

# The Photographer Shows the True Face of Islam (Part 4)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Carlos Khalil Guzman is a “revert” to Islam who is now going about the United States, taking pictures of cheerful, fresh-faced, smiling Muslims, each of whom is asked to choose a favorite verse in the Qur’an, or a saying by Muhammad in the Hadith, and to explain why he, or she, has made that particular choice.

*So far, [Guzman has] taken 52 portraits across about 26 states. His goal is to take 114 portraits, to symbolize the 114 chapters in the Quran. He hopes to finish the project this year, and later turn the entire series into an interactive traveling art exhibit. He said his sense of urgency to complete the project has been spurred on by reports of increasing levels of hate crimes against American Muslims.*

*He hopes his audience can come to understand that the challenges faced by Muslims in America are connected to the challenges faced by other marginalized groups.*

*“What affects one oppressed community in this country affects another oppressed community,” he said.*

Are Muslims an “oppressed community” in this country? Where is the evidence for this? In the series of manufactured “hate crimes” used to swell the numbers of the latter? In all the examples of smarmy interfaith outreach where Christians and Jews feel they have to defend Muslims and Islam, but never feel they have an obligation to find out first about what is

in the texts of Islam, and what Muslims are routinely taught, and especially how they are taught to regard Infidels? **They defend the faith, by taking it on faith.** If it is claimed by Guzman that Muslims are “oppressed” in this country, he should offer the evidence. What we see is not oppression but, on the contrary, an unseemly media rush to defend Muslims and Islam, repeating the absurdist mantra that “Islam has nothing to do with Islamic terrorism,” which by now is a fixed formula. Then there is the focus after every attack by Muslim terrorists on the “need to reassure the Muslim community,” in its most treacly version through holding those Interfaith meetings where Christian and Jewish clergymen “stand side-by-side with their Muslim brothers.” And at the same time the coherent critics of Islam, who carefully adduce the textual evidence from Qur’an, Hadith, and Sira to explain Islamic terrorism, are cast into the outer darkness as “Islamophobes” and soon find that both Google and Facebook direct people away from them online. In other words, at every step, far from being “oppressed,” the Muslim community finds itself the recipient of very public uncritical support.

One of Guzman’s photographs is of a student, one Myree Shadi, whose favorite remark by Muhammad may actually never have been uttered by him:

*“All mankind is from Adam and 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.” – Prophet Muhammad*

*“This is so important to me not only as a Muslim but also as an Afro-Latina. This states that Islam is against racism and discrimination. All humans are created equal. All that matters to God is the good a person does and the devotion we have for our creator.”*

Is it true that in Islam “an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab”? The Arabs certainly behave as if Islam is their gift to civilization, and that they are indeed superior to non-Arabs. After all, the message of Allah was received by an Arab, and in the Arabic language. Muslims are supposed to read, recite, memorize the Qur’an in Arabic, whatever their native language. Five times a day, Muslims turn toward Mecca, in Arabia, to recite, in Arabic, their prayers. Converts to Islam very often take on Arab names. In some countries – e.g., Pakistan – non-Arabs adopt not just Arab names, but a spurious Arab lineage. Pakistan is full of people who identify themselves as “Sayids,” or descendants of the Arab tribe of Muhammad, as a matter of appropriated prestige. Finally, what would or should Myree Shadi, “College Student” in Boston make, or what does Carlos Khalil Guzman himself make, of Anwar Shaikh’s important study, *Islam – The Arab Imperialism*? Or have they never heard of him, or his book, even though he is known to Muslims from Pakistan to Great Britain, many of whom clamor for the clerics to issue a rebuttal to his book? Curiously, none have apparently felt able to do so. As for the claim that the Arabs do not feel themselves superior to non-Arab Muslims, why have the Arabs in Iraq denied the Muslim Kurds national rights, and killed almost 200,000 of them, without any Arabs in or outside Iraq publicly uttering a syllable of dismay? Why have Arabs in Algeria denied the Berbers cultural rights, and for a long time even tried to prevent them from using the Berber language? Why did Arab Muslims attack, and murder, black African Muslims in Darfur? Doesn’t this have to do with the Arab sense of superiority over non-Arabs?

And is Ms. Shadi sure that Muhammad said that “an Arab is not superior to a non-Arab”? [One Muslim website](#) describes where this apocryphal quote came from: “This comes, supposedly, from Muhammad’s ‘last sermon,’ but no mention of it can be found in the ‘authentic’ hadith collections of Sahih Al-Bukhari or Sahih Muslim. It appears to have been disseminated by a

Pakistani Islamist named Syed F.H. Faizi in the last century. Because the Pakistanis are ajami (non-Arab) Muslims, they obviously have a motivation to lie about the teachings of Islam with regards to the position of Arabs and non-Arabs. The rigorously authenticated hadiths of Muhammad make it clear that God favors the Arabs over the non-Arabs.”

For example, the famous historian Al-Tabari wrote that **“Arabs are the most noble people in lineage, the most prominent, and the best in deeds. We were the first to respond to the call of the Prophet. We are Allah’s helpers and the viziers of His Messenger.”**

For many similar quotes about Arabs being superior to all other Muslims, click on the link [here](#).

Another of Guzman’s subjects offers as her favorite remark by Muhammad this Hadith: “Heaven lies under the feet of your mother.”

*“This hadith is one of my favorites because it talks about being mindful of our parents.”*

Yes, but this verse should be read along with other verses about how to treat your parents. Perhaps this young Muslim does not know what else is written in the Qur’an about being “mindful” of your parents “if they choose unbelief.” Here is 9:23:

“Believers, do not befriend your fathers or your brothers if they choose unbelief in preference to faith. Wrongdoers are those that befriend them.”

In other words, if your parents are not Muslims but “choose unbelief,” then you are commanded to have nothing more to do with them. They are dead to you. That’s not exactly filial piety or being “mindful of one’s parents.” Its uncompromising harshness and cruelty – to one’s own parents – is terrifying.

Here's another "favorite verse" of another of Guzman's subjects, Kenneth Rula:

*"And never say of anything, 'Indeed, I will do that tomorrow,' without adding, 'If Allah wills.' And remember your Lord when you forget and say, 'Perhaps my Lord will guide me to what is nearer than this to right conduct.'" – Quran 18: 23-24*

*"This verse, to me, is a significant reminder of Allah (God). Remembering to say 'inshallah,' if God wills, before speaking about plans is acknowledgement that as humans, we are not in control of everything." Kenneth Rula, Louisiana*

"Inshallah" is not quite so innocuous a sentiment as is here suggested. It means more than that "we are not in control of everything." Rather, it is a continuous reminder of the fatalism that Islam encourages. This inshallah-fatalism is the kind of thing that discourages, for example, economic development – for why try hard if, in the end, it is the will or whim of Allah that determines failure or success? It's also a way of avoiding blame when things go wrong, for it's "Allah's will," and that's all that need be said.

Fida Ousol, a nursing student in New Jersey, chose as her favorite verses part of the first chapter of the Qur'an, *Al-Fatiha*:

*"In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. [All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds. The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense. It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path. The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray." – Quran Chapter 1, Verses 1-7*

*"I chose the verses from the first chapter (Al-Fatiha) of the*

*Quran. These verses remind me of my childhood. My sisters and I would all gather together and we would recite it together or one by one. We were so proud of ourselves when we memorized it and we could see our parents were proud of us too. This surah (chapter) is the first in the Quran and I have always said it in times of fear, when I would think a ghost was in the room or if I was walking home late. I knew Allah (God) was watching and helping me. These words are powerful and they have helped me feel and be protected."*

Of course, neither Fida Osoul, nor Carlos Khalil Guzman, is going to explain that the Al-Fatiha curses the kuffar, for "those who have evoked [your] anger" refers to Jews and "those who are astray" refers to Christians. Perhaps they are unaware of what the authoritative Qur'anic commentators say about this part of the Al-Fatiha, or perhaps they know all too well, and have no intention of volunteering such information.

Bushra Zarin, in South Dakota, finds Muhammad's words on migration to be his favorite:

*"Actions are according to intentions, and everyone will get what was intended. Whoever migrates with an intention for Allah and His messenger, the migration will be for the sake of Allah and His messenger. And whoever migrates for the worldly gain or to marry a woman, then his migration will be for the sake of whatever he migrated for." – Prophet Muhammad*

Though you would likely not know it, if you are a non-Muslim, this "migration for the sake of Allah and His messenger" refers to the Hijra, when Muhammad and his followers moved from Mecca to Medina, in 622 A.D. This was jihad by emigration, the large-scale movement of Muslims into a non-Muslim area, bringing Islam with them, in an effort to win new territories for Islam both by demographic conquest and by conducting Da'wa, the Call to Islam. This, of course, is what is taking place in Europe today, where tens of millions of

Muslims now live, having been allowed to settle deep behind what Islam teaches them to regard as enemy lines. And they are conducting Da'wa, finding particular success among prisoners, and others who find that Islam supplies a ready-made band of brothers, offers both a complete regulation of life and explanation of the universe, and sanctions what some might interpret as criminal violence but which can now be interpreted as Islamically justified when the victims are Unbelievers. Crimes of property can be seen as helping oneself to a proleptic Jizyah; sexual assault by Muslims of Infidel women, whose dress and demeanor are of the come-hither sort, are similarly a case of "they deserve what they get."

Nothing surprising here. Carlos Khalil Guzman offers one more variant of crowd-pleasing Islam, of smiling young Muslims offering sweetness and light, with every Qur'anic verse that deals with Jihad or the Unbelievers simply ignored, and with only the most benevolent bits offered up to us, in what Guzman and his collaborators no doubt think is a good cause: to make us believe that we misunderstand Islam when, for some unfathomable reason – could 31,800 attacks by Muslims since 9/11/2001 have something to do with it? – we allow ourselves to think ill of it. And in the brave new world Muslims and their apologists are – *inshallah!* – creating, that would never do.

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