

Khaled Abou El Fadl, Omar and Azmeralda Alfi Distinguished Professor of Law at the UCLA School of Law

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Some time after my article on Khaled About El Fadl appeared in 2005, with its many links to his then-website www.scholarofthehouse.com, he apparently relinquished that domain name, and instead bought another. Now, if you click on www.scholarofthehouse.org (not .com), you will arrive at his current website: www.searchforbeauty.org. That website is awe-inspiring, in the sense that it inspires a certain kind of awe. So do read as much as you can stand at www.searchforbeauty.org.

At that site, you will find out About Us:

Beauty and Reasonableness are the defining principles of the

school of thought of scholar and Islamic jurist, Khaled Abou El Fadl. Professor Abou El Fadl has dedicated a lifetime to the study of Islam, Islamic jurisprudence, Shari'ah (the path to and from God), international law and human rights, among many other subjects. Yet, few are aware of the massive corpus of scholarship he has produced, as well as their ultimately transformative nature.

For this reason, we have set out to amass this wealth of knowledge in one place and make it easier to access, navigate and learn from. We believe this is the way forward for the future of Islam: open-minded, engaged with modern reality, centered on truth and justice, full of love for all of humanity and creation, and motivated by the search for divinity and beauty in all avenues of life. For those who know his work, this engagement with the Islamic tradition represents the alternative to the often bleak and depressing current state of affairs among Muslims, and offers a hopeful, inspired and reassuring way out.

At that site, you will discover Our Mission:

Our Mission is to raise awareness, educate and increase the understanding of the methodologies, ideas and learned opinions of one of the best Islamic scholars of our times, Dr. Khaled About El Fadl, whose work profoundly illuminates the way to live an engaged and elevated life as a Muslim in the West in our day and age.

The writings, lectures, and opinions – in other words, the collective testimony before God of this great scholar – make the grand case that Islam, Islamic law and Shari'ah (the path to and from God) should rightly be understood, lived and dedicated to the divine virtues of our shared humanity with others, and that our duty as Muslims is to represent the best of humanity in all we do. This collective testimony is our manifesto, plain and simple.

OUR PURPOSE

Our Purpose is to help navigate this vast wealth of knowledge {in seeking an enlightened, humanistic and compassionately reasonable alternative to the status quo – away from the ugliness of oppressive and ignorant interpretations of Islam. We ask for God’s guidance and blessing in this weighty task, and invite all to join us in working towards a collective journey to enlightenment, or as Dr. Abou El Fadl terms it, “a collective enterprise of goodness.” (from Reasoning with God)

But it is not just the desire to raise awareness, educate and increase the understanding of the methodologies, ideas and learned opinions of one of the best Islamic scholars of our times, Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl, whose work profoundly illuminates the way to live an engaged and elevated life as a Muslim, nor to make available the vast wealth of knowledge of Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl, that explains this website which, it should be said, Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl had nothing to do with.

Generous contributions are requested from viewers, but do not think for one minute that Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl himself benefits financially from this:

This website is solely owned and operated by Students, Supporters and Friends of Dr. Abou El Fadl, and is committed to the preservation and dissemination of his school of thought. Dr. Abou El Fadl is neither involved in nor responsible for any of the activities related to this website, including the conducting of any matters of business, or the making of any decisions regarding its policies. Dr. Abou El Fadl does not gain any financial benefit from the website, but has graciously allowed us permission to reproduce his works here.

Of course, while Dr. Abou El Fadl may not “gain any financial

benefit,” one wonders if his wife, Grace Song, or his son might by any chance do so. Or is that being overly suspicious?

Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl has started something he calls the Usuli Institute, which he describes at the site as an Islamic Think Tank. He is soliciting funds for that Think Tank, which is headed by none other than its founder, Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl. Might he, just possibly, receive a salary – oh, shall we say something nominal? – for this “Counter-Jihad Initiative,” this “Islamic Think Tank for countering ignorance and extremism,” and winning the War of Ideas. “Reclaiming beauty, reasonableness, love and humanity in Islam” takes work. And money, lots and lots of money. You can’t attract talent like that of Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl without suitable compensation.

The goal of the Usuli Institute, to quote Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl, is

...To win this very real war that has done inestimable damage to so many Muslims and to the truth of the Islamic faith, it is absolutely imperative that moderates declare a counter-jihad against the puritan heresy. This is not a call for the shedding of blood; it is a call for matching the zeal of puritans through unrelenting intellectual activism. This is a counter-jihad to reclaim the truth about the Islamic faith and win the hearts and minds of Muslims and non-Muslims all around the world...

To help everyone learn what he or she needs to know about different aspects of Islam, the website of Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl, though don’t forget this website is “solely owned and operated by Students, Supporters and Friends of Dr. Abou El Fadl,” has a list of nine books of Recommended Readings.

These nine indispensable books are:

Reasoning With God by Khaled Abou El Fadl

The Search for Beauty in Islam by Khaled Abou El Fadl

The Great Theft by Khaled Abou El Fadl

Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law by Khaled Abou El Fadl

The Place of Tolerance In Islam by Khaled Abou El Fadl

Islam and the Challenge of Democracy by Khaled Abou El Fadl

Speaking In God's Name by Khaled Abou El Fadl

And God Knows The Soldiers by Khaled Abou El Fadl

Conference of the Books by Khaled Abou El Fadl

I think I detect a pattern here. And why not? If you have someone with vast knowledge, one of the world's greatest scholars of Islam, who has not been sufficiently appreciated, why should anyone, least of all the Supporters of Dr. Khaled Abou el Fadl, who own and operate this website, be reluctant to list his books? Is Khaled Abou El Fadl to blame if he has written so magisterially on so many important topics? Should we blame Khaled Abou El Fadl if "in 2017 and 2005, he was listed as one of LawDragon's Top 500 Lawyers in the Nation"? Or if, "in 2013," he was recognized among "the 50 Smartest People of Faith" by TheBestSchools.org, and was awarded the "American Muslim Achievement Award" in 2014." Should Khaled Abou El Fadl hide his light under a basket, and not let us know that "he has been ranked" among "The Power 500 List of the World's Most Influential Arabs" and "The World's 500 Most Influential Muslims"? Fortunately, all that information, and much more, can be found after having clicked on "About About El Fadl," you then click on "Honors and Recognition" and come to a long list of honors and recognition sure to dazzle and impress.

At the website for the Usuli Institute, which was founded by, and is currently headed by, Dr. Abou El Fadl – who wants it to be understood that he would love to have someone else take up

the burden of running this institute, but so far it's been left on his broad shoulders – you will find paeans of well-deserved praise to the vast learning and wisdom of Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl. You will find videotaped lectures and sessions of halaqa (the “circle of learning”), starring Khaled About El Fadl, the latest online articles by Khaled Abou El Fadl, the books written by Khaled Abou El Fadl, the media appearances by Khaled Abou El Fadl, the latest Friday khutbas by Khaled Abou El Fadl. He's a one-man multitude, is Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl.

You can find a lot more – I'd recommend spending several hours examining the inexhaustible intellectual riches of the Usuli Institute, which you can find [here](#).

And just to whet your appetite, here's what went on at the Third Halaqa, on 3 February 2018:

In the third meeting of the Usual Institute, we begin with a discussion of converts. Dr. Abou El Fadl discusses the historical dynamics of conversion in America, and the relationship of colonialism and Islamophobia, as well as the underlying theology of the “straight path” and the meaning of imaan. In the Q&A segment, he covers a wide range of topics from jinn and demons; to the what it will take to make a difference in our current context; to the intercession of the Prophet; shaking hands, wearing beards and much more.

And you may find particularly stirring the inaugural lecture of the Usuli Insitute, which happened to be given by Khaled Abou El Fadl [here](#).

But once you have digested that new information about Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl's recent work, perhaps you will revisit with me a piece I did on Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl in 2005, when, while he was already eminent, he was not quite as eminent as he is nowadays, having in recent years scaled all the possible everests of eminence that remained for someone of his eminence to climb.

You can find that piece [here](#) about Scholar of the House
Khaled Abou El Fadl. It does not date.

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