

TEACHING TOLERANCE



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Responses to Islamic Center

The development of the Islamic Center in Lower Manhattan has been the source of diverse and powerful responses. Read each of the following quotes below. Each viewpoint reflects ideas about the proposed center. Spaces are provided for you to add a couple of quotes that support or oppose the building of mosques elsewhere. In small groups, discuss each quote: What is this person's opinion on the Islamic Center? Why do you think this person feels or thinks the way he does?

“As a citizen, and as President, I believe that Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as everyone else in this country. And that includes the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in Lower Manhattan, in accordance with local laws and ordinances. This is America. And our commitment to religious freedom must be unshakeable.”

—President Obama
Source: tinyurl.com/26lbzma

“This project is divisive. All you're doing is creating more division, more anger, more hatred. This project is creating tremendous pain to people who have already paid the ultimate sacrifice.”

—Rudy Giuliani, Former Mayor of New York City
Source: tinyurl.com/2838dsl

“At its essence, our position is about sensitivity. Everyone—victims, opponents and proponents alike—must pay attention to the sensitivities involved without giving in to appeals to, or accusations of, bigotry. Ultimately, this was not a question of rights, but a question of what is right. In our judgment, building an Islamic Center in the shadow of the World Trade Center would unnecessarily cause some victims more pain. And that wasn't right.”

—Abraham H. Foxman, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League
Source: tinyurl.com/2ehenve

“The government has no right whatsoever to deny that right – and if it were tried, the courts would almost certainly strike it down as a violation of the U.S. Constitution. Whatever you may think of the proposed mosque and community center, lost in the heat of the debate has been a basic question—should government attempt to deny private citizens the right to build a house of worship on private property based on their particular religion? That may happen in other countries, but we should never allow it to happen here. This nation was founded on the principle that the government must never choose between religions, or favor one over another.”

—Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of New York City
Source: tinyurl.com/27mdjpr

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