

RESPONDING TO ANTI-MUSLIM TROPES

A Guide for Allies

This guide is for allies who want to be aware of and stop anti-Muslim bigotry. A constellation of anti-Muslim funders, political operatives, media outlets, hate groups and elected officials are responsible for spreading conspiracy theories, falsehoods and bigoted stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. **These tropes are often repeated and reinforced by people on all sides of the political spectrum.** Even allies of Muslim communities sometimes unknowingly accept and perpetuate anti-Muslim tropes. That's why it's imperative that allies be aware of these tropes and be forceful, unequivocal and loud in their denunciation of this kind of bigotry. If there is no concerted backlash to anti-Muslim bigotry, then it will continue.

HOW TO RESPOND TO WEAPONIZED, ANTI-MUSLIM BIGOTRY

Understand how double standards operate and reject them.

When an American Muslim is attacked for an action or statement, especially if it's a trope that sounds like one of the many in this guide, it's imperative to first think about whether people who are not Muslim are being held to the same standard. If the attack holds Muslims to a different standard than non-Muslims—it's a bigoted attack. The way to respond is to raise the concern of a double standard. Condemning a Muslim who spoke inarticulately, while excusing people of other backgrounds who do the same, is an endorsement that they must be guilty of what they're accused of.

Don't repeat bigoted stereotypes about Muslims. Don't repeat the lies.

These anti-Muslim tropes are false. Don't accept them. Muslims are not more prone to terrorism, not more prone to hating America, not more prone to hostility to Jews, women or the LGBTQI+ community and are also not more prone to violence.

You don't need to know Muslims to know your values.

Do you think the U.S. should be a place of true religious freedom? Do you think we shouldn't treat our friends, co-workers and neighbors differently based on how they look or how they pray? Do you think people shouldn't be assaulted or killed based on their religious beliefs? *Then you can speak up for American Muslims, too.*

Being silent is never helpful. Be loud and be proud.

In the face of these attacks, American Muslims need unequivocal support from allies. According to Muslim Advocates' report [Running on Hate](#), when allies respond to anti-Muslim bigotry from politicians, it leads to change. When allies organize against vilifying Muslims, it can marginalize bigoted officials and lead to resignations and recalls.

COMMON ANTI-MUSLIM TROPES

Muslims and Islam are inherently anti-Semitic.

This anti-Muslim trope is one of the most common. American Muslims in political life are often held to double-standards that non-Muslims are not held to. Some even falsely claim Islam teaches Muslims to kill Jews. These lines of attack can be especially insidious because they are intended to be used as a wedge against progressives who see diversity as a strength.

Examples: [Rep. Ilhan Omar](#), [Rep. Rashida Tlaib](#), [Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison](#), [Congressional Testimony of Dr. Mohammad Abu-Salha](#), [ZOA National President Morton A. Klein](#)

Muslims are inherently foreign, disloyal, uphold Sharia above the Constitution or part of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Time and again, American Muslims in public life are held to a double-standard or are made to answer for the policies of governments on the other side of the planet. Despite the fact that Muslims have been part of the U.S. since enslaved Africans first arrived on our shores, this myth of inherent foreign-ness endures. American Muslims in public life constantly have their loyalty to the U.S. questioned. Specifically, American Muslims are often falsely accused of belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood, an international political movement. This is to stoke fear by painting the world's 1.9 billion Muslims as a monolithic, ideological threat and not people who practice a common faith. American Muslims are also falsely accused of having allegiance to Sharia law and not the Constitution.

Examples: [Then-Rep. Carson was told he could not be trusted to serve on House Intelligence Committee](#), [Rep. Duncan Hunter claimed his Arab American opponent was part of a Muslim Brotherhood plot to infiltrate Congress](#), [several major candidates have said Muslims are loyal to Sharia law over the Constitution](#)

Muslims and Islam support violence or terrorism.

American Muslims are often accused of supporting violence or terrorism, with no evidence whatsoever. All Muslims in public life are put in the position of having to condemn the acts of ISIS and al-Qaeda-inspired terrorists. Meanwhile, people of other backgrounds are not similarly asked to condemn the acts of extremists like the white supremacist Tree of Life shooter or the KKK. This trope is often expanded to all Muslims in the U.S., who are falsely rumored to worship in “terror mosques” or have “cheered” the 9/11 attacks. **For allies, please be aware that asking Muslims to publicly denounce terror or affirm their loyalty to the U.S.—even as a gesture of support—still reinforces these false tropes.**

Examples: [Trump falsely claims American Muslims cheered 9/11 attacks](#), [refugees are a “trojan horse army,” hate group says 90% of American mosques are “radical,” former NYPD commissioner says Rep. Omar is “infatuated” with Al Qaeda](#)