

The American Muslims You Don't See

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On First 100 Days, Fox News host Martha MacCallum brought together 8 diverse Muslims as part of a larger 22 member panel to talk about President Trump's temporary travel ban. While the panel was passionate, the pre and post show dialogue reflected a softer side of American Muslims that often goes unseen.

To my right sat Hammad Ahmad, a young imam out of Maryland. We delved into a wonderful conversation about our time growing up in different parts of the world and our views about the current state of Islam. I would later contest his on-air comment, and in turn I was contested by Dr. Kashif Chaudhry. After the segment, I introduced myself to Kashif and we chatted briefly on how fundamentalism needs to be dealt with – something we both agree on.

The before and after portrait of Muslims sharing their stories and views with immense respect for each other is something that isn't often seen. Instead, we are pressed with the most extreme version of Islam and its adherents. Radical Islam is a deviant version of Islam with inhumane interpretations rising to the surface, partially because we as Muslims refuse to speak truthfully in larger numbers. The truth is:

“If your belief system advocates for treating women like property; if your belief system allows you to kill homosexuals, then that belief system has no place in the civilized world. And that belief systems that all Americans need to unite against is radical Islam.”

To unify our voices as Muslims who cherish American values, consider this:

If Muslims argue that the practice of extremists isn't Islam, then why are we so quick to shut down conversation on the ideology of extremists? The ideology of extremists, and their radicalization of Islam, should never have safe harbor.

We need to get comfortable with hearing uncomfortable statements, and with respecting people enough to give people the floor to speak versus assuming their position before we've listened to them. We (and especially Muslim Americans who are under a growing spotlight) cannot claim to be American yet not uphold the most fundamental liberty: freedom of speech.

