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## Mosques, Muslims and America in Darkness

by: William Rivers Pitt

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Things have come to a pretty pass when I'm the guy saying it would be really helpful if George W. Bush were still around. I'm saying it, and I mean it, because this country could really use his brand of wisdom right now.

Let me be clear: I despise the man. Loathe him. He was quite simply the worst president in all of American history; if a future president wants to outstrip his deplorable record, they will literally have to crash the Earth into the Sun to pull it off. He is a thief, a liar and a murderer, and I consider the fact that he has not been called to account for his serial crimes against the American people and the world to be a failure of leadership equal to Hitler's decision to open a second front. If George W. Bush were on fire in front of me, I would not piss on him to put him out.

But I'd really like to hear from him right about now. Whatever else he did wrong, Mr. Bush went out of his way during his eight years in office to tell us that we are not at war with Islam and Muslims, the "crusade" gaffe notwithstanding. His rhetoric regarding Islam and Muslims after 9/11 was uniformly conciliatory, couched as it was between his WMD fabrications and pro-war grandstanding, and as the leader of his party, he kept the lid on an explosion of virulent hatred against fellow citizens who prayed to Allah instead of Jesus or Yahweh. It was bad enough after 9/11, with many assaults on Muslims and mosques to go around, but it could have been far, far worse had Bush not spoken as he did.

Well, he's gone now, and the dogs are off the leash. The proposed construction of the Cordoba House two blocks from the World Trade Center site has given the far-right the opportunity to unveil the one flag they really salute: hatred, divisiveness and fear. For whatever reason, Mr. Bush has chosen to remain silent while his former minions drag the GOP and the country even further into darkness - his spokesman issued a "no comment" on Tuesday regarding the matter, in fact - so it falls to cooler heads to try and prevail. The problem is, my head isn't all that cool. I'm furious and disgusted over this situation, over the fact that once again, the far-right media establishment has successfully dragged us all to the edge of a cliff, over the fact that too many of us are wallowing in our worst selves.

So let's get a few things straight.

First of all, the Cordoba House is not a "Ground Zero Mosque." It is a Muslim community center, it is two blocks away from the site, and in a neighborhood that already has a mosque...and a strip club, and a lot of other stuff that makes talk about "desecrating hallowed ground" sound like the nonsense that it is.

Oh, and by the by, a lot of the people quacking about "hallowed ground" are the same cretins who refused to pony up funding for 9/11 rescue workers who desperately need health care when the bill came before Congress. I'm pretty used to broadband Republican hypocrisy - the core of their power in politics, after all, is their utter and complete lack of shame - but this just sends me over the moon. Money for continuing the Bush-era tax cuts for rich people? Sure. Money for people who charged into the fire and dust and smoke on that day, who are now dying by inches because of their heroism? Not so much. And P.S., all Muslims are bad. Got that? It's the Republican way.

As for the idea that the Cordoba House is going to be a nest of radicals, well, the Imam in charge of the project - Feisal Abdul Rauf - is as sensible and progressive and sane as anyone you know. For God's sake, Mr. Bush hired the man to help America try to treat with the Muslim world, and Rauf advised the FBI on counter-terrorism tactics, which are a pretty interesting couple of line items on the resume of a so-called fanatic. I'd like to thank The Rude Pundit for putting together a collection of Imam Rauf's observations on women's rights, terrorism, and murder. Because he's a Muslim, too many people will immediately expect his views to be along the lines of those seventh-century lunatics who give Islam the bad name it enjoys.

Not so much:

Really, oh, sweet, imbecilic right-wingers? Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf of the Cordoba Initiative, which dares to want cheap real estate in New York City in order to build a Muslim community center, is a radical? Really? Does anyone actually understand the meaning of "radical" anymore?

Here's what he's said over the last few years. Mullah Omar, he ain't:

"The issue of women's rights is more than an issue for women or about women. It involves everyone...The best of you are those who are best to their women. Consequently,

the worst of men are those who are worst to their women."- From the *Yemen Times*, August 9, 2009, at a conference on advancing the cause of women in Islam.

Rauf believes in "showing those who resort to violence that it is counter to the very idea of Islam." - From the *Khaleej Times* (UAE), July 5, 2009.

"Islam denounces suicide of any sort, especially suicide bombings that kill innocents. Even in a defensive war sanctioned by Islamic law, suicide is expressly forbidden." - From a June 2009 commentary by Rauf.

"The Quran expressly and unambiguously prohibits the coercion of faith because that violates a fundamental human right - the right to a free conscience. The Quran says in one place 'There shall be no compulsion in religion.' And in another it says, 'To you your beliefs and to me, mine.'" - Same as above.

"Rauf was one of the few Muslim leaders who appealed for calm and tolerance after the Regensburg speech." From the *New Yorker*, April 2, 2007, regarding Pope Benedict's 2006 lecture where he quoted a Muslim-hating Byzantine emperor. Riots ensued.

Young Muslims "are deeply frustrated by what's going on in the name of Islam. They feel they are paying a price for actions done by a very, very negligible minority, but which capture the attention of the media. Terrorism done in the name of Islam has hurt Muslims as much, if not more, than it has hurt Westerners." - From a June 2006 U.S. State Department press release on a conference regarding Muslim youths.

Wow, what a total madman. Or not.

There is no better place on Earth for a progressive Muslim facility than near the site where Islam was horribly stained by the actions of a few motherless bastard renegades. Imam Rauf seeks, in his own words, to "push back" against the radicals within his faith through the Cordoba House. It is, in a way, an apology for what happened on 9/11, a repudiation of the perversion of Islam that inspired it, and an avenue for reconciliation and forgiveness. I'm no Christian scholar, but I do recall hearing some stuff about forgiveness in my CCD classes.

Speaking of apologies (and motherless bastards), it was Newt Gingrich who injected an incredible dose of stupidity into this disgusting debate. Newt said, "You know, Nazis don't have the right to put up a sign next to the Holocaust Museum in Washington. We would never accept the Japanese putting up a site next to Pearl Harbor. There's no reason for us to accept a mosque next to the World Trade Center."

Yeah, this one has me ballistic. Pearl Harbor and the Holocaust were perpetrated by two militarized, nation-based, nationalistic empires. 9/11 was pulled off by a small cohort of fanatics who, thanks to the gross negligence of the Bush administration, got incredibly lucky on one single day. Germany and Japan, it should be noted, apologized for their actions in World War II, and we accepted those apologies, even though their actions killed millions. 9/11 was terrible. World War II was by many orders of magnitude worse,

and was made possible by entities that are in no way comparable to a handful of misogynistic throwbacks on the far fringes of Islam.

This whole ridiculous thing is nothing more or less than a midterm election Trojan Horse deployed by the GOP to try and win back the power they lost in 2006 and 2008, and the "mainstream" media appears all too happy to go along. People in this country are justifiably terrified right now, thanks to the results of Republican economic theory we are currently enduring, and the temptation to lash out at something, anything, is all too close to the skin. For two years now - more, actually, if you count the '08 campaign - the GOP has been calling President Obama (and through him, the Democrats) a Muslim terrorist fanatic. The blogger most responsible for this mosque frenzy went so far as to claim Obama's father was Malcolm X, so this whole crapshow is right in their wheelhouse. They are preying on our fears, and have found fertile ground due to the circumstances we find ourselves in, and it is as deplorable as anything the GOP has pulled in their long and sorry history.

A lot of this bad noise is coming from the so-called Christians on the right, who think all of Islam is coming to destroy America, who call that faith a cult, who paint every Muslim as a murdering radical, and who make no bones about the internment-camp solutions they have for this so-called "problem." I think it fitting to remind those people that it was good Christians who enslaved and murdered millions of Africans, who gave blankets infected with smallpox to Native Americans and very nearly annihilated them all, who thought "separate but equal" was a bully idea, and who did all of these things because the victims were the non-Christian/dark-skinned "other." We're knocking on that door again, and only Hell lies behind it.

A little bit of Scripture from the newest "other":

A true Muslim is the one who does not defame or abuse others; but the truly righteous becomes a refuge for humankind, their lives and their properties.

- Mohammad

Be wary of malice, for malice consumes virtues, just as fire consumes fuel.

- Mohammad

The ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr.

- Mohammed

The most excellent jihad (struggle) is that for the conquest of self.

- Mohammed

Especially if you are well-to-do, see that no one goes hungry or naked.

- Mohammed

Believers, Jews, Sabaeans or Christians - whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does what is right - shall have nothing to fear or regret.

- the Quran

Sounds a lot like the Bible, right? There's a reason for that. Sure, the Quran has plenty of verses that seek to kindle the worst activities of humankind, but guess what? I can point you to five dozen Bible verses that advocate slavery, murder, hatred, and violence to a degree that puts what is in the Quran in deep shade. Exodus and Leviticus leap nimbly to mind. In short, Christians and Christianity are in no position to judge anyone, anywhere, ever.

The philosopher Denis Diderot once said, "Men will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest." I don't go that far, but for sure this whole sad, sorry issue makes me want to strangle myself with my own intestines. In so many ways, including this mosque issue, we are falling backwards into a darkness from which there is no recovery. Well-meaning people can object to the building of a Muslim facility near the World Trade Center site, but the way this has played out is a blot on the soul of America. We have to be better than this