue of the controversial Muslim travel ban by President Donald Trump.

“If you’re not welcome to someone’s house, you’re not going to feel safe going there,” said Laila Mehar, 27, a student who is a bit older. “You’re not going to feel at home. Again, cultivating a sense of fear. So we think that we’re seeing a lot of that today with the refugees coming in.”

What the reporter, no doubt channeling Mansoor, uncritically calls the “Muslim travel ban,” needs yet again to be

clarified. It is not a “Muslim travel ban.” It is a ban on admitting people from seven countries, two of which were non-Muslim, where the American government believed there was a heightened threat from terrorists, and the ability of the governments in those seven countries to monitor such threats was deemed inadequate. 95% of the world’s Muslims remained unaffected by this so-called “Muslim travel ban.”

Nonetheless, Mansoor told the class, he still thinks America is a great place to practice Islam – that it remains a safe haven for immigrants like himself. Mansoor explained how he came from Sri Lanka almost 30 years ago after his medical school there was bombed.

“We don’t want the Muslim ban and the ‘Islam hates America’ and stuff to change this nation that welcomes immigrants and that has made America such a beautiful country,” Mansoor said.

Much is made, in this report, of the supposed anxiety felt by these Muslim high school students. It is worth noting that Dr. Mansoor could have helped relieve his students of some of their unnecessary anxiety by explaining that the so-called “Muslim ban” was nothing of the kind. He might have explained, too, that reports of attacks on Muslims in this country have been deliberately exaggerated by some of those claiming victimhood (their stories, as they unraveled, can be found online), that given the many Muslim terror attacks in America and Europe, it is perfectly understandable that many Americans are wary of Islam...and that – he could have added – “we Muslims have a duty to confront, not to deny, the Qur’anic verses that have led Muslims to wage Jihad against all others for 1,400 years. We must not flinch from examining the contents of the Quran, to see if a way to establish a real modus vivendi, a true coexistence with those we have been commanded to fight and to kill – let’s not keep up the pretense that such verses do not exist – is possible. Dissimulation, taqiyya, may

continue to fool many Infidels, but those many can become few.”

The class was winding down. “All right, good job, guys,” he said. “Time for pizza.”

Outside, one of the security guards could be seen patrolling the property. Eleventh-grader Nisaa Mohamed, 16, said she feels safe at her mosque. But as a Connecticut high schooler who wears a headscarf, Mohamed said she’s had to deal with people calling her a terrorist.

Victimhood is powerful. Mention of the security guard is meant to remind us of the dangers these young Muslims face. And while all over the Western world we see Muslims attacking non-Muslims in attempts to terrorize them, we are supposed to believe that, although Nisaa Mohamad “feels safe at her mosque,” implicitly she does not “feel safe” elsewhere (else she would have said “I feel safe”), and “people” have “called her a terrorist.” Skepticism is in order. How many people have called her that? Twenty? Ten? One? None? It’s an easy claim to make, impossible to disprove.

“My friend and I, who also wears a scarf, we took our time to explain to them that our religion does not motivate or promote violence,” Mohamed said, “and that we’re a religion of peace.”

In other words, Nisaa Mohamed and her friend “took [their] time” to misinform – more exactly, to lie – about Islam, to Unbelievers. It’s not credible that she can truly believe “that our religion does not motivate or promote violence.” The Qur’an is full of violence. Nisaa Mohamed is 16, and presumably by now has read the Qur’an, and if she did, she can hardly avoid having come across at least some of the 109 verses that command Muslims to wage violent Jihad against Unbelievers. Did such verses as 2:191-193, 2:216, 3:151, 4:7,

4:89, 812, 8:60, 9:5, 9:29, 47:4, for example, make no impression on her? What did she think "Fighting is prescribed for you" (2:216) meant? Or "Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers'" (3:151)? Or "Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve, fight in the cause of Satan" (4:76)? Or "(Remember) when your Lord inspired the angels... 'I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them'" (8:12)? Or the Verse of the Sword, that tells Believers "when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them." (9:5). Even just one of those verses, and there are 109 verses of that ilk, would have been sufficient to show that Islam – the Qur'an – "motivates and promotes violence." Either Nisaa Mohamed is practicing her taqiyya, or she has no idea what is in the Qur'an. I know which explanation I find more plausible.

Like Mohamed, Ameen Parks is one of the only [sic] Muslims at his Connecticut high school. He tries to be a good ambassador for his faith, he said – just like he's been taught in Sunday school. But when an incident involving Muslims happens out in the world, he hears the stereotypes and racist jokes.

An "incident involving Muslims" means, for the less demure, "when there is a Muslim terrorist attack." And what are those terrible, quite baseless "stereotypes" he hears? Something to do, perhaps, with Muslims and terrorism? Now why would any decent person make that connection? Could those 35,000 terrorist attacks since 9/11 have something to do with it? As for "racist jokes," Ameen Parks is, like so many Muslims, deliberately confusing a faith with a race, but by now it is impossible for that obvious point to be accepted.

"I try to clear things up," Parks said. "But a lot of people you just can't change. They're really stubborn."

How does Ameen Parks “clear things up”? Does he emulate his classmate Nisaa Mohamed and roundly declare, with as much fabricated sincerity as he can manage, that Islam does “not provoke or promote violence” of any kind; that the terrorists in question could not, therefore, be “real Muslims” and thus it’s “case closed,” except for the islamophobes and anti-Muslim racists whose minds are permanently made up – “a lot of people you just can’t change...they’re really stubborn”? Could it be that ever more people, mugged by the Muslim reality, are no longer willing to give Islam a pass, and to pretend that “extremists” who “have nothing to do with the real Islam” are behind all this explosion of terrorism? If they now are “stubborn,” it is because they are tired of having been misled by Muslim apologists for so long, have conducted their own investigation of what the Qur’an inculcates and, properly informed, are now “stubborn” in their newfound, appalled understanding.

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