

Common Misconceptions About Muslims and Five Things Never To Say to a Muslim

By Stan Kimer



Expert Forum

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About four years ago, I read a blog called “5 Things to Never Say to a Black Person” and that inspired me to write [“5 Things to Never Say to a Gay Person”](#) which was my first blog to go viral. I thought – wow, how cool! So, I later followed with [“5 Common Misconceptions about Gay People”](#) and [“5 Things to Never Say to Transgender People”](#).

Then two years later my Hispanic colleague Elsa Maria Jimenez Salgado wrote [“5 Things to Never Say to an Hispanic Person”](#) and [“Five Misconceptions about Hispanic People.”](#)

Now my next series is about the often misunderstood and demonized group in the USA – Muslims. First, here are “Five Misconceptions of Muslims in the USA.” For this resource, I have collaborated with Zainab Baloch, a young local Muslim woman in Raleigh, NC who ran for Raleigh City Council and got close to winning; a big thank you to Zainab - additional information about Zainab is at the end of this resource.

- 1) **They do not believe in God and hate all Jews and Christians.** Actually, Islam is one of the three Abrahamic faiths and shares many of the same tenants as Judaism and Christianity. Muslims do believe in the Old Testament (Torah) and the New Testament and Jesus. They believe there is one God and call Him “Allah.”
- 2) **They are all terrorists.** Just as an extremely small percentage of Christians are radical extremists condoning violence, the percentage of the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims (23% of the earth’s population) who are terrorists is infinitesimal. Honestly, if even 1% of the world’s Muslim were terrorists, we would all be dead by now. Most Muslims are peace loving people integrated within all our communities and serve as our teachers, doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs, social workers, etc.
- 3) **Most Muslims in the USA immigrated here and many are undocumented immigrants.** Actually, according to Pew Forum Research, over 40% of the Muslims in the USA were born here, and over half of those are third generation Americans. And a vast majority of those Muslim who immigrated to the US are well educated and documented.
- 4) **All Muslims are Arabs.** Although Islam is often associated with the Arab world and the Middle East, fewer than 15% of Muslims are Arab. By far, the largest populations of Muslims live in Southeast Asia. And of the Muslims in the USA, about a quarter of them are Arab and a quarter are African-American.
- 5) **Muslim women have no rights; they are the property of their fathers and husbands.** Actually, a vast majority of Muslim women are viewed as equal human



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beings with men and have key leadership roles and professional lives. Certainly there is a small percentage of the Muslim population who practice their faith in such a way that the male patriarchy controls women, and some of the gender issues in the Muslim community are the same as facing the world in general. I would encourage all readers of this resource to familiarize themselves with Islam, make some friends with Muslim people and perhaps attend a community or educational event held by your local mosque, and help shatter these crazy stereotypes.

And now to improve communications with Muslim, here are five things never to say to a Muslim:

- 1) **“Did you know Osama Bin Ladin?”** With 2 billion Muslims in the world, there is little chance the Muslim you meet ever met Osama Bin Ladin or knows anyone near him. It would be like asking a Catholic if they personally know the Pope.
- 2) **“Don’t you feel responsible for 9-11?”** “Why can’t you stop them?” It is unfair to ask anyone in a group to take responsibility for and to stop the horrid behavior of an extremely small minority. It’s not like the 2 billion Muslims in the world have a “Whatsapp Group.” Can you make a group chat that big?
- 3) To a woman wearing a hijab or scarf: **“Don’t you feel hot under that thing?”** **“Do you wear it in the shower?”** **“You would look so much prettier without that thing.”** And the worst thing yet to say, **“Could you take that off, I’d like to see what you look like without it.”** The wearing of a scarf or hijab is a very personal and private decision made by a Muslim woman and should be treated with reverence and respect.
- 4) **“Aren’t you hungry during Ramadan? OMG – you don’t eat for an entire month?”** Actually, practicing Muslims only fast between sun-up and sun-down and can eat after dark. Plus, there are exemptions, i.e. pregnant women, those with medical conditions, etc. Like point 3 above, the decision of fasting during Ramadan is a personal and private decision, and you may just want to be aware if a Muslim friend or co-worker is fasting so you don’t try to frequently offer them food. Plus, they may be slightly irritable or sluggish toward the end of the day. ([Link to info about Ramadan](#))
- 5) **“Why don’t you believe in God?”** You need to find Jesus – come to church with me!” Actually, Muslims do believe in God and call Him “Allah.” Plus, Jesus is a beloved Prophet within Islamic history and many of the tenants of Islam are very similar to those of Judaism and Christianity.

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More about my collaborator Zainab Baloch: Zainab is a Raleigh, North Carolina native, first generation American, and ran for Raleigh City Council in 2017. She is an advocate for issues facing Raleigh and our state and nation, and has a long-standing foundation of community service in various leadership positions. She is the third vice chair of the Wake County Democrat Party, and serves on various boards including WakeUP Wake County, [The Islamic Association of Raleigh \(link\)](#) Board, etc. She works in quality management for the North Carolina State Division of Mental Health and is almost done with her Masters in Public Administration from University of NC-Chapel Hill.