

**Dr. Omar Khalidi of MIT's Department of Architecture presents his photo exhibition
"Mosques in America." December 2-4, 2006.**

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(Words that could not be identified are marked "???")

Dr. Khalidi: ...9/11 Muslims themselves felt alien. The responsibility that they are in some ways spokespersons for Islam and that Americans perceive Islam through the impression?? of how they see their neighbors.

Interviewer: And how successful do you think that's been in—in helping the foreign people's opinions of Muslims as nonthreatening members of their community?

Dr. Khalidi: I think it helps on—on two accounts. One is that Muslims in America are, uh, for the most part, professionals, highly educated, ???, self-confident, uh, and they are seen as for the professionals and universities, as hospitals, in the IT industry, in various business and so forth, and Muslim population, like the rest of the American population, is also so highly diverse, that it is, uhm, a reflection of America as an immigrant nation. America, I think is the only international nation today, uh, in which, uh, people are represented from every part of the globe. And that's what makes it difficult for any group to harbor any strong feelings about one of the other groups

Interviewer: Are you of the opinion then, that most Americans do have relations or contact with members of the Muslim community?

Dr. Khalidi: Well, I'd say, uhm, those that are in major cities, in places where Muslims have settled, yes, they do. So I wouldn't be talking about someone in North Dakota or about in, somewhere in Wyoming, in places like that. But if you're talking about, let's say, Boston, L.A., New York and so forth, they'll have definitely have contact with Muslims. To give you an example, I think, uh, at, uhm, on 9/11... ah...we had in western Massachusetts, in ???, western, we had a meeting that same, uh, evening when the terrible incident happened, and the meeting was gathered in a church where representatives of Muslims, Jewish communities and others gathered for a, uh, ecumenical prayer in which all religious groups participated for peace. I think that is a very strong community bound???

Interviewer: They're currently shooting in Canada, uh, for the CBC a television show called Little Mosque on the Prairie. Which is supposed to be the first Muslim-oriented sitcom. Do you think that America, American pop-culture is ready for... to incorporate Muslims?

Dr. Khalidi: The Canadians are far behind the US. I know of a--

Interviewer: ???

Dr. Khalidi: Oh yeah. I know at least of three or four sitcoms, the Muslim sitcoms scene, uhm, making fun of Muslims, by Muslims show how light it could be. There are a number of comedians who have shown this kind of, uh, uhm, sessions at various places.

Interviewer: Comedians definitely put a-a-a major list of shows that can be shown on the CBC, which is...

Dr. Khalidi: Oh, okay, okay, that's right

Interviewer: ...on the ABC or NBC, so really prime-time television.

Dr. Khalidi: Oh, I think that'd be a great event.

Interviewer: M-hm

Dr. Khalidi: And I think the community is sensible enough to see that this is...you know innocuous humor and that this is not to demonize Muslims, but to shee—to see them in, uh, their natural, erm, um, in a way that, uh, that's not necessarily, uhm, satirizes them, but still uh, pokes fun at some of the behaviors and of the pattern of interactions and so, I think that many, if not most Muslims, would welcome it.

Interviewer: I've actually heard some people comment that 9/11 might happen to have a possible positive impact on Muslims, of giving them a stage, giving them a voice in America, that they would never otherwise have obtained, and that if they can turn the tide against the tide of negative feeling, that it really gives them a chance to participate in a way in America that they wouldn't otherwise have in the social discourse and political discourse.

Dr. Khalidi: Yes, that can be, uh, you know, this is both a challenge and certainly a great opportunity to, uh, turn things around, and, uh, give a stage, a forum, uh, to give their perspective on this matter, and some have, and I think some of the media is sus—is receptive to Muslim writers and people who want to give an Islamic perspective on these issues, yes. Uh, there's need for more in the mainstream press, but I think, uhm, a, uh, opening has happened and that people are beginning to give a hearing to Muslim perspective, or, or at least a number of Muslim perspectives, because obviously there is no one monolithic community, you have variations in terms of, uh, their own interpretation of Islam. Because, I—I--there are people, you know, who have variant approaches to Islam.

Interviewer: In November, we had the first Muslim elected to Congress, right. Keith Ellison from Minnesota.

Dr. Khalidi: Yeah.

Interviewer: How bit a role to Muslims play in American politics?

Dr. Khalidi: I think it's, uh, fairly small. Uhm, and, but beginning to play, uh, wherever there has been ??? from within the Muslim community to organize, to--to support candidates and so forth. For instance, in my own home state of Massachusetts, I know that many Muslims were quite active in, with the ??? campaign and would in fact, uhm, uh, for the... in fact in my own hoe we had a meeting, a neighborhood meeting for one of the, uh, state congressmen... meeting...uh, election. I think that is an indication of how people, Muslims who are educated and aware of their rights and duties can take up that role, um, to participate actively in the campaigns for election of one or the other candidate. So yes, I think it is the beginning and I suspect that this will expand, but at the other time I think it's-- it is still in its infancy but has immense potential