

A Few Questions for Craig Considine

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Craig Considine is a lecturer in sociology at Rice University who continues to call himself a Christian, though for years he has been a Defender of the Faith – that faith being Islam. For Considine, Islam is a religion of “love.” He doesn’t bother to try to engage with, or explain away, such Qur’anic verses as those that describe Muslims as “the best of people” (3:110) and non-Muslims as “the most vile of created beings” (98:6); nor does he discuss the Qur’anic verse that instructs Muslims not to take Christians or Jews as friends “for they are friends only with each other.” (5:51) He passes over in silence, too, the more than 100 verses that command Muslims to wage violent Jihad, to “fight” and to “kill” and to “smite the necks of” and to “strike terror in the hearts of” the Infidels. He has nothing to say about the two dozen Qur’anic verses denouncing Jews. Instead, he simply ignores them.

Some time ago he wrote on social media about how Islam – supposedly alone among the world's religions – condemns racism.

The story, at *Moroccan World News*, is [here](#):

The teachings of Islam have throughout the years inspired American scholar Craig Considine, who shared with his social media followers how the religion and its ethics condemn racism and racial discrimination.

On May 31, the scholar took an extract from Malcolm Little, better known as Malcolm X, an American civil rights activist and minister who invited his countrymen to better understand Islam.

Considine shared a saying from Malcolm X's writings during his visit to Mecca in 1964, reading: "America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem."

For 1,300 years, Muslim Arabs have been enslaving black Africans. As early as the ninth century, black Africans rose in revolt against mistreatment by their Arab masters in southern Iraq, in the "Zanj rebellion" ("Zanj" referred to Bantu-speaking slaves) that was brutally suppressed with massacres of the black slaves. Between 1.5 and 2.5 million people were killed in that rebellion. Arabs are keenly aware of racial differences, and from Morocco to the Persian Gulf, continue to treat blacks with contumely. In several African countries Arab masters continue to hold black slaves. In Libya a slave market selling Africans to Arab buyers has sprung up in recent years – those being sold were unable to come up with the money for passage to Europe and, stranded penniless in Libya, were forced into slavery.

Considine said the black Muslim activist was encouraging Americans to consider the "farewell sermon of Prophet

Muhammad" on racial equality.

"All mankind is from Adam & Eve an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action," the passage reads. There is more to that "Farewell Address"(of which there are several versions) that Considine leaves out. There was Muhammad's insistence that Muslims stick together: "Know for certain that every Muslim is a brother of another Muslim, and that all Muslims are brethren." Not "all men are brothers" but "all Muslims are brethren." That's a very different message from the Christian "all men are brothers." It is, rather, a message about Us (the Muslims who stick together) Versus Them (the non-Muslims). Considine doesn't include that essential part of the "Farewell Sermon."

In a tweet on May 29, Considine said: "Rooted in both ignorance & arrogance, racism has plagued civilization since the advent of man. Prophet Muhammad addressed this disease of the heart & [mind] from its root cause."

Islam is the "one religion that erases from its society the race problem"?

From its very beginning, Islam has condoned slavery – and overwhelmingly, slaves in the Islamic world were black Africans. Muhammad himself bought, sold, and owned slaves. And since Muhammad for Muslims is the Perfect Man (*al-insan al-kamil*) and the Model of Conduct (*uswa hasana*), the fact of his owning slaves meant that the practice could never be condemned. There never has been, nor could there ever be, a Muslim William Wilberforce.

The Arab trade in African slaves began eight centuries earlier, ended 150 years later, and had many more victims, than the Atlantic Slave Trade carried on by Europeans and

Americans. It was only the British Navy that beginning in the mid-19th century managed to halt the dhows and other vessels carrying Africans to Arabia, from where they would be taken to the slave markets of Islam – Riyadh, Muscat, Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Constantinople. Slavery itself continued in Arab lands long after it had been outlawed elsewhere. It was only in 1962 that Saudi Arabia and Yemen, under terrific Western pressure, finally outlawed slavery. Oman held out until 1970. Many of Saudi Arabia's half-million black slaves, even after being formally freed, continued to endure slave-like conditions for many years.

In recent years, before the civil war that resulted in independence for South Sudan, the Arabs in the Sudan kept several hundred thousand blacks enslaved. Even today, slavery continues to be practiced in Africa: Arab masters hold hundreds of thousands of black slaves in Mauritania, Mali, and Niger. Many of the black Africans in Libya who arrived thinking they might make the sea voyage to Europe instead found themselves being sold in brand-new slave markets that had sprung up to serve Arab buyers.

Surely Craig Considine knows about the Muslim Arab enslavement of black Africans over 1,300 years. But in all of his writings, he nowhere mentions this. Nor does he tell his audience that the example of slave-owning Muhammad explains why there was never an anti-slavery movement among Muslims. He ignores the continuation of slavery – Arab masters of black slaves – in several African countries today.

In his denial of "racism" in Islam, Considine also completely ignores the hair-raising evidence of racist beliefs, expressed by many of the most important figures in Islamic intellectual history.

Let's begin with the many **Hadith with racist implications, such as this: "Narrated Anas bin Malik: The Prophet said to Abu-Dhar, "Listen and obey (your chief) even if he is an**

Ethiopian with a head like a raisin.” And this: Ahmad ibn Abi Sulayman, the companion of Sahnun said, “Anyone who says that the Prophet was black should be killed.” (Ibn Musa al-Yahsubi, Qadi ‘Iyad, p. 375)

And there is this from the celebrated historian Al-Tabari: “Noah prayed that the hair of Ham’s descendants [Africans] would not grow beyond their ears, and that whenever his [Ham’s] descendants met Shem’s, the latter would enslave them.” (Al-Tabari, Vol. 2, p. 21, p. 21)

Why was it so terrible for the Prophet to be called “black”? Because for the Arabs, blacks were unquestionably inferior. And therefore Prophet Muhammad could not possibly have been black. Such misidentification, according to Ahmad ibn Abi Sulayman, was an insult to the Prophet, and deserved death. Blacks, as descendants of Ham, are fit to be slaves (Shem’s descendants “would enslave them”).

Many of the most famous Arab writers and Islamic scholars were certainly “racists” in the full meaning of that word.

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) was, among other things, an Islamic jurist, Islamic lawyer, Islamic scholar, Islamic theologian, and hafiz (one who has memorized the entire Qur’an). He is one of the most important figures in Islamic history. Here are two (among many) remarks he makes about black Africans in his *Muqaddimah*:

Therefore, the Negro nation are, as a rule, submissive to slavery, because [Negroes] have little [that is essentially] human and have attributes that are quite similar to those of dumb animals, as we have stated.

Beyond [known peoples of black West Africa] to the south there is no civilization in the proper sense. There are only humans who are closer to dumb animals than to rational beings. They live in thickets and caves, and eat herbs and unprepared grain. They frequently eat each other. They cannot

be considered human beings.

Ibn Sina or Avicenna (980-1037), was another celebrated figure in Islamic history: a Hafiz, an Islamic psychologist, scholar, and theologian and, by our lights, a deep-dyed racist: “[Blacks are] people who are by their very nature slaves.”

Ibn Qutaybah (828-889), was a renowned Islamic scholar from Kufa, Iraq: “[Blacks] are ugly and misshapen, because they live in a hot country.”

Nasr al-Din al-Tusi (1201-1274), was a Shia Muslim Scholar and Grand Ayatollah:

If (all types of men) are taken, from the first, and one placed after another, like the Negro from Zanzibar, in the Southern-most countries, the Negro does not differ from an animal in anything except the fact that his hands have been lifted from the earth –In no other peculiarity or property – except for what God wished. Many have seen that the ape is more capable of being trained than the Negro, and more intelligent.

[The Zanj (African) differ from animals only in that] their two hands are lifted above the ground,... Many have observed that the ape is more teachable and more intelligent than the Zanj.

Al-Muqaddasi (945/946-1000) was a medieval Muslim geographer:

Of the neighbors of the Bujja, Maqdisi had heard that “there is no marriage among them; the child does not know his father, and they eat people – but God knows best. As for the Zanj, they are people of black color, flat noses, kinky hair, and little understanding or intelligence.” [Kitab al-Bad’ wah-tarikh, vol.4]

Al-Masudi (896-956), was a Muslim historian and geographer, known as the “Herodotus of the Arabs”:

“Galen says that merriment dominates the black man because of his defective brain, whence also the weakness of his intelligence.” (Al-Masudi, Muruj al-dhahab)

Ibn al-Faqih was a Muslim historian and geographer:

A man of discernment said: The people of Iraq ... do not come out with something between blonde, buff and blanched coloring, such as the infants dropped from the wombs of the women of the Slavs and others of similar light complexion; nor are they overdone in the womb until they are burned, so that the child comes out something between black, murky, malodorous, stinking, and crinkly-haired, with uneven limbs, deficient minds, and depraved passions, such as the Zanj, the Somali, and other blacks who resemble them. The Iraqis are neither half-baked dough nor burned crust but between the two. (from his Mukhtasar Kitab al-Buldan, 903 AD).

Someone should present Craig Considine with the evidence for the enormous and exceptionally cruel slave trade in black Africans – including the castration in the bush of millions of young boys – by Muslim Arabs, lasting over 1,300 years, and ask him to explain why it went on for so long, why slavery in Muslim lands ended only under Western pressure, and why such slavery (Arab masters, black African slaves) continues to exist in several African countries today. And once he has tried to answer that series of questions, this admirer of Islam should have posted on his Facebook page the hair-raisingly racist remarks by celebrated Muslims can be collected above, made about blacks by such celebrated Muslims as Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Masudi, and ask him if he wishes to reconsider his claim that Islam is uniquely devoid of “racism,” in the light of that appalling florilegium.

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