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## In the Mosque

*posted by Garth Turner on [06.11.06](#) @ 11:09 pm |*

*[Canadian Politics](#), [Halton Riding Events](#)*

I won't pretend I felt comfortable. I didn't. Friday prayers were just ending when Esther and I rolled up, found a place to park in the jammed lot and made our way towards the two-storey, aluminum-sided former industrial building a few hundred feet away.

The first man I saw was dressed in traditional garb, small hat, overshirt to his knees, and he poked a finger in my chest and asked me if I thought it was proper that RCMP officers "should handcuff a little nine-year-old girl and a mother while they searched their house. Men with assault weapons. Is that right?"

A minute later I was rescued by another member of the Muslim community, extremely polite, who ushered us into a small classroom with white plastic chairs and tables. We sat alone for a while, and then the room quickly filled with about 20 people, four of them women, two in burkas and the others completely covered save their faces. Quarters were close, as five of the elders sat at our table and the rest were lined up facing us a couple of feet away.

I shook hands, but the first woman I reached out to quickly tucked her hand inside her robes. "We are not allowed," she said, with a slight bow of her head.

For thirty minutes I sat in this place, the centre of the 1,000-strong Muslim community in north Oakville, and listened to some friends and relatives and parents of the 17 accused terrorists defend them, their families, their community – and ask how we can all prevent such a thing from happening again. I heard that some of the accused were just good kids who got wrapped up in militant Islamic web sites the way others get sucked into porn.

I heard the profoundly held view that the white media and the white police were completely wrong to release the home addresses of the accused – so that satellite trucks and ENG camera operators could stalk and harass the families. And I heard that just being Muslim, or believing in Islam, or wearing a burka, or having brown skin, is now enough to get you shunned in Halton.

No, they do not hate their white bread neighbours. Yes, they have respect for the Halton cops who spent four hours at their centre last week. And, yeah, they did genuinely appreciate their MP asking to come and talk to them. But the clear impression was that among the 17 'terrorists' – many of them sitting in the Maplehurst facility down the road from my house – are a bunch of scared teenagers who played with a jihadist match or two and went up in unintended flames.

The meeting ended with the elders asking me to take their thoughts to the prime minister, which I will. They asked if we could meet again, and try to bridge a cultural divide. I replied yes. But left unsaid was a simple request that transcended language. Forgive our sons.

posted by Garth Turner on [06.11.06](#) @ 11:09 pm |

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“Forgive our sons.”

As a parent, I can appreciate the thought. But let’s move forward a step or two and ask ourselves how easy it would be to forgive those sons if CSIS et al hadn’t been watching, and they’d been successful in one or more of their plots?

I realize teens can get caught up and go too far, but my tolerance gets stretched much beyond shoplifting.

Garth, what are YOUR thoughts on this?

*If there are not two sides to everything, at least there are colours of separation - nuances. I heard things in that room I certainly would never get from the MSM and that was incredibly useful. After all, they are my constituents, and I have a duty to understand and to represent them, as I have a duty to my country. I believe the authorities were 100% correct in what they did, but there’s also a very good chance many of these young ‘terrorists’ were less dangerous than the punk street racers who have actually already taken lives. This will all require some understanding. — Garth*

By [Candace](#) on 06.12.06 2:55 am

Garth,

I also have a harsh view towards terrorists. Having said that I am also a parent.

My heart goes out to those parents who are genuinely mortified at the predicament that their children are in.

However, I must agree with Candace. What if the plot had succeeded? These young people must have had an inkling of consequences. They have learned one of life’s harshest lessons. Actions lead to reactions.

We can only hope that this will cause Muslims to be more aware and responsible for the teachings within their community.

So far as the MSM posting their home addresses. Unacceptable, but it is the media, since when have they been responsible?

By [Paul](#) on 06.12.06 6:46 am

I’m disgusted with the MSM that they’d publish the addresses of the families. That’s just unacceptable - of course it just shows how disrespectful and offensive the MSM has become (but that’s the subject of another posting).

See I think the biggest problem right now is Muslim apologists. I only focus on Muslims as the terrorists have been Muslim. Had they been from a different cultural community I'd substitute that group in there. Anyway in Iraq or the US or even here if the Muslim community would take a zero tolerance policy with radicals and turn them in rather than hide and cover for them they'd have no place to hide. But as long as they can blend into the community the war on terror can never be won.

So I have sympathy for the families... if their sons got in with "the wrong crowd" there wasn't much they could have done (especially had they succeeded). However, as soon as they start defending their actions in my eyes that makes the families and the community just as accountable. If someone I knew... white, brown, black, or any other color was involved in terrorist activity the police would know about it 30 seconds after I found out. I don't care if they're from the same community, religion, or family as me... if the plan is to kill indiscriminately then it's all of our duties to get them put away.

*By K2 on 06.12.06 9:03 am*

Garth, Timothy McViegh and his buddy were just kids playing around with fertilizer and look what happened in Oklahoma city.

*By Gary V on 06.12.06 9:28 am*

In a perfect world, this is something that politicians should stay out of and let the courts handle. In a perfect world, the police and court would take a careful, impartial look at the case, and treat them the same as we would everyone else. Remember things like the Young Offenders Act, and the actual laws broken before terrorist laws were introduced.

This is not a perfect world. There is already huge pressure from the public, media and politicians on this issue. Many people have already decided that since these people all 17 are terrorists in the worst sense of the term.

With 17 people there is a good chance that they are not all beyond redemption. Political protections might be needed to keep the process fair.

Furthermore, I was and am glad to see PMSH and Mr. Turner meeting with the Muslim and Arab communities to see what can be done on their side. It's a welcome change from a short speech about how tragic these things are, then going back to business as usual.

*By Luke on 06.12.06 9:31 am*

I won't pretend I felt comfortable.

Just wondering Garth did you think they might behead you right then and there?

*By Gary V on 06.12.06 9:34 am*

My heart goes out to the parents of these kids. You love your kids no matter what and it is much worse if you have diligently tried to raise them to respect other people and the law.

That said, these accused could have killed many people and caused chaos in our country and if they are found guilty, no punishment is enough. They have to be an example of zero tolerance in the world of terrorism.

I think it's great that you went to meet them, Garth and I like what the P.M. is doing as well. And I like the idea of working with the Muslim community to try and figure out why this happens and take remedial action.

But the only people who can fix or prevent similar occurrences are Muslims themselves. They have to declare that this is wrong and will turn anyone in that is suspicious. This is not an issue about race or religion, it's a principle about a way of life.

I would turn in a Catholic or Jewish person, an Irish, Polish or Brazilian person if I suspected he/she was out to harm the fabric of our society.

*By Don S on 06.12.06 10:40 am*

You've got guns in your pants and 3 tons of ammonium nitrate being delivered to your house. Your sons have passed the point of deluded young men and have become criminals, at very least for their gun crimes. They need to go court, like anyone else would.

If these kids had been caught with the fertilizer for use on a grow-op Garth would not have felt the need to visit this group of citizens.

They are not, like the apologist John Tory said the other night, suspected terrorists who happen to be Muslims. It's an essential part of the equation and like poor kids and crime, absolutely correlated. I wish people would stop pretending religion is not a factor that impacts negatively on this issue.

I'm not afraid of Muslims. Most of them are decent, if misguided people (as are Christians), but their religion advocates violence and even the more moderate elements do not entirely disagree with the practice.

*By William Hane on 06.12.06 10:45 am*

To me this highlights a problem throughout our society. Parents need to get involved with their children's lives and also be responsible for them.

Too often you hear that "He/She was such a good boy/girl". This applies to every race and creed. It's time for all parents to stop raising "Fast-Food" children. Children need boundaries and to feel wanted and loved. I hope that this is a wake-up call to some parents and gets them to participate in life with their children.

*By BG on 06.12.06 11:07 am*

I agree /w William on this one. This is not some fringe Muslim group. Rather it is 17 people that were going to put into action what many, many other Muslims think is the right thing to do.

After working these feeble minds into a frenzy of anger and hate, prayer meeting after prayer meeting, the whole community is just sitting there, with a surprised look on their faces, like they've never seen this coming. Wow! What a joke.

*By jmccain on 06.12.06 11:54 am*

Good Post, Garth.

I wonder if the parents had any opinion of guilt or innocence (mitigating factors aside) of the 17. I have been appalled at the way the media, once the obligatory “innocent until proven guilty” comments have been put aside, seem to be simply be regurgitating crown talking points. There are a number of somewhat fishy things about this case, one being the fact that the police seem to be wanting to fight it out in the media before they get to the courtroom. It makes me wonder how strong the case really is. Another fishy thing is that the “ringleader” has not yet been charged with recruitment for the purposes of terrorism.

By [bigcitylib](#) on 06.12.06 11:56 am

It's the responsibility of the courts convict these people, if they are found to be guilty as charged.

It's up to everyone else (politicians, police, and society at large) to 'work' within the community to try to prevent this from happening again. When we overreact to what the media has spoon fed us, we create a lot of lost opportunity.

Lets concentrate more on what matters - why these individuals lost so much faith in our society that they would want to destroy it!

By [bluenoser](#) on 06.12.06 12:01 pm

I'm not afraid of Moslems. Most of them are decent, if misguided people (as are Christians) , but their religion advocates violence and even the more moderate elements do not entirely disagree with the practice.

william, islam does not advocate violence.

The follwing is an excerpt from an interview done by Paris Match. It is with The Aga Khan:

PM: Let us touch on the important subject of fundamentalism.

AK: If fundamentalism means the destabilization of a society, I am certainly opposed to it. We have taken up the annoying habit of linking each sporadic act of terrorism to the Muslim world. It is a painful confusion. The Muslim world is made up of 1 billion believers, living in 30 to 40 countries, speaking 500 languages and dialects, people who come from countries which became Muslim - some at the time of the Prophet, others three hundred years later - some speaking Arabic, others that do not. There is no Islamic entity where 1 billion believers interpret and practice their faith in the same manner. The truth is that you from the west, perceive so badly the Muslim world, that you judge it as though it was only one single block. We have a better understanding of you in the west than you do of us, because you colonized and governed us for some period of time. The destabilizing activities are a reality, but are minor compared to the mass of silent believers that we are. It is sort of like if I said: “The IRA commits acts of terrorism in England; therefore, all Catholics are dangerous terrorists.” You tend to confuse the religion of people and their political goals. While many fundamentalists have clear and precise political objectives, far less often are their objectives uniquely centered about proselytizing. In some cases even, the West has gone as far as peddling their own ideologies by manipulating the Mujahadeen to remove the Soviets from Afghanistan, and have used extremists to counter the communist threat. The free western world must establish a distinction between political ambitions and the religion of Islam. It cannot be denied that the ideological frustrations of the Algerians, the Jordanians or the Libyans have created extremist

movements, but this should not smear the credibility of the entire Muslim world.

Garth, I hope you will permit me to post this. I read your blog everyday I go to the office. Sometimes I post, most times I read and am informed or entertained. But comments like Williams's only help to enflame hatred rather than understanding.

*By kk on 06.12.06 12:03 pm*

Garth

Kudos for going out into the community and taking a look.

This is not a situation with a simple answer. On one hand perhaps Canada's overall approach to immigration has been lax. We need to work harder to try and integrate people into the community and be clear about the values that we uphold. At the same time the Muslim community and Islam is really undergoing alot of change. There is no strong leadership structure within the religion and this leaves it open to extreme elements. Muslims need to take control of the teachings and preaching within there faith. The messages coming out are mixed. On one hand muslims speak about a religion of peace, on the other hand the actions are violent. At this stage I think that we should encourage dialouge in the community and support from government. Make friends with your good Muslim neighbours, that will go a long way.

*By Kevin on 06.12.06 12:08 pm*

Yes, of course it's silly to paint an entire group with one brush but this is an exception I think.

Islam seems to have few non-devout followers and that scares me. To have a such a large group of people so eager to entirely remove themselves from the debate about the roles of men and women in the society based on a dusty old book written by men who lived before pythagorous seems insane to me. A people so resolute in their abandonment of change in favour of doctrine is a failing not a virtue.

Such a people are Moslems. Or rather I should say, it seems to be that Moslems are such a people.

*By William Hane on 06.12.06 12:50 pm*

This is NOT a complex issue. Canada is one of the best countries to live in, for people of all races. So stop encouraging your kids to blow themselves up and kill innocent people. Stop the double talk and stop blaming everyone else for the problems in your communities.

If you want to build bridges, stop blowing them up in the name of religion.

*By jmccain on 06.12.06 1:04 pm*

*Lets concentrate more on what matters - why these individuals lost so much faith in our society that they would want to destroy it!*

Maybe they're just 17 brainwashed morons.

*By jmccain on 06.12.06 1:16 pm*

Garth, your blog used to be a genuine pleasure to read, I couldn't go a day without stopping by, and I always enjoyed it even if I didn't agree with every word.

But of late I find your writings seem to have lost their magic.

As a young man if I had been caught plotting to blow up buildings my parents would have taken me to the police themselves. Further, they would have found the individuals responsible for luring me in, and reported them as well.

We do not see such behaviour within the Muslim community. Rather, we are asked to forgive their sons. Your post is written in such a way that one is left assuming you agree.

Have you not factored into your thinking what damage such a large quantity of explosive could have done? The number of innocent women and children that could have been killed?

The Muslim community has been negligent, quietly doing nothing while hatred for the West brewed within their community unchecked. They have indeed been playing with fire, and now that the chickens have come home to roost they want us to feel sorry for them?

I'm deeply disappointed you felt it necessary to lend them a sympathetic ear.

*So, maybe we can dispense with the trial, too?? — Garth*

*By ACanuck on 06.12.06 1:27 pm*

"But left unsaid was a simple request that transcended language. Forgive our sons."

And you can include McVety while you're at it!

Is it not all about the media exposure that is highjacked to broadcast ideology?

And now we must rise above it all and apply true forgiveness - as tough as it is.

*By mark p. on 06.12.06 1:51 pm*

*"The IRA commits acts of terrorism in England; therefore, all Catholics are dangerous terrorists."*

Notice how well Ireland is doing now that the IRA has put down it's weapons. An example to follow perhaps?

*By jmccain on 06.12.06 1:59 pm*

I am also concerned about the way that the media are reporting the crowns talking points as "fact" and there is no talk about "innocent until proven guilty" do the police and crown have so much power that they can have someone guilty before they even see a judge. The JP that is currently leading the proceeding seems to be taking the crowns side alot. It was reported late today that the crown has now asked and seems to have recieved a publication ban on the proceedings of the case. After the crown "leaked" as much damning evidence as possible in the last 10 days. Although I must say that the

lawyer that brought up the whole beheading thing made a grave PR error. These defendants need better representatives if they even have a hope of a proper defence. Again what MP is going to stand up and ensure that these people receive proper treatment and representation. I suspose none. All talk no action!!

*By Kevin on 06.12.06 3:14 pm*

I hate to pass up an opportunity to dump on religion but wouldn't it be simpler to just deal with this for what it is? A crime.

Seventeen people have been accused of committing a crime. They will be tried by one of the most open, progressive justice systems in the western world.

They will receive a fair trial. This is Canada not Iran.

*By ALW on 06.12.06 3:44 pm*

"I believe the authorities were 100% correct in what they did, but there's also a very good chance many of these young 'terrorists' were less dangerous than the punk street racers who have actually already taken lives. This will all require some understanding. — Garth"

Garth, I respectfully submit that there can be absolutely no comparison between those who would endanger innocents through careless driving and those who would joyously kill hundreds or thousands of innocents in the name of their God.

We know from the Israeli and UK experiences that it is the very malleability of the young that makes them preferred vehicles of terror.

Thankfully the diligence of our law enforcement and security personnel prevented the planned catastrophe that would have made this sympathetic response laughable.

*By MJB on 06.12.06 3:58 pm*

Garth, it is commendable that you reached out to your Muslim consitutents.

I do hope that the Muslim community stop and become more involved and analytical in their Iman's messaging. I know some moderate muslims and they are very much like any other person - integrated into the 21st century.

A few thoughts on my observations.

One - the 12 that are charged are MEN, not boys, not "youth". In fact, isn't there one that is a 20 year husband and father?

Two - the lawyers and the Imans are not helping in creating an image of wanting to integrate into the western society, when they are bashing Americans and "Bush". Their children are being brain washed with hatred in their hearts. Either they are Canadians or their are not. Canada and America are alies. period.



Third - When a horrendous act is carried out by a christian (be it by a priest, minister, or an Irish terrorist), christians do not make excuses - they denounce the terrorist act. If Islam is a religion of peace, then, the leaders and Imans SHOULD denounce ANY horrendous and terrorist acts. I do not hear any muslim leaders and Imans denouncing the killings of converted Christians in the Middle East, nor the murder of gays in the Middle East, nor the imprisonments of journalists and scholars in Iran, nor the Muslim on Muslim bombings in Iraq. If these leaders started to show their disgust with these barbaric acts, then, this would go a long way in building bridges.

On a personal note: I also do have concerns with the muslim fundamentalists - especially the Wahabi sect. They seem to oppress their women and treat them like second class citizens (at least by western standards). As a woman, when I did encountered these fundamentalists in my work place, I was very much treated (at least it felt it) like second class. Hence, my encounters with the muslim fundamentalists does not leave me to respect or trust them.

In closing, I am pleased that the Muslims leaders are reaching out and that you and Stephen Harper are reaching out. Maybe this is an optimistic turning point.

*By Catherine on 06.12.06 5:14 pm*

ACANUCK:

I must respectfully disagree with you on this. I think Garth did exactly the right thing to meet with the Islamic community. This is not an "Us vs. Them" situation. Muslims are not all guilty by association. These were a group of brainwashed dumbassess who let a charismatic leader convince them into committing treason (after all, what else could you call it?). But by meeting with the community it sends out a strong signal that we do not view this as a Canadian vs. Muslim situation... this is a Canadian vs. Terrorist situation and I firmly believe that the solution to this problem will be rooted in the families and communities of potential perpetrators being vigilant to protect Canadian society.

*By K2 on 06.12.06 5:42 pm*

The fact is that an MP went to visit their families and relatives and parents, and it would appear that the most important thing on their list was to give him an earful. Not an apology to be found.

I think it is a sorry reflection on the Muslim community, and underscores the fact that the number of Canadian Muslims that quietly despise Western culture is more than just a handful.

When I was a graduate student the attitude of many Muslim students toward Canada was appalling. Some of them honestly believed that the West was truly evil, and that by coming to Canada and studying at our universities it would provide them with an opportunity to tackle that evil head on. I'm not making it up.

The Muslim community cannot have its cake and eat it. Either they are serious about their committment to Canada, or they are not. If they are serious, now would be a good time to show it.

For example, if every imam in Toronto joins Warren Kinsella's "I am not afraid" campaign, then I will have some cause for optimism.

*By ACanuck on 06.12.06 7:21 pm*

Catherine you wrote “Third - When a horrendous act is carried out by a christian (be it by a priest, minister, or an Irish terrorist), christians do not make excuses”

That’s a load of crap. Look at all the child molesters that remained hidden in the Catholic church - the church’s first reaction was to cover things up. There were no apologies until the MSM broke the silence.

*By progressiveC on 06.12.06 7:23 pm*

Garth,

Wow. Would you be available to come and meet some of the people in our Aboriginal community if you are ever on Vancouver Island? I am serious about that. This post of your amazes me, and your willingness to reach out to the Muslim community in your riding. Like I said before, on a previous comment. I think you are doing an incredible job of re-defining what an MP is and is supposed to do, regardless of their political party. My hat is once again off to you sir.

*By [MWW](#) on 06.12.06 9:34 pm*

progressiveC, huh? a particular church tried to cover it up... but, the parishes DIDN’T!!!

And even by your reasoning, the MSM broke muslim extremists terrorist activities for how many years now? Hmm, let’s see 9/11, the train bombing in Spain, the Balli bombings, the school children murder in Chechnya, 7/11, etc, etc, etc. How many innocents need to pay with their lives before these “religious spiritual” “leaders” condemn and denounce these Islamic extremists?

So why aren’t Canadian IMANs not calling for a halt to Islamic terrorist bombings in Iraq? My god, muslim Shiites are killing muslim Sunnis and vice versa! In Sudan, muslim Arabs are killing muslim blacks AND are threatening a jihad if the UN sends in troops! It’s time to wake up and take back Islam from these lunatics.

*By Catherine on 06.12.06 9:44 pm*

And does anyone see something strange - that the 17 are only “alleged” terrorists, but, when their lawyers spoke to the media, they state their clients WERE tortured by the prison authorities. Should these lawyers actually not state “the alleged torture”? Do these lawyers have proof that our Canadian prison authorities actually tortured these 17 “alleged” terrorists?

*By Catherine on 06.12.06 9:48 pm*

Catherine, Maybe we would get answers to your questions if the proceedings were open and if family members/clergy/lawyers had access to the accused.

Secrecy breeds half-truths and innuendo.

Open, transparent, accountable judicial systems should remain open, transparent and accountable, no matter who is brought before them.

*By Judy on 06.12.06 10:35 pm*

ACANUCK ..well said

Thankfully, on issue's such as this, Garth's actions and/or opinions are insignificant... ....the police and judicial system will take care of these 17 alleged terrorists and Garth will service his constituents.....

*By John G on 06.13.06 12:01 am*

OK Judy, I'll bite,

If the proceedings are open and transparent.... then, wouldn't the counter argument be that these 17 "alleged" terrorists would be tried in the media?

As for their families' and lawyers' access... they did get access with a glass in between. Still access.

*By Catherine on 06.13.06 6:08 am*

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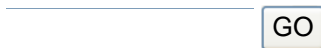


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