

A reader once called me a racist in response to an article I wrote criticizing Islamism. I was puzzled because Islam is not a race and criticism of its more poisonous aspects is an attack on an ideology, not individuals.

Today, Muslim activists using their legal arm, CAIR, accuse anybody who criticizes Militant Islam of "Islamophobia," hatred of Muslims. They use this term as the equivalent of the anti-Semitism, or hatred of Jews. However, we need to be clearer in our use of the terms racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia because the three have some important differences.

Racism means hatred of others because of their "race," which really refers to superficial differences in appearance (skin color, eye shape, hair type). Racism also involves fear and hatred of people solely based on ancestral origins (Africa, Asia, the West). A deeper layer of this phenomenon is based on cultural differences: differences in acceptable behavior and the historic memory of enmity. Racism in the United States was once spread widely among varied targets: Native Americans, Black slaves, Chinese railroad workers, the Irish, Italians, and Jews (the last three not races, but heritages). Today, the racist problem appears to be a remnant of the institution of Black slavery, although it is currently more based on class than color.

Anti-Semitism is hatred of people who are, or once were Jews. Hitler designated as Jews those with even one distant Jewish ancestor. Throughout history, Jews could escape persecution by converting to Christianity, at least in theory. During the Spanish Inquisition, however, Jewish converts were called "New Christians," a second-class category of Christian always suspect for "insincerity." And with Hitler, people with Jewish ancestry who never even knew they were Jewish or who were indifferent to religion altogether were all swept up, called sub-human (untermenschen) and murdered.

Islamophobia has none of the qualities of racism or anti-Semitism, both of which involve aspects of a person that cannot be changed. Racist and anti-Jewish hatred is directed at whole categories of people, not at individuals.

Islamophobia, on the other hand, is fear and dislike of Muslim practices, not Muslim individuals. For example, when Presidential candidate Ben Carson said he would not vote for a Muslim for president, he was compelled to rethink this and more properly say that he could not vote for a Muslim candidate for President who held views anathema to our constitutional values. This concern can certainly be defended. It is not the person's religion, but rather his ideology, that matters.

To know how Muslim values play out in the real world, a survey of the cultures of Muslim-majority countries makes this clear. There is no freedom of speech, press, or religion other than Islam in such countries, and this goes even further in that even the Islam they practice must be the right sect (Sunni or Shia, not both). There is no separation of church and state in these countries. There is no gender equality either by law or custom. One would rightly be an Islamophobe if such values were to be permitted in this country or modern Europe. These values are anathema to modern liberal democracies.

If Muslim immigrants were to flee their native society in the desire to share the values of the Western world, they should be welcomed. Most Iranians who fled the Islamic Revolution have integrated well. But if immigrants come demanding that their homeland customs be honored here, they should not be granted admission. We must not accept honor killing or retreat to self-censorship when "offended" Muslims threaten or murder those whose speech, art, cartoons, or books, are deemed "blasphemous."

Islamophobia is not a blanket hatred of people who happen to be Muslims. It is not a condition (like race) that they can do nothing about. It is legitimate dislike of values that we in the Western world have long found incompatible with our culture. We must never let women citizens fall back into the condition of property, which they are in Muslim countries. And we must have freedom from religion as much as we have freedom of religion.

677 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of God's Law or Man's

Law. You may contact her at [Lfarhat102@aol.com](mailto:Lfarhat102@aol.com) or [www.globalthink.net](http://www.globalthink.net).