

## This Is Where We Begin to Say No

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[Andrew C. McCarthy](#)

On the Ground Zero mosque, Americans reject the opinion elites that empower the Islamists.

A tectonic shift is in motion: How fitting that its focal point is Ground Zero, the inevitable fault line between Islam and the West.

Only the blink of an eye ago, uttering the unpleasant truth that in terms of doctrine there is no such thing as “moderate Islam” resulted in one’s banishment from what our opinion elites like to call the “mainstream,” by which they mean the narrow-minded, viciously defended circle of their own pieties and fictions. You could say it, but your skin had better have an extra coat or two of thick: You were in for a fusillade of rage, the likes of which our candor-phobic elites would never dream of unleashing at our Islamist enemies — no matter how clearly those enemies announced their intention to destroy us.

The fusillade still comes, but now its blows only glance. The elites and their mainstream have been exposed as frauds: Being on the wrong side of enough 70-30 issues will do that to you.

It should never have gotten this far. Sponsors of the Ground Zero mosque neither own the property in question nor possess the means to build and operate the palatial Islamic center they envision. The more light that shines on their record of murky real-estate dealings and the dubious circumstances of their limited stake in the Ground Zero property, the more questions arise. In a more sensible world, those questions would get answered before we plunged into a rancorous public debate. That hasn’t happened, though. In spite of the implacable determination of the mayor (and the attorney general who would be governor) to look the other way, the issue has galvanized the public. What has long bubbled beneath the surface did not need much more heat to boil over.

For the better part of two decades, Americans have been murdered by Islamists and then lectured that they are to blame for what has befallen them. We have been instructed in the need for special sensitivity to the unceasing demands of Islamic culture and falsely accused of intolerance by the people who wrote the book on intolerance. Americans have sacrificed blood and bottomless treasure for Islamic peoples who despise Americans — and despise us even more as our sacrifices and gestures of self-loathing intensify. Americans have watched as apologists for terrorists and sharia were made the face of an American Muslim community that we were simultaneously assured was the very picture of pro-American moderation.

Americans have had our fill. We are willing to live many lies. This one, though,

strikes too close to home, arousing our heretofore dormant sense of decency. Americans have now heard Barack Obama's shtick enough times to know that when he talks about "our values," he's really talking about his values, which most of us don't share. And after ten years of CAIR's tired tirades, we're immune to Feisal Rauf, too.

We look around us and we see our country unrivaled by anything in the history of human tolerance. We see thousands of thriving mosques, permitted to operate freely even though we know for a fact that mosques have been used against us, repeatedly, to urge terrorism, recruit terrorists, raise money for terrorists, store and transfer firearms, and inflame Muslims against America and the West. As Islamists rage against us, we see Islam celebrated in official Washington. As we reach out for the umpty-umpty time, we find Muslim leaders taking what we offer, but always with complaint and never with reciprocation. We're weary, and we don't really care if that means that Time magazine, Michael Bloomberg, Katie Couric, Fareed Zakaria, and the rest think we're bad people — they think we're bad people, anyway.

So finally we're asking: Where is this "moderate Islam" you've been telling us about? Why would a self-proclaimed bridge-builder insist on something so patently provocative and divisive? How can we be sure that if imam Rauf builds his monument on our graveyard, it won't become what other purportedly "moderate" Islamic centers have become: a cauldron of anti-American vitriol?

It turns out that there are no satisfactory answers. When finally pressed on the taxonomy of moderate Islam, the best our elites can do — besides shouting "Islamophobia!" — is debate whether there ever was a "golden age" of Islamic tolerance. They have to confess that the Islamists — whom they'd like us to see as a handful of "extremists" but who are in truth a mass movement — are in the ascendancy. It is embarrassingly obvious that while some of us have been working to defeat Islamism in our midst, our elites are of the incorrigibly progressive mindset that counsels accommodating them — in the delusion that they will be appeased rather than encouraged to become more aggressive. That is precisely the mindset that makes an Islamist think: Maybe now is the time for a \$100 million mosque at Ground Zero.

"Moderate Islam" is a dream, not a reality. It is a dream with potential, because there are millions of Muslims who are moderate people, and because there are dedicated Muslims working to transform their faith into something that is institutionally moderate. But they work against great odds. They confront Islamists whose dedication to theocratic principles is deeply and undeniably rooted in Islamic scripture. And they confront American opinion elites who, wittingly or not, serve as the lifeline of the Islamists.

The reformers' slim chance at prevailing hinges on the American people's will to say "no" to our self-anointed betters. Ground Zero, once again the site of epic Islamist overreach, may be remembered as the place where we started to say "no."

Andrew C. McCarthy, a senior fellow at the National Review Institute, is the author, most recently, of *The Grand Jihad: How Islam and the Left Sabotage America*.

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