

AN 'UN-AMERICAN' BURNING OF THE KORAN? AND WHO WILL OBAMA SUMMON FROM THE BULLPEN? *Separate emails with a comma. Maximum of 5 emails allowed.* **Share this**



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As with the controversy over the Ground Zero mosque, Rev. Terry Jones and his tiny band of followers have a perfect right to burn Korans, but it would be well beyond insensitive to do so. Yet where are the establishment voices drawing the parallels? Where is President Obama, leaping to his defense?

Instead, we find the likes of the editorialists at the **New York Times** giving moral instruction to benighted New Yorkers, two-thirds of whom oppose siting a mosque at Ground Zero even as they defend Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf's right to build it there. Meanwhile, last evening on the PBS **NewsHour**, the very essence of establishment TV, the sole guest on the Koran-burning segment, George Washington University's Marc Lynch, lamented that across the Arab media, "on the jihadist forums, the newspapers, everywhere, there is a lot of focus on the fact that America right now is in the grip of this - of this trend towards anti-Islamic rhetoric and - and actions." The fact? What Islamophobic "grip" are Americans in? As the most recent **records** show, hate crimes against Jews in America are 10 times more frequent than against Muslims.

So what is the principle by which the establishment distinguishes the two controversies, heaping scorn on Rev. Jones while defending Imam Rauf? Surely it's not that Muslims worldwide will react violently to a tiny Koran burning incident while non-Muslim Americans will passively accept siting a mosque at Ground Zero. The heckler's veto enjoys no currency in respectable parlors. And condescension is reserved for domestics unworthy of admission to such parlors, not for foreigners untutored in our nice distinctions. Nor of course can the explanation rest on so crass a premise as selective indignation based on religious sect, however often the unwashed might leap to such a conclusion.

But selectivity of a higher order does seem to be at play among the establishment voices. And we get a glimpse of it in Imam Rauf's piece in this morning's **Times**. Citing the support of "the downtown community, government at all levels and leaders from across the religious spectrum, who will be our partners," he vows to proceed with building the mosque - the people be damned, one almost hears. But he does so only after noting how "inflamed and emotional" the mosque issue has become, adding that "the level of attention reflects the degree to which people care about the very American values under debate: recognition of the rights of others, tolerance and

freedom of worship." Singularly missing among those "American values" is respect for the feelings of others, quite apart from the rights of one's self. Tolerance, in short, does not mean acceptance. New Yorkers, and Americans generally, will tolerate a mosque at Ground Zero, because they must, as a matter of principle, but in their hearts they will not accept it, because it is an insensitive affront to their deepest values.

It is that distinction, between rights and values, that the editorialists at the Times fail to grasp when they defend their position by writing: "Too bad other places are ahead of [New York]. Muslims hold daily prayer services in a chapel in the Pentagon, a place also hallowed by 9/11 dead." The Pentagon, a public building, belongs to all of us, including Muslim-Americans. For that reason, all faiths have a right to use its chapel. And for the same reason, the government of New York City may not prohibit Imam Rauf from building his mosque on his own property. But it is no intolerance for the people of New York to make their values known. Those who condemn them for doing so, to put it biblically, know not whereof they speak.