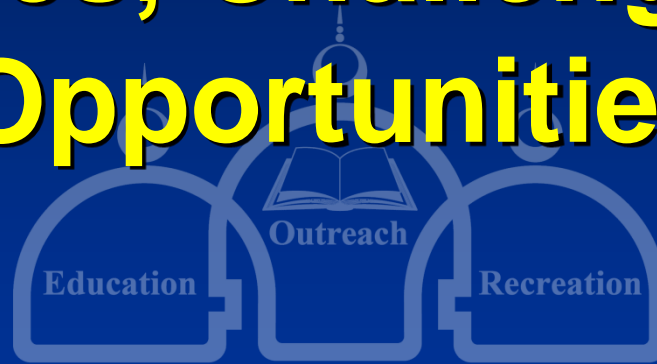


Muslims in North America

Identities, Challenges and Opportunities



Dr. Jamal Badawi, Professor Emeritus
St. Mary's University, Halifax, Canada
Jamalbadawi@hotmail.com

Outline

I. Identities

- Universal quest
- An Islamic Perspective
- Guiding core values

II. Some Challenges

- External & Internal

III. Opportunities

Conclusions

I. Identities [ID]

Universal Questions

1. Your perception of **who you are?**
2. **A universal** human quest
3. Is predicated on **core beliefs/values**
 - Is there a **creator** of the universe?
 - If so, **how to relate** to both
 - Why here on earth? **My mission?**
 - Whereto **after death?**

I. Identities [ID]

An Islamic Perspective

1. **Belief in the One Creator of all**
Faith & reason: no inherent conflict
Supra-rational is not irrational

2. **God cares and guides**
Through innate nature
Using senses and reason
Revelation through Prophets

I. Identities [ID]

An Islamic Perspective - 2

3. Human is God's trustee on earth

Freedom of moral choice

Accountability here and hereafter

4. Nature: for human use not abuse



I. Identities [ID]

Islamic Guiding Core Values

1. **Sanctity** of human life [5:32]
2. Universal human **dignity** [17:70]
3. Universal **justice** with all [4:58, 5:8]
4. Acceptance of **plurality** [30:21]
5. Just peaceful **co-existence** with all [60:8]
6. **Co-operation** for common good [5:2]
7. Universal **brotherhood & equality** [49:13]
8. Univ'l **mercy** to all creation [21:107]

II. Some Challenges

1. Questioning Muslim Loyalty & Patriotism [Muslim or American?]

1. Are **multiple loyalties** mutually exclusive?
2. Can be loyal to **God, country** and family?
3. Is the **priority of loyalty to the creator** uniquely and **exclusively Islamic**?
4. Is **sincere criticism of gov't** policies, unfair “tailor-made” legislation and actions disloyal or unpatriotic **in democracies**?

II. Some Challenges

2. Linking Islam to “Violence”

1. Violence & crimes **have no religion!**
2. Claimed “followers” of **all religions commit crimes** and acts of terror
3. Some even commit **violence “in the name” of religion** or “God”
4. Why **selectively** and wrongly use terms such as **“Muslim terrorism”**?

3. Rise of Islamophobic anti-Muslim Feelings & Actions

1. Focus on negative **historical legacies**
2. Post-911 “**guilt by association**”
3. Muslims: Guilty until **proven innocent**
4. **Profiling and discrimination** by religion
5. **Hate crimes** against persons & property
6. Muslim Citizens: a **political football** in the political arena of competition for votes, by appealing to **fear and hatred?**

4. Mixing Normative Islam with Muslim Views and Wrongdoing

1. Is there any “religious” community of 1.6 billion humans that is **totally free from criminals, “terrorists”, fanatic [some violent] extremists?**
2. Is **political extremism** as dangerous and may be as violent as religious extremism?
3. Are there many **un-Islamic cultural** practices among Muslims? other religions?

5. Internal Challenges

1. Insufficient serious **commitment**
2. Problems of **interpretation** of main texts
3. Need to **embody lofty Islamic values**
4. Extremes of **assimilation and isolation**
5. Critical need for the **Qur'anic “justly balanced” approach** of understanding & implementing Islam in our lives [2:143]
6. Need **unity, tolerance & co-operation**

III. Opportunities

1. Authentic **normative** Islam is a comprehensive message of a balanced spiritual, moral and material well being
2. Most people are honorable, **fair and open** to truth if they know it.
3. Muslim responsibility is to understand, **embody** and communicate Islamic ethics
4. **Serving humanity** is serving God

CONCLUSIONS

Needed paradigm shift

- “We” vs. “Them” or “Us” together?
- Confrontation or **co-operation**?
- Violence or just **peaceful co-existence**
- Focus on the past or **dealing w/ reality**
- Stereotyping or **sound knowledge**

Thank you!

Further Information

- OnIslam.net
- Islamicity.com [mostly audio material]
- [Youtube](https://www.youtube.com): Search under “Jamal Badawi”
- Jannah.org [Gender Equity in Islam]
- Several sites esp. onIslam.net, titles like:
 - ✓ Muslim and Non-Muslim Relations
 - ✓ Muslim Contribution to Civilization
 - ✓ Apostasy: Is It a Capital Crime?
- Email: JamalBadawi@hotmail.com