



## The Buzz: The soul of Islam

Wednesday, June 17, 2009

By Mary Grossman

Jackson Hole, Wyo - LibForAll Foundation CEO and co-founder, C. Holland Taylor came through town earlier this week meeting with local supporters and answering a ton of questions about the threat of radical Islam. Taylor founded LibForAll Foundation ([www.LibForAll.org](http://www.LibForAll.org)) with former Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid to promote a peaceful understanding of Islam and "discredit the use of terror" worldwide.

He's recently published a notable expose on the rise of radical Islam in Indonesia and has begun to produce a 26-episode television show presenting a pluralistic, tolerant Islam. Taylor and Wahid hope to influence Muslim communities in Indonesia, and throughout the world, with their brand of "counter-extremism" to foster basic values like civil, economic, religious liberties and respect for all.



**Jackson Hole Weekly:** As an American, how do you gain legitimacy in Muslim circles without seeming like an interloper?

**Holland Taylor:** The key factors are sincerity and integrity; cultural sensitivity and awareness. I lived in Muslim societies as a child ... traveled extensively in Turkey, Iran and Pakistan ... I've had a life-long familiarity with Islam. When I meet with people who have a common understanding of the threat to humanity that is posed by radical ideology which underlies and animates terrorism, I find it's actually very easy to work with such people.

**JHW:** You talk about the business of radical Islam funded by Saudi petro dollars. Can you explain this.

**HT:** In 2003 U.S. News and World Report had an article that was based on Saudi sources indicating that from 1979 to 2003, Saudi Arabia spent over 70 billion dollars on radicalizing Muslim populations worldwide. Saudis, of course, call it propagating the "true understanding" Islam based on their Wahhabi ideology. Extremist Islam has become a massive business worldwide, which employs people, and they're working 24/7 in order to achieve the objective of that ideology.

**JHW:** With regards to President Obama's recent speech in Cairo, the Saudis lauded the speech as pivotal and positive for U.S./Muslim relations. What does that mean in light of what you just said about the Saudis responsible for radicalizing Islam?

**HT:** I think that the comments made by the Saudis were like "we're not looking for trouble with the Obama administration." I also think they like the moves that Obama is making in terms of putting pressure on Israel. This doesn't end the proselytization of Wahhabi Islam worldwide and, in fact, Obama is not calling on the Saudis to do so. If Obama were to hold Saudi Arabia accountable for the massive expenditures that are being made to promote Wahhabi/Salafi Islam worldwide, the noises we'd hear out Saudi Arabia would be entirely different.

**JHW:** How much difference do you think it would make to cut off funding from Saudi Arabia and Iran?

**HT:** It would transform the situation worldwide. It would no longer be a business and would depend on

local generation of funds. You would see a transformation in the dynamics of the Muslim world as a result of that.

**JHW:** The Obama administration seems like they would subscribe to the LibForAll methodology of counter-extremism. But you think this might actually be a challenge?

**HT:** The Obama administration and Democrats in general, rightly perceive that the struggle cannot be won through military force alone. But then you get to the next question: what is animating these problems within the Muslim world, what is the solution? LibForAll Foundation articulates that terrorist acts themselves are being perpetrated by individuals driven by an ideology. Ideology is more dangerous than bombs because ideology takes over a country, then the entire country becomes the vehicle to spread that ideology. I have not yet seen an indication that the current administration clearly sees this threat and is prepared to grapple with the ideology itself.

**JHW:** You've had a lot of local support, tell us what impact this has on LibForAll Foundation.

**HT:** Local support from Jackson Hole has been critical to LibForAll Foundation, because people like Foster Friess, Rich Sugden and their families. They did a community fundraiser and those funds that came from Jackson Hole were actually critical to LibForAll's budget last year allowing us to complete two world-class projects. These locals were able to impact how Muslims think throughout the world and actually transform the dynamics on the ground in the struggle for the soul of Islam that is occurring in Indonesia and the rest of the Muslim world. JHW

*COURTESY PHOTO*

*C. Holland Taylor, center right, stands with Shimon Peres and Indonesian peace delegation*

[PERMALINK: The Buzz: The soul of Islam | Planet JH News Article: General News](#)

## Reader Comments

Is it possible that America is hated in the middle east because we have invaded, occupied, and brought ruin on Iraq and its population, and are continuing down that path in Afghanistan and Pakistan?  
little saganaga

LS, this is a predictable and safe conclusion, but not the reason. I think our foreign policy has little impact on whether they hate us or not, though most Americans are trained to think that its something "we've done.".. Radical Muslims have hated Western culture and Jews long before U.S. presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And it also doesn't explain why they direct most of their violence toward other Muslims who reject their interpretation of Islam. Though radicalized Muslims like to play the press with anti-American/Western propoganda, behind the scenes they spend much of their energy intimidating, terrorizing and radicalizing fellow Muslims. More Muslims have died at the hands of other Muslims in this century than Jews killed during the Holocaust.  
NHreader

Thanks NHreader. I appreciate the comments. Can you respond to another question or two? If radical Muslims direct most of their violence and terror toward other Muslims, why is the US bleeding itself morally, financially, and literally in fighting them? When and how did US presence and interference in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan begin? Finally, I don't think "most Americans are trained to think it's something we've done." That's not the official story, and most Americans believe the official story. My question though is, if foreign powers were meddling with and invading the US, what would be the response of our people?  
little saganaga