

# American Mosque Response to Freedom House Report: “SAUDI PUBLICATIONS ON HATE IDEOLOGY FILL AMERICAN MOSQUES”

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All Dulles Area Muslim  
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Islamic Society of  
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King Fahd Mosque

Richardson Mosque

## Summary

Freedom House published a report titled *Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Fill American Mosques* (hereinafter referred to as Report) concluding that hateful indoctrinations emanating from Saudi publications are dominant in American mosques.

If this were to be accurate, it would be of grave concern for the Muslim community. Islam advocates dialogue and preaches freedom of conscience.<sup>1</sup> Any speech that incites hatred and sows discord in a community is unequivocally repudiated and rejected. Therefore we decided to launch an investigation into the veracity of Freedom House's alarming conclusions.

After a review of the Report, background of its contributors, careful scrutiny of its citations, and interviews with leaders of the mosques cited by the Report, the following conclusions were reached<sup>2</sup>:

- The Report uses a very small, unrepresentative sample to draw stereotypical and encompassing conclusions.
- The Report is authored by people who have in the past exhibited a lack of understanding of Islam.
- The Report uses translations provided by an institution that is known for selectivity and bias towards Arabs and Muslims.
- The Report taints a whole community about their alleged hate, without conducting any survey of the community or speaking to their leaders.
- The Report charges the Muslim community with being indoctrinated by hate, yet the Report's own selectivity and hasty generalizations could lead to more hateful attitudes toward the Muslim community.
- The Report seems to be politically motivated. The second release of the Report, which has the title *Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques*, has a disclaimer that reads, "We have made no determination that [the] mosques endorsed any of these material cited in this report, or were aware of their presence."<sup>3</sup> Yet, the Report contradicts itself by making emphatic claims that the literature represents a main source of indoctrination in the mosques. The Report even claims that Muslims "have requested our help in exposing Saudi extremism in the hope of freeing their communities from ideological strangulation."<sup>4</sup>

We disagree with the Report's broad-brush generalizations and selective presentation of material that constitutes an insignificant amount in the larger Islamic educational material available at American mosques.

We agree that several of the quotes cited in the Report are indeed hateful. We repudiate them unequivocally. Such hateful messages contradict the spirit of Islam, which stresses dialogue and moderation. Additionally, we as community organizations pledge to work with our membership to continue our efforts to promote an accurate understanding of Islam based on our faith's stance in favor of moderation, tolerance, and dialogue.

The remainder of this document is divided as follows: Section 1 reviews the background of the contributors to the Report. Section 2 contrasts the Report findings with documented evidence from American mosques. Section 3 evaluates the relevance of the publications cited in the Report. Section 4 suggests a holistic approach to combating hate.

"In light of the Islamophobic view of some key contributors to this [Freedom House] Report, the reliability of the FH Report becomes questionable."

## SECTION 1: SOURCES AND CONTRIBUTORS

In completing the Report, Freedom House employed a team of translators who worked in tandem with the center's director and two other researchers. An investigation has found some disturbing aspects in the background of some of the key people affiliated with the Report. In light of the Islamophobic view of some key contributors to this Report, the reliability of the Report becomes questionable.

### Paul Marshall, Senior Fellow

Paul Marshall is credited in the Report for providing "research and editorial advice."<sup>5</sup> In his book, *Islam at the Crossroads*, Marshall:

- Depicts Islam as a religion bent on subjugating others, especially Christians.<sup>6</sup>
- Presents the crusades as a response to Muslim aggression.<sup>7</sup>
- Supports anti-Muslim diatribes, including the charge that Islam's exemplar, the Prophet Muhammad, contributed to the subjugation of women.<sup>8</sup>
- Implies that Islam itself sanctions violence for the pursuit of possessions owned by others: "Islam has also maintained a long tradition from the seventh century onwards of *Jihad* or holy war, aimed at conquering not just inner worlds but to capture the real lands and homes of non-Muslims"<sup>9</sup> In fact, the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad condemn those who fight for materialistic gain.
- Offers inaccurate information on Islam. He states that while Christianity views the Bible as the "inspired word of God," Islam regards it as the "respected word of the prophets."<sup>10</sup> To the contrary, an essential element of the Islamic creed is a belief that the Bible, in its original text, is God's word revealed to Jesus.

One reviewer of Marshall's book wrote that: "...after reading [Marshall's first] chapter, [no one] will ever again make the mistake of referring to Islam as a religion of a common book and prophets with Christianity and Judaism."<sup>11</sup>

### Middle East Media Research Institute

The Report relies heavily on Arabic translations by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). Juan Cole, professor of Middle Eastern and South Asian history at the University of Michigan has said the following about MEMRI:

- "I continue to maintain that MEMRI is selective and biased against the Arab press, and that it highlights pieces that cast Arabs, especially committed Muslims, in a negative light..."<sup>12</sup>
- "On more than one occasion I have seen, say, a bigotted Arabic article translated by MEMRI and when I went to the source on the Web, found that it was on the same op-ed page with other, moderate articles arguing for tolerance. These latter were not translated..."<sup>13</sup>

The Report does not explain the role of the translators. Some of the unanswered questions in the Report are:

- Did MEMRI translate the whole content of the selected publications?
- Or did the translators only identify passages that they wanted to be included in the Report?

Translating the entire content of the publications would have been a huge undertaking that should have warranted some mention. But the Report is silent on this key point in the research. If MEMRI only passed on to Freedom

House what in their view were hateful passages, then the Report reflects the views of MEMRI not Freedom House.

The most significant part of any research is to determine not only the meaning of the data but also their relevancy, which can be decided by considering their context. It seems that this contextualization was relegated to the translators thus jeopardizing the credibility of the conclusions reached by Freedom House researchers.

## SECTION 2: AMERICAN MUSLIMS: THE MISSING SUBJECTS OF THE STUDY

The Report insinuates that ideas of "hate" permeate Muslim congregations in America. A conclusion as alarming and incendiary as this requires careful scrutiny. The Report makes no attempt to explain the correlation between the ideas of hate found in a few tracts and the overall beliefs of a diverse congregation. American mosque-goers are assumed by the Report to be passive participants in an alleged indoctrination process.

Previous surveys found that fewer than 20 percent of the American-Muslims are Arabs. Given most of the literature that the Report ascribes to being hateful was in Arabic, it is fair to assume that the vast majority of the mosque-goers will not be able to access the literature that the Report finds objectionable.

Perhaps the appropriate thing for the Report to do was to survey members of the congregation to detect the influence of any extremist ideas. Studying the effects of any given influence on subjects without seeking any input from them is hardly conducive to understanding, especially when the inquiry is about their feelings and perceptions.

Further the Report could have interviewed the leadership of the American mosques to ascertain to what level, if any, indoctrination is part of their agenda.

Simpler yet, the researchers could have just scanned the Internet to uncover data relevant to evaluating the feelings and perceptions of the vast majority of American Muslims. Consider the following examples of well-documented facts about American Muslims, which contradict key suggestions highlighted in the Freedom House Report:

### Comparison of Report Citations to Mosque Facts on Selected Issues

Issue	Freedom House Report Citations	Mosque Facts
Living among non-Muslims	It is forbidden for Muslims. <sup>14</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Muslims in America have established an uninterrupted communal presence in the U.S. for nearly a century.</li> </ul>
Seeking employment with unbelievers	Disapproved for Muslims.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Muslims have sought employment in companies regardless of religious affiliation. Employment problems reported by some Muslim workers have not resulted from lack of desire in jobs, but from discriminatory denial of employment.</li> </ul>

*"American mosque-goers are assumed by the FH Report to be passive participants in an alleged indoctrination process."*

*The FH Report claims that interfaith contacts are discouraged for Muslims; however, "Imam Mohammed Magid of ADAMS [a mosque cited in the Report] is Vice Chair of the Fairfax Faith Communities in Action Group, a group of over 100 faith groups..."*

Involvement in interfaith contacts

Discouraged for Muslims<sup>15</sup>.

- A google search using the words "ADAMS", a mosque cited in the Report, and "interfaith" returned the following entry from the mosque's website:

- ADAMS works with United Christian Parish Reston, St. Annes Church, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Universal Unitarians of Sterling, Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation, Adat Reyim Synagogue in Burke, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church at Burke, Congregation Etz Hayim, Shoreshim Jewish Congregation, Universal Unitarians of Leesburg, Washington Plaza Baptist Church, and more."<sup>16</sup>

- Imam Mohammed Magid of ADAMS is Vice Chair of the Fairfax Faith Communities in Action Group, a group of over 100 faith groups, including Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Bahais.<sup>17</sup>

- Dar al-Hijrah hosted at least one meeting of the Fairfax County Board of Education. It has exchanged frequent visitations with neighboring churches. The center is a member of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington.

- The Islamic Center in D.C. is a founding member of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington.

- Islamic Society of Orange County (ISOC) is active in Catholic-Muslim dialogue and hosts frequent visitations by the interfaith community. It has received numerous awards from interfaith and civic organizations acknowledging its humanitarian and interfaith works. The Mayor of Garden Grove, the Police Department, county officials and local Church leaders frequently visit and hold their own meetings at ISOC.

- ISOC's religious director, Muzammil Siddiqui, holds several important positions in interfaith activism locally, nationally and internationally. He is a member of the Council of 100, part of the World Economic Forum, a board member of the National Council of Community and Justice, and a vice-president of the Academy of Judaic, Christian and Islamic Studies at the University of California at Los Angeles.

- The Muslim Community Center in Illinois has hosted Thanksgiving services and has worked with Albany Park, a non-profit community service organization.

- Richardson Mosque recently worked with Thanksgiving Square, a prominent interfaith organization. Other activities include frequent interfaith meetings and facilitation of a joint effort by Muslim and Christian children to develop a pond in the community. Mosque members have exchanged visits with 30 churches. Mosque members are volunteers with Habitat for Humanity. The mosque has also organized blood drives with the Red Cross. The mosque took a full-page ad in the Dallas

		<p>Morning News to condemn the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Mosque doctors offer free medical services, 3 days a week, open to the public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Islamic Society of Greater Houston has hosted 25 interfaith meetings and recently took part with area churches in a Feed the Hungry program, donating a group sum of 6,000 lbs. of meat.</li> <li>• ISGH was instrumental in mobilizing 3,000 Muslim volunteers to aid in the feeding effort of Hurricane Katrina evacuees housed in the George Brown Convention Center.</li> <li>• Al-Farouq Mosque in Texas hosts regular meetings with members of neighboring churches. The mosque received the mayor several times and held forums hosting candidates for local council election.</li> <li>• The Islamic Center of San Diego held panel discussions with local priests, discussing commonalities between Islam and Christianity.<sup>18</sup></li> </ul>
<p>Women's involvement outside the house<sup>19</sup></p>	<p>Disapproved for Muslim women.<sup>20</sup></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muslim women in America frequently maintain jobs outside the home.</li> <li>• Media outlets have reported many stories showing women with <i>hijab</i> (religious covering) had to fight their way into the job market in the face of religious discrimination.<sup>21</sup></li> <li>• The Islamic Center in D.C. holds classes for women and reports that more than 50 percent of its volunteers are women.</li> <li>• At Dar al-Hijrah, women's committees organize educational events, community bazaars, and administer recreational programs for women. Hundreds of women join Friday prayers. The executive committee of the center has a female member.</li> <li>• Richardson Mosque has a very active ladies committee, which has daily educational activities and bi-monthly social gatherings for women.</li> <li>• All weekend school teachers at Al-Farouq Mosque in Texas are women.</li> <li>• At the Islamic Center of San Diego, there are 2 classes for women. Also the center recently launched a girl's youth group, working with the local (mostly non-Muslim) girl scouts associations.</li> <li>• At ISOC, 4 of the 17 board members are women. Also a woman serves as the principal of its full-time school whose staff and teachers are mostly women.<sup>22</sup></li> <li>• At ADAMS, the 13 member board has 4 women, including the vice president.</li> <li>• At the Muslim Community Center in Illinois, 4 women serve on the board of directors.</li> <li>• King Fahd Mosque does not have women on its board, but it offers educational programs for women.</li> </ul>

*Despite the FH Report's assertion that women's involvement outside the house is disapproved "media outlets have reported many stories showing women with hijab (religious covering) had to fight their way into the job market in the face of religious discrimination."*



*"Political participation of Muslim American citizens of immigrant background has been noted in the literature as the main feature of American Muslim development in the 1990s."*

Islam and Democracy	Anti-democracy indoctrination "is propagated among Muslim emigrant communities throughout America." <sup>23</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political participation of Muslim American citizens of immigrant background has been noted in the literature as the main feature of American Muslim development in the 1990s.<sup>24</sup></li> <li>• Most of the mosques cited in the Report offered their meeting halls to host forums for political candidates. ADAMS has had over 50 candidates and officials from all levels of government come to Friday and Eid (Muslim holiday) events to address the community.</li> <li>• Some of the mosques cited in the Report such as Dar al-Hijrah and ADAMS are home to active voter registration drives, facilitating increased voter participation in their localities.</li> </ul>
Shia and Sufi Muslims	Their faith is questionable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dar al-Hijrah and ADAMS are members of the D.C. metropolitan area <i>Eid</i> Committee, which includes Manassas Mosque whose Imam is Shia.</li> <li>• Shi'a members of ISOC have served on the mosque's board of directors and held the position of president and chairman of the board several times.</li> <li>• The Shura Council of Southern California includes mosques with Shia, African American or immigrant majorities. These mosques include ISOC (in the Report) and the Islamic Education Center in Irvine, a Shia majority mosque.</li> <li>• ADAMS welcomed Sufi groups who prayed in the center. Also, ADAMS Imam has taken part in a Sufi conference, organized by the Islamic Study and Research Association (ISRA), a group of young Muslim Sufis in Rockville, Maryland in 2003.<sup>25</sup></li> </ul>

### SECTION 3: THE CITED PUBLICATIONS AND THEIR RELEVANCE

From the outset, the Report sets its goal to prove that "Saudi [Wahhabi] hate ideology" is a dominant aspect of American mosque life.<sup>26</sup> This is daunting task and can only be reasonably ascertained by doing two things – surveying the mosque goers and interviewing mosque leaders. Neither activity was undertaken. Instead the researchers gathered a few publications from fifteen mosques. These fifteen mosques were not chosen in any random manner and represent only 1 percent of the total of more 1,500 American mosques. Any conclusions about wider communal patterns will be at best described as an overreach.

The Report claims that it acquired 200 books from their pre-screened list of fifteen mosques. However, the Report list only 57 documents and cites only 41 of them. On average, two quotes deemed offensive material are taken from each of the 41 sources. Interestingly about 40 percent of the Report's citations came from 5 publications.<sup>27</sup> The substance of the alleged evidence is about 100 quotes. No attempt is made to review the overall content of any of the 41 books (or the 5 core publications).

In addition, the publications reviewed by Freedom House represent a miniscule portion of library collections in American mosques. A survey of 13 mosques mentioned in the report (the remaining two were not reachable) shows that collectively the mosques named in the Report hold more than 29,500 books.<sup>28</sup> One bigoted book is one too many and must be challenged. However, the Report's insinuation that American mosques from coast to coast propagate an ideology of hate is a distortion of facts.

The Report does not inform readers about the overwhelming majority of the books found in any typical American mosque. Nor are readers informed how the authors of the Report reached their conclusions that the offensive quotes represented any significant influence on mosque participants.<sup>29</sup> No calls were made by the authors to ascertain how the books made it to mosque libraries or to determine the use of the questionable literature in any of the mosque's educational (sic indoctrination) programs.

Extensive interviews were conducted with leaders of the mosques identified in the Report. The findings are as follows:

- The leadership of the all the mosques did not recall being approached by any representative of Freedom House for the purpose of reviewing or acquiring any material available to mosque-goers.
- Officials with the cited mosques said the questionable publications were unfamiliar; however, they did not deny that the publications may have been found or taken from mosque bookshelves. The Islamic Center in Washington, D.C. reports that after a search, they have not been able to locate any of the cited materials. The ISOC in California said that it did not find the book listed in the Report as Document No. 57. The book was never used in any ISOC school programs.
- As for reading patterns in the mosques, the interviewed officials from the Islamic centers said that members of their mosques usually read the Qur'an before or after prayer services. The Holy Book is usually placed on small bookstands in the prayer halls. Individuals interested in further readings can visit the libraries. Typically, the library collections largely consist of classical religious texts, which are usually available to the public.
- Nearly 40 percent of the 29,500 books in the targeted mosques are located at the Islamic Center of Washington D.C.<sup>30</sup> Its book collection includes the following titles authored by the mosque's Imam, Abdullah Khouj: "War and Peace in Islam," "Essentials of Human Understanding," "Ascent to Freedom," and "Religious Tolerance in Islam." None of these publications were selected for review by the Report researchers. Is it not reasonable to assume that the Imam would teach from his own publications? The Report does not even acknowledge that such titles exist; nor does it explain their exclusion from the screening.
- As for other book policies in mosques:
  - o Officials with the Islamic Center in D.C. and King Fahd Mosque said books are reviewed for inclusion in their collections; publications with extreme views are usually excluded.
  - o All other mosques said they do not have a policy on donated books; donors can place books easily on their bookshelves.
  - o ADAMS posts a disclaimer that the mosque does not necessarily endorse the views contained in any books. At this mosque, whenever an offensive publication is brought to the attention of the administrators, the questionable publications are immediately removed.<sup>31</sup>

*"One bigoted book is one too many and must be challenged. However, the FH Report's insinuation that American mosques from coast to coast propagate an ideology of hate is a distortion of facts."*

- o The Islamic Center of Oakland said it will begin a process of stamping approved literature for inclusion in their bookshelves.

To highlight the fallacy of the Report, the following table offers a contrast between depiction of the American-Muslim community in the Report and the reality of American mosques, including those cited in the Report:

#### Freedom House Report Depictions Compared to Mosque Facts

Depictions in the Report		American Mosque Facts	
Cited mosques	15	Total mosques in U.S.	1,500
Cited books	41	Books in circulation at the cited mosques	29,500
Importance of cited books	Essential sources used to transmit a worldview of hatred	Use of cited books in the cited mosques	A miniscule portion of thousands of volumes of religious literature
Nature of books	Secretive tracts	Nature of mosque literature	Mostly works of theology, spirituality, and jurisprudence; available to public
Use of books in mosques	Mosque goers are passively fed the hateful instructions	Book use in mosques	Most mosque participants read the Qur'an. Very few mosque goers visit bookshelves to consult reference books.

*"Any serious attempt to single out and isolate hate needs to encompass all of the hate directed toward any and all groups."*

#### SECTION 4: CHALLENGING HATE EFFECTIVELY

Beyond assessing facts and conclusions, it is important to ask why the Report is short on providing a constructive vision for remediation.

Any serious attempt to single out and isolate hate needs to encompass all of the hatred directed toward any and all groups, whether Muslims, Jews, Catholics, etc. anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia should be all acknowledged as scourges to our collective well being.

The rise of anti-Muslim sentiment in the U.S. is of particular concern to Muslims who live in this society and contribute to its prosperity. The following provide a brief illustration of rising anti-Muslim and Islamophobic sentiments in America:

- The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Poll in 2004 states<sup>32</sup>
  - o Almost 4 in 10 Americans have an unfavorable view of Islam, about the same number that have a favorable view.
  - o A plurality of Americans (46%) believes that Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence among its believers.
  - o A slim 44% believe that "just a few" or "some" Muslims are anti-American. That compares with 42% who say that "about half," "most," or "almost all" Muslims around the world are anti-American.



- o Among religious groups, seculars by two-to-one express a favorable opinion of Islam (50%-25%).
- o A plurality of white Catholics also has a positive impression of Islam (43% fav/34% unfav). But white evangelical Protestants, on balance, have a negative opinion of Islam (46% unfav/29% fav).
- ABC News March, 2005 Poll:<sup>33</sup>
  - o Four months after September 11, 2001, 14 percent believed mainstream Islam encourages violence; today it's 34 percent.
  - o Three years later, 43 percent think Islam does not teach respect for the beliefs of non-Muslims — up sharply from 22 percent.
  - o Nearly two-thirds of Americans feel they don't have a "good basic understanding" of the religion, essentially the same as it was right after the terrorist attacks.
  - o People who feel they do understand Islam are much more likely to view it positively. Among Americans who feel they do understand the religion, 59 percent call it peaceful and 46 percent think it teaches respect for the beliefs of others.
  - o By contrast, the two-thirds who express basic unfamiliarity with the religion are 19 points less likely to call it peaceful, and half as apt to say it respects other beliefs.
- Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) 2004 Civil Rights Report:<sup>34</sup>
  - o Incidents of harassment, violence and discriminatory treatment increased nearly 70 percent over 2002 (the year after the 9/11 terror attacks). This represents a three-fold increase since the reporting year preceding the terrorist attacks.
- CAIR 2004 Poll:<sup>35</sup>
  - o More than one-fourth of survey respondents agreed with stereotypes such as "Muslims teach their children to hate" and "Muslims value life less than other people."
  - o When asked what comes to mind when they hear "Muslim," 32 percent of respondents made negative comments. Only two percent had a positive response.
  - o Those with the most negative attitudes toward Islam and Muslims tend to be less-educated white males who are politically conservative.
  - o General knowledge of Islam is low but the presence of Muslim friends and colleagues drives more enlightened attitudes.
  - o Those who believe they are knowledgeable about Islam tend to have more positive attitudes.
- Cornell University Study:<sup>36</sup>
  - o In addition, highly religious respondents also were more likely to describe Islamic countries as violent (64 percent), fanatical (61 percent) and dangerous (64 percent).
  - o Fewer of the respondents who said they were not highly religious described Islamic countries as violent (49 percent), fanatical (46 percent) and dangerous (44 percent).

Unfortunately, evidence of anti-Muslim sentiment is also found at Freedom House, the sponsors of the Report. In a *Washington Post* article, Freedom House National Secretary Kenneth Adelman said "...[c]alling Islam a peaceful religion 'is an increasingly hard argument to make...The more you examine the religion, the more militaristic it seems...'"<sup>37</sup>

*"Polls show that among the American public, general knowledge of Islam is low but the presence of Muslim friends and colleagues drives more enlightened attitudes."*

*"Perhaps more alarming is the evidence of anti-Muslim indoctrination in some churches across America."*

Perhaps more alarming is the evidence of anti-Muslim indoctrination in some churches across America. Pat Robertson, minister and founder of Christian Coalition, frequently uses his 700 Club television program—which reaches millions of viewers—to express such bigotry. Millions of viewers watched him say, "[Prophet Muhammad] was an absolute wild-eyed fanatic. He was a robber and a brigand. And to say that these terrorists distort Islam, they're carrying out Islam."<sup>38</sup>

People for the American Way have traced Robertson's anti-Muslim remarks to the early 1990s. In a recent report they cite Robertson as having said, "Muslims in America particularly are trying to put on a smiley face so that they'll make people think, 'Well, we're just like you are.' I don't want to have a religious bigotry [sic], but this political correctness has gone out of control because these people at their core are the enemies of the United States, the enemies of freedom, and they're sworn enemies of Israel, and they will--are trying to destroy us....I'm talking about hundreds of millions of them."<sup>39</sup> Most recently, he went on CNN to make the bizarre accusation that the Venezuelan president is trying to make his country, "a launching pad for Communist infiltration and Muslim extremism all over the continent."<sup>40</sup>

Other evangelical leaders of high note repeatedly went on national television to make similar remarks. Jerry Falwell, a minister and founder of Moral Majority Coalition, said on CBS "I think Mohammed was a terrorist..." (60 Minutes, October 6, 2002)<sup>41</sup> Reverend Franklin Graham, Spiritual Adviser to President George W. Bush, stated that Islam is "wicked, violent and not of the same god." (NBC Nightly News, November 16, 2001)<sup>42</sup>

Radio talk shows are also forums that affect public opinion. Increasingly such shows under the guise of freedom of speech are making Islamophobic statements often without any repudiation. Dr. Laura Schlessinger, host of a syndicated daily radio talk show with 15 million listeners, replied to a mother's quest for advice on her daughter's participation in a planned class visit to a mosque in the following words "This is a class on morals. What is the point of going to a mosque?"<sup>43</sup> Dr. Schlessinger refused to apologize when publicly challenged.

In July 2005, WMAL talk show host Michael Graham repeatedly said that the Islamic faith itself is a terrorist organization.<sup>44</sup>

Individuals in high places in politics and government have also made inflammatory remarks. James Jatras, former analyst with the Senate Republican Policy Committee, wrote "Islam is a self-evident outgrowth not of the Old and New Covenants but of the darkness of heathen Araby."<sup>45</sup> He argued that America's intervention in the Balkans in 1993 was wrong because it aided Muslims against Christians.

General William Boykin, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, reportedly made frequent church appearances in uniform making bigoted statements. In one of those speeches he was caught on tape saying, "I knew, that my God was bigger than his [this was in reference to a Somali warlord]." Boykin has also made several statements indicating that America's enemy was "a spiritual enemy...called Satan," and that "radical Muslims" hate the United States, "because we're a Christian nation, because our foundation and roots are Judeo-Christian and the enemy is a guy named Satan."<sup>46</sup>

The following table summarizes some of the Islamophobic messages from key public figures.

### Islamophobic Messages by Source on Selected Issues

Issue	Islamophobic Messages	Source
Muslim beliefs	Muslims believe in a moon god called Allah. Muslims worship an idol, a small god.	Ministry of Robert Morey and Chick Publications. <sup>47</sup> Department of Defense General William Boykin.
Muslims and violence	The Qur'an teaches Muslims to kill non-Muslims. The Prophet of Islam was a terrorist.	Ministry of Rev. Pat Robertson; Ergun Caner, Dean of Jerry Falwell's Liberty University. Jerry Falwell.
Muslim sexual mores	For Muslims rape is okay if you're the rapist. The Prophet of Islam was a child molestor.	FrontPageMagazine. <sup>48</sup> Southern Baptist Church leaders. <sup>49</sup>
American Muslims	Fifth Column.  Their very presence and growing numbers in America is a threat.	Senate Republican Policy Committee analyst James Jatras. Daniel Pipes, President Bush's appointee to the board of the U.S. Institute of Peace. <sup>50</sup>

The hateful depictions are not limited to extreme religious or political propaganda. Jack Shaheen has aptly illustrated in his book, *Reel Bad Arab*, the stereotyping of Arabs, the Middle East, Islam and Muslims by Hollywood. This stereotyping has turned into a cottage industry that transmits to moviegoers the imagery of the violent, fanatical Arab or Muslim.

Intolerance and prejudice is not the exclusive domain of any one religious community. As citizens of conscience we have the obligation to educate and inform people to overcome their prejudices and fears. Meaningful dialogue and avoiding stereotypes (guilt by association) are among the chief measures that require creating alliances to challenge hate effectively.

A few points to bear in mind as we embark of the difficult challenge of combating hate:

**Isolate hate:** If hate is to be singled out for confrontation, it should be approached in an objective way. Tainting this objectivity with other agendas helps to only fuel more hate, not mitigate it. Freedom House —by employing researchers with a prior history of bias and by overstretching the relevance of their findings—has done disservice to the important cause of combating hate.

**Repudiate hateful rhetoric across the board:** Hate is wrong, no matter who commits it and no matter to whom it is directed. Repudiating hateful rhetoric across the board, will allow collaboration among members of various faith groups in seeking joint remedies. A coalition of different groups will have a better chance at combating hate than any group on its own. A broad and inclusive coalition will also prevent scapegoating. Unfortunately, the Report does not attempt to place its findings within the larger national or global discourses on hate and bigotry. Since Freedom House is envisioned as a non-partisan civic society group, they have a good chance of pulling this off, provided they approach the idea of combating hate in a balanced way by including input from all faith groups as part of their effort.

*"Freedom House—by employing researchers with a prior history of bias and by overstretching the relevance of their findings—has done disservice to the important cause of combating hate."*

*Our findings fail to validate the conclusions of the Report that "resources and publications on extremist ideology remain common reading and educational material in American mosques."*

**Dialogue:** A coalition of groups will be far more likely to engage leaders of the various religious persuasions to commit themselves to meaningful dialogue on how to combat hate.

## CONCLUSION

The Report began with a declared objective of proving that "Wahhabi indoctrination" dominates American mosques. Our findings fail to validate the conclusions of the Report that "resources and publications on extremist ideology remain common reading and educational material"<sup>51</sup> in American mosques.

The authors fail on several fronts—unrepresentative sampling, overreaching generalization, and bias.

The Report paints the American Muslim community with a broad ethnocentric brush in their attempt to demonstrate that American mosques are hotbeds of intolerance. The most unfortunate fact about this Report is the exclusion of feedback from American Muslims.

This is not to say that there is no literature available at mosques containing some anti-Western stereotypes, prejudice and other hateful statements. Mosques ought to consider mechanisms for selecting (without censorship) literature that are based on reasoned, wise discourse. After all, this is what the Qur'an teaches Muslims to do: "Call for the path of your Lord with wisdom and good advice."<sup>52</sup> Some mosques have such mechanisms in place; others are working to improve their existing processes.

In addressing hate, such as Islamophobia, anti-Semitism or anti-Americanism, a comprehensive and inclusive approach will be well suited to achieve success. A comprehensive approach will be to sponsor research that looks at all forms of hate as a consequence of ignorance about other groups or faiths. An inclusive approach will be to enlist the help of legitimate and authentic leaders of all faith-based groups in formulating an action plan. It is in our collective interest to combat hate wherever and whenever it occurs. Name calling and using broad brush strokes to paint an entire community or faith in a negative manner does exactly the opposite.

## APPENDIX

### (1) Document Citations in the Report by Frequency and Percentage

Document Number	Citation Frequency	Percentage
1	7	3.2
2	11	5
4	3	1.3
5	3	1.3
6	4	1.8
7	3	1.3
8	2	0.9
9	1	0.4
10	8	3.6
11	4	1.8
12	4	1.8
14	3	1.3
18	1	0.4
19	5	2.3
20	6	2.7
21	8	3.6
22	2	0.9
23	3	1.3
24	3	1.3
25	6	2.7
28	4	1.8
29	1	0.4
31	11	5
32	6	2.7
33	4	1.8
34	4	1.8
35	2	0.9
36	2	0.9
38	2	0.9
39	2	0.9
40	3	1.3
41	3	1.3
42	2	0.9
43	5	2.3
44	18	8.1
45	12	5.4
46	4	1.8
47	6	2.7
48	7	3.2
52	33	15
55	2	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>98.9</b>



## (2) Sample Response from Mosques to Freedom House Report

All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS)  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VA MOSQUE RESPONDS TO FREEDOM HOUSE REPORT  
ADAMS Center never acquired or distributed hate-filled literature

(STERLING, VA, 2/7/05) - The recent 95-page Report by the conservative Center for Religious Freedom, Freedom House, titled "Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Fill American Mosques," makes sweeping, unfair and generally incorrect assessments of the American Muslim community and mosques across America. The Report mentions several prominent mosques including the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center.

The Freedom House Report falsely claims that the ADAMS Center "proliferate[s]" a "destructive ideology" by using Saudi publications to educate mosque-goers and urge them to subscribe to "Wahhabi" extremism. It further claims that researchers of the Freedom House visited the ADAMS Center and found a Saudi pamphlet, called "Religious Edicts for the Immigrant Muslim," which purportedly suggests, "it is forbidden for a Muslim to become a citizen of a country (such as the United States) governed by infidels."

The truth is that the ADAMS Center has never acquired or distributed such hate-filled literature or indulged in anti-American rhetoric. The ADAMS Center Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee, and the community emphatically rejects all sorts of "extremism," regardless of the way these may be labeled, and remains resolutely vigilant against such elements. In fact, the Center is a democratically-governed, interfaith-oriented, progressive and open mosque, as required by the tenets of Islam.

Also, it is worth noting that:

- \* ADAMS is governed by a thirteen-member Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee - both elected by the members, with strong participation by women. Specifically, 4 out of the 13 Board of Trustees are Women.
- \* ADAMS maintains strong ties with other religious groups, and regularly hosts dialogs with Jewish, Christian, Sikh, Hindu, Baha'i, and other faith traditions.
- \* ADAMS participates heavily in interfaith and community service programs and social events.
- \* ADAMS has one common prayer area for men and women, and does not practice gender discrimination.
- \* ADAMS doesn't practice denominational discrimination between Shi'ites and Sunnis and allows sermons by Imams of both religious interpretations.
- \* ADAMS has active Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts programs.
- \* ADAMS maintains an excellent relationship with the FBI, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of State, and various state and local law enforcement agencies.

\* ADAMS regularly hosts elected public officials and candidates from all parties for public offices during Friday prayers, social activities and the annual Northern Virginia Civic Picnic.

People of varieties of faiths and persuasions frequent the ADAMS Center premises, and visitors are allowed to freely move about the center. As a result, sometimes the ADAMS administration discovers unwanted propaganda materials on the premises. It should be noted, most of the ADAMS Community does not speak Arabic, so if these types of documents existed they would not be understood. Had news of this type of literature been brought to the attention of ADAMS officials the literature would have been discarded immediately since this type of literature is against ADAMS policy and contrary to Islam. For example, Christian Evangelical books and videos that proselytize to Muslims have been found on occasions at the Center. Also, the fact that the Freedom House researchers freely roamed around to "find" their alleged "hate-filled materials" is a testament to its open and free environment.

The ADAMS Center pursues this policy of openness, despite the possible risk of having someone 'plant' unwanted materials to defame the Center. However, the ADAMS administration is always vigilant against any such materials left behind by anyone, and these are promptly discarded upon discovery.

It is painful to the ADAMS Center administration and community to know that there are those who actively sneak around to seek unfounded "evidence" and maliciously disseminate false accusations against the Center, despite its track record of engagement as an open, productive, beneficial and law-abiding member of the American society.

These kind of attacks do indeed help encourage hate-crimes against Muslims and the Center, as it has been subject to several times in the past few years.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Qur'an* 16:125 and 2:256

<sup>2</sup> In preparation for this review, interviews were conducted with officials or imams of 13 mosques cited in the *Report*. Two mosques, Masjid Al-Islam in Washington, D.C. and Darul Islah in Teaneck, New Jersey did not participate in the interviews.

<sup>3</sup> Freedom House, *Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques*. Washington, DC, 2005, p.78. Posted at: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/religion/>. (This version of the Report is the same as the original almost verbatim. Note that the pdf file online has slightly different page numbering.)

<sup>4</sup> *Report*, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> *Report*, p.1.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Marshall et. al *Islam at the Crossroads* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112. See also p.27. Marshall cannot say they he meant to refer to extremists. His book ascribes the terms "*radical Islam, extremist Islam and Islamists*" to "the practitioners of violence and their supporters" (p.16).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Ken Masugi's review of *Islam at the Crossroad*: <http://www.townhall.com/book-club/masugi.html>.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.juancole.com/2004/11/intimidation-by-israeli-linked.html>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Report*, p.22.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.21, 28.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.adamscenter.org/Content.asp?ID=160>. See also the response of ADAMS center in the Appendix.

<sup>17</sup> For more information see: <http://www.adamscenter.org/Content.asp?ID=160>.

<sup>18</sup> There are scholarly sources available in libraries on American Muslim involvement in interfaith activities. See for example: Jane Smith, "Muslims as Partners in Interfaith Encounter," in Zahid Bukhari et. al, *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square: Hope, Fears, and Aspirations* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2004), pp.165-200.

<sup>19</sup> This information, of course, does not represent a full picture of the treatment of women in the mosques in America. The information presented here shows that some centers encourage full participation by women while others limit their involvement. But this substantive discussion is of no interest to the *Report* authors, whose aim is to promote the notion that American mosques support the subjugation of women.

<sup>20</sup> *Report*, p.66.

<sup>21</sup> A yahoo search using the terms "Muslim women" and "employment" yields a great number of entries on women employment issues in the U.S.

<sup>22</sup> The predominance of women in the teaching positions in Islamic schools is usual in many American Muslim communities.

<sup>23</sup> *Report*, p.43.

<sup>24</sup> See for example source cited above *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square: Hope, Fears, and Aspirations*; Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research* (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), pp. 16-23; Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *Muslims in the West: From Sojourners to Citizens* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002); see also Chapter 9 in Mohamed Nimer, *The North American Muslim Resource Guide: Muslim Community Life in the United States and Canada* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>25</sup> The use of the term "Muslim Sufis" is warranted by the fact that many Americans who ascribe to Sufi teachings do not even claim to be Muslim.

<sup>26</sup> *Report*, pp.1-2.

<sup>27</sup> See the Appendix for the cited documents by frequency of citation.

<sup>28</sup> Eight centers said they house bookstores or bookshelves with book collections other than the Qur'an. These are: the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C. (12,500), Dar al-Hijrah in Falls Church, Virginia (1,000), ADAMS Center, in Sterling (1,500), Richardson Mosque in Richardson, Texas (4,000), Masjid al-Farouq in Houston, Texas (2,000) King Fahd Mosque in Culver City, California (4,000), the Islamic Center of San Diego, California (1,000) and the Islamic Center of Orange County, California (3,500). Together they have 29,500 volumes. The other centers said they do not offer reading books other than the Qur'an.

<sup>29</sup> From the outset the *Report* claims that its goal is "to document Saudi influence," and to reveal "Wahhabi indoctrination within the United States." (*Report*, p.2)

<sup>30</sup> This Massachusetts Avenue mosque was established by contributions from 28 governments of Muslim-majority countries, whose ambassadors are automatic members of the mosque's Board of Governors. The mosque was inaugurated in 1957 by President Eisenhower, acknowledging America's growing relations with the Muslim world and the presence of Islam in America. President George W. Bush visited with American Muslim leaders in the mosque after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The center distributes literature and receives thousands of visitors annually. Its director told the *Wall Street Journal* that they have never received any complaints about the material. See *Wall Street Journal*, January 28, 2005.

<sup>31</sup> ADAMS reported that mosque officials in the past found Christian Evangelical books and videos trying to convert Muslims to Christianity.

<sup>32</sup> <http://pewforum.org/publications/surveys/islam.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> [http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/World/sept11\\_islampoll\\_030911.html](http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/World/sept11_islampoll_030911.html)

<sup>34</sup> <http://cair.com/asp/execsum2004.asp>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.cair-net.org/downloads/pollresults.ppt>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.news.cornell.edu/releases/Dec04/Muslim.Poll.bpf.html>

<sup>37</sup> *Washington Post*, November 30, 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Hannity and Colmes, Interview with Pat Robertson, September 18, 2002, available at [http://www.nexis.com/research/home?\\_key=1062968365&\\_session=29c328aa-e176-11d7-8224-c0a8645eaa77.1.3240421165.340768.%20.0.0&\\_state=&wchp=dGLbVlBzSkBW&\\_md5=c0439b2ce26b18336df821a8b9f562e1](http://www.nexis.com/research/home?_key=1062968365&_session=29c328aa-e176-11d7-8224-c0a8645eaa77.1.3240421165.340768.%20.0.0&_state=&wchp=dGLbVlBzSkBW&_md5=c0439b2ce26b18336df821a8b9f562e1).

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=5005>.

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/08/23/robertson.chavez.1534/>.

<sup>41</sup> CBS 60 Minutes, Interview with Rev. Jerry Falwell, *Zion's Christian soldiers; how conservative Christians see Israel's role in bringing on the Second Coming of Christ*, October 6, 2002 available at [http://www.nexis.com/research/home?\\_key=1062968365&\\_session=29c328aa-e17611d7-8224c0a8645eaa77.1.3240421165.340768.%20.0.0&\\_state=&wchp=dGLbVlbzSkBW&\\_md5=c0439b2ce26b18336df821a8b9f562e1](http://www.nexis.com/research/home?_key=1062968365&_session=29c328aa-e17611d7-8224c0a8645eaa77.1.3240421165.340768.%20.0.0&_state=&wchp=dGLbVlbzSkBW&_md5=c0439b2ce26b18336df821a8b9f562e1).

<sup>42</sup> "Franklin Graham has some harsh words for Islam as feast of Ramadan begins," NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw, November 16, 2001. Transcript available at [http://www.nexis.com/research/home?\\_key=1063040541&\\_session=3611020a-e21e-11d7-9338a0c593caa77.1.3240493341.340768.%20.0.0&\\_state=&wchp=dGLbVlzzSkBB&\\_md5=ab2d7ca70ef67b0922ec4055142f6bdc](http://www.nexis.com/research/home?_key=1063040541&_session=3611020a-e21e-11d7-9338a0c593caa77.1.3240493341.340768.%20.0.0&_state=&wchp=dGLbVlzzSkBB&_md5=ab2d7ca70ef67b0922ec4055142f6bdc). One must note however, that the evangelical movement is diverse and includes more sober voices. Ted Haggard, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, criticized the anti-Islam rhetoric among evangelicals after 9/11 as "intemperate."

<sup>43</sup> Dr. Laura Schlessinger Show, November 17, 2003.

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2005/07/28/AR2005072802241.html>.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1146626/posts>.

<sup>46</sup> [/www.commondreams.org/headlines04/0820-02.htm](http://www.commondreams.org/headlines04/0820-02.htm) (Associated Press, August 20, 2004).

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.chick.com/catalog/books/0173.asp>.

<sup>48</sup> <http://frontpagemag.com/Articles/Printable.asp?ID=13230>.

<sup>49</sup> Pastor Vines was quoted telling participants in the 2002 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) conference: "Islam was founded by Muhammad, a demon-possessed pedophile who had 12 wives -- and his last one was a 9-year-old girl. And I will tell you Allah is not Jehovah either. Jehovah's not going to turn you into a terrorist that'll try to bomb people and take the lives of thousands and thousands of people." See: [http://jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/061202/met\\_9646446.html](http://jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/061202/met_9646446.html). Other SBC leaders said they supported the remarks.

<sup>50</sup> Pipes told Salon.com that 10 to 15 percent of Muslims worldwide are potential killers. Others offered other formulas. Evangelical writer Dr. Cky J. Carrigan wrote: "If only 5% of Muslims in America are Fundamentalist Muslims which support the kind of terrorist acts of September 11th, then America has 300 thousand Muslim enemies living within its borders. See: <http://ontruth.com/islamwtc.html>.

<sup>51</sup> *Report*, p.2.

<sup>52</sup> *Qur'an*, 16:25.

## Publications Available from CAIR

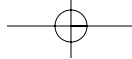
Civil Rights Reports	#copies
1996–The Price of Ignorance	\$ 5.00 _____
1997–Unveiling Prejudice	\$ 5.00 _____
1998–Patterns of Discrimination	\$ 5.00 _____
2001–Accommodating Diversity	\$ 5.00 _____
2002–Stereotypes & Civil Liberties	\$ 5.00 _____
2003–Guilt by Association	\$ 5.00 _____
2004–Unpatriotic Acts	\$ 5.00 _____
2005–Unequal Protection	\$ 7.00 _____
<b>Guides</b>	
Employer’s Guide to Islamic Religious Practices	\$ 2.00 _____
Educator’s Guide to Islamic Religious Practices	\$ 2.00 _____
Health-Care Provider’s Guide to Islamic Religious Practices	\$ 2.00 _____
Correctional Institution’s Guide to Islamic Religious Practices	\$ 2.00 _____
Law Enforcement Official’s Guide to Islamic Religious Practices	\$ 2.00 _____
Know Your Rights Pocket Guide	Free (limited) _____
Ramadan Publicity guide	Free (limited) _____
Hajj/Eid Publicity guide	Free (limited) _____
Voter Registration Guide (groups, orgs, etc.)	Free (limited) _____
<b>Other Publications</b>	
U.S. Congress Handbook (full color 108th Congress)	\$ 12.00 _____
American Muslims One Year After 9/11 (special)	\$ 10.00 _____
Media Relations Handbook	\$ 10.00 _____
The American Mosque–Mosque Study Project	\$ 10.00 _____
A Rushto Judgment	\$ 7.00 _____
The Usual Suspects	\$ 3.00 _____
A Model for School District Religious Policy	Free _____
Postage	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>



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