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On the Clear and Present Danger

Scott P. Richert's article on the Islamic school in Rockford ("Through a Glass, Darkly," *The Rockford Files*, April), was extremely tasteful—and also very disturbing.

There are several Islamic private schools here in Washington, D.C. The *Washington Post* did a story on the phenomenon a couple of years ago, listing some of the same selling points that Mr. Richert did, explaining why many Christians (mostly, I suspect, in name only) send their children there—the discipline, the structure, and the academic emphasis. There are other reasons as well. Many parents either waited too late to get their children into the private school of their first choice, couldn't afford their first choice, or got a sudden case of indigestion when they realized how bad the public schools really had become.

I feel quite sure, however, that most parents who send their youngsters to the Islamic schools didn't do the kind of homework that Mr. Richert did. It's not as if one has to stay on school grounds for weeks and weeks, after all, to uncover what he did. Nothing was hidden. It was mostly out there in the open, as are many of the problems with the public schools.

As I wrote in a piece last year ("School Days," *Vital Signs*, January 2001), I went to an honest-to-goodness nonsectarian, multicultural school (diplomats' kids, etc.) in Washington, D.C. It enrolled not only Muslims but Hindus, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, and probably children of some other faiths I wasn't aware of. Nevertheless, we all said the Lord's Prayer in three languages every morning and saluted the American flag. Nobody opted out—or wanted to. We had a Christmas pageant every year at one of the area churches, and all of the parents, regardless of faith or country of origin, sat there grinning from ear-to-ear as we walked solemnly down the aisle singing about the Christ Child and the Virgin Mary. Although we did not repeat or study any Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu prayers, I can't recall a single incident of disrespect or bullying over ethnicity or religion.

In pre-1960 America, every parent and student accepted that Christianity and patriotism were "givens" in the United

States, even as people were free to worship in other ways and to retain loyalties to other countries (dual citizenship, for example). How tragic that this all suddenly became so problematic.

I can't help wondering, especially after reading Mr. Richert's excellent piece, if a lot of the angst hasn't been hastened by factions determined to create a divisiveness, an us-against-them mentality in the name of diversity. After a while, that mentality becomes a "given," too, which sets people up to wreak all kinds of havoc in the name of an agenda they neither sanction nor understand.

That's what appears to be happening in the case of the Rockford Iqra School. The "American Christian" (as one child put it) who attends no doubt is an intelligent youngster, but malleable and vulnerable even so, in need of someone capable of channeling his energies and focusing his thoughts. That is why U.S. educators and parents once prized concepts such as "structure" and "mental discipline." Unfortunately, the unsuspected enemies in our midst now appear to be capitalizing on our change of heart.

—B.K. Eakman
Washington, D.C.

Having been relatively sheltered on the southeast side of Rockford, imagine my surprise when I learned that an Islamic academy resides within two miles of my home. Shocked? Yes. Indignant? Definitely. I certainly appreciate the wake-up call, however. Not only does this article open my eyes to the influence the Muslim community has within Rockford, it gives me an inkling of what we as Christians may expect from a city (and a nation) that discards its traditions in the name of diversity. This infiltration of sorts is very unsettling. Nevertheless, what disturbs me most about this school is not so much what is being taught as who is doing the teaching. I am very disappointed that Christian teachers have such slight regard for their Faith and their duty to present the truth, but I can't say that I'm surprised. It is proof of a closing of the mind to the past, and it is much more dangerous than the call to open it to the future. No good Muslim would either seek or be sought for a position within a Christian school, so why are these teachers daring such a compromising po-

sition? No doubt the rigid structure and support system are very alluring, as many other schools at present can hardly boast of any solid sense of order. This article was definitely a call to arms, and I am amazed to find myself forced to take up a defensive position rather than an offensive one. We must bring these teachers back to our schools, reintegrating the organization and common sense lost when this country forfeited its religious, literary, and educational traditions. We must give them something to come back to and remind them of their duty to God, their country, and their children.

—Bethany Lewis
Rockford, IL

By Mr. Richert's description, the Islamic school in Rockford seems to be yet another trivial and small replica of a myriad of similar "educational" centers all over France and the European Union. His value-free narrative about the Islamic mindset however, leaves me with the impression that he may be incognizant of this alien influence within Western culture.

I hope that Mr. Richert, despite his surplus of politeness, knows what the stakes are. Instead of focusing on the exotic Islamic curriculum, shouldn't we raise the question as to who really allowed this fifth column into the United States of America? Muslim aliens should not be scorned for their valiant incursions into America. Rather, it is the masochistic, guilt-ridden Christians themselves, and particularly the Catholic clergy, who bear prime responsibility for future inter-religious and interracial warfare. The Christian "love thy neighbor" fake conviviality is bound to bring untold misery to the European Union and the United States of America. Muslims in Rockford are only peacefully conducting cultural war over terrain that has been prepared over decades by spineless gentiles and their secular leftist "human rights" offshoots.

—Tomislav Sunic
Croatia

I think the article by Scott P. Richert is a disgrace. The article showed your fear of Islam and your lack of an answer to it. Jesus spoke of the Prophet Muhammad and his coming. God said in the Koran that he sealed the eyes and ears of some people. For them, understanding of Islam will never come because God has sealed their eyes and ears. Whomever God has led cannot be led astray; whom-

ever God has left cannot be led. How sad to be left behind—to be a sheep regurgitating what your parents taught, following the flock, because that is what one does in Rockford, Illinois.

—Unsigned
Kansas City, MO

As a concerned parent of a student of Rockford Iqra School, I would like to bring to your attention the biased and prejudiced article published in your magazine. The author writes as if no one has visited our school and center before. The mosque is open to one and all. There are open houses, and people of all faiths frequently visit the center. If there were something to hide, the school or the community center would never have given permission in the first place for your journalists to come in. We trust the people who visit us, or else the children would not have been allowed to be interviewed. What if someone went to a local public/private school and interviewed kids, only to twist and turn the answers to mean something else? The children will not trust anyone. The writer has written lies making false connections at many places.

Also, he seems to have no religious tolerance or any respect for those trying to learn about all faiths. We try to learn about Christianity and Judaism, and so do other people about Islam. He calls three Christian boys who came in to ask questions about Islam "grungers." We have many such people that come in frequently. We respect all and do not call people names. What if I visited some local churches? People who visit us highly appreciate our hospitality and are in awe, especially when they visit the mosque. Some have accepted Islam, too, not because of force but because they realize this is the same religion of Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace be on them all). If such were the case, we would not have highly educated, pious Christian teachers at our school.

America is a country of religious tolerance and freedom. There are Christian churches, Jewish synagogues, Hindu temples, Buddhist temples, and Muslim mosques in this country. All add to the immense glory and rich past, present, and future of America. Muslims are law-abiding, tax-paying citizens like the Christian and Jewish citizens of this country.

For the reasons listed above, I would like this article to be withdrawn immedi-

ately. I do not give permission for any further propagation of this article.

—Asmina Ali
Rockford, IL

Scott P. Richert's article is *full of broken truth and, at times, utter lies*.

A few instances are:

1. Iqra School is affiliated with the Iqra Foundation (lie).

2. Muslim *rap is not taught at this school*. Songs were downloaded from the internet *and interwoven in the article*, making it seem that a nine- or ten-year-old was taught these songs (lie).

3. Walk in *a library* and you see some books by *an author* and you assume an affiliation of the *library and the author!* You extend this further and trace the author's one million donations. Out of this million donations, a few *donations may be by another "X" person*. Now you try to link this "X" person with the author and thus the library. *Lame and folly*. (The author tried to link the community library to Ahmad Deedat and to Osama bin Laden and Iqra School.)

4. Zaid wants to memorize the Koran *while excelling in his academics*. He has loftier academic goals than his two doctor parents. I do not find anything wrong with this, and so would any sensible person [*sic*].

5. Moreover, Zaid's parents did not move to Rockford for Zaid to join Iqra School. An utter lie. Zaid did not say this. *Two doctors with two professions moving from Grayling, Michigan, to Rockford for Iqra School!* Don't you think Mr. Richert is getting a little too carried away and beyond common sense?

6. There are even instances of *slander* in regards to other kids and their parents.

7. More than *50 percent of the teaching staff is Christian*. If there were any biased teaching, these teachers would have knowledge of this.

There is *animosity and hatred from the start*. *The introduction* to the article, (before Mr. Richert even arrives at the school) *delineates his despise* [*sic*], surprise, and how the *idea of a Muslim population is inconceivable* [*sic*]. It *concludes with outright blasphemy*. There is twisted truth and *lies between this introduction and conclusion*. Why?

Muslims have *no grudge* against Christians. On the contrary, *we love you all* from the deepest recesses of our heart *just like Jesus* (pbuh) [peace be upon him—ed.] taught and *Muhammad* (pbuh) reinforced this love. Mr. Richert *brews with*

spite as he drives back. He is *angry at the very presence of an Islamic school* and considers its existence a *failure of nerve on the part of Christians*. His *religious intolerance seeps in his comments* as he depicts one mosque in Rome.

Through sewn lips my heart outcries as I ruminate on the gist of the article. *Truth has been molested, and the trust of the innocent children betrayed*. I cannot drown these heart-ripping comments by turning to music. *Tears roll down my eyes as the author talks about love on one hand and blasphemizes [sic] a prophet in the next sentence, calling him a ravening wolf*.

I beg and pray and cry before the ONE Lord of Jesus, Moses, and of Muhammad (peace be upon them) and the sole creator of the worlds to sift the darkness of souls, soften the hatred of ignorant minds and shine on us the light of truth and trust.

—A Parent
Rockford Iqra School

Mr. Richert Replies:

As readers can see, the reaction to my article has been quite varied. When I appeared on a local radio talk show, one caller accused me of being “pro-Muslim”; later, when I was a guest on the Tom Clark Show on Wisconsin Public Radio, several callers accused me of being “anti-Muslim.” I have been told by professors of religious studies that my article was “more than fair” and that it might make a good recruiting tool for the Rockford Iqra School, and the cofounder of an organization for Christian-Islamic dialogue (a former Muslim who is now a Catholic) gently chided me for not condemning the violent language in the Muslim rap that I cited. And both Christians and Muslims have accused me of spreading “intolerance” and “hatred.”

In other words, various people seem to have read into my article whatever they were looking for, much as Asmina Ali and “A Parent” accuse me of doing when I visited the school. Mrs. Eakman’s kind letter reflects her concerns about the destruction of public and private education in the United States over the past half-century, while Tomislav Sunic’s remarks are precisely what I would expect from a dispirited, fallen-away Catholic who is looking to neopaganism to undo the damage that he believes has been wrought by “masochistic, guilt-ridden Christians.” (While I don’t agree with his solution,

Dr. Sunic is right to blame American Christians for the growth of Islam in the United States. As I wrote in my article, the very presence of an Islamic school in Rockford “is as much an indication of a failure of nerve on the part of Christians as is the more visible mosque that has been erected in Rome.”) And “Unsigned” accuses me of being a “sheep regurgitating what your parents taught, following the flock,” presumably because I don’t believe what his parents taught. For instance, when he claims that “Jesus spoke of the Prophet Muhammad and his coming,” he undoubtedly has in mind John 16:7 (“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you”), which Christians have always believed refers to the Holy Spirit (see John 14:26: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”).

When the April issue appeared, I sent several copies of it to Principal Atteya Elnoory and told him that we would be happy to publish a response. To date, the closest thing we have received is a packet of 14 letters (of which Asmina Ali’s was one), forwarded by a local law firm, which demanded that we remove pictures of students from the version of the article on *Chronicles’* website, even though we had obtained permission through the school to take pictures and to publish them. (We did not interview, nor take pictures of, any students whose parents did not grant permission in advance.)

“A Parent” claims that my article is “full of broken truth and, at times, utter lies.” He lists three: (1) “Iqra School is affiliated with the Iqra Foundation.” My source for this was a *Chicago Tribune* article from November 25, 2001 (www.chicagotribune.com/search/chi0111250380nov25.story). As Aaron Wolf and I were leaving the school, we verified this fact with Principal Elnoory, in the presence of school-board chairman Dr. Khalid Siddiqui. (2) “Muslim rap is not taught at this school.” I never claimed it was. The children, however, sang a Muslim rap to me, said that they had memorized it for a talent show, and told me that I could buy a copy of the tape at the Iqra Educational Foundation’s bookstore in Chicago. The first song on that tape, which at least two of

the students said they owned, is the one that they sang. The very next song is “Jihad of the Nafs,” whose violent lyrics I did download from the internet. (3) “Zaid’s parents did not move to Rockford for Zaid to join Iqra School. . . . Zaid did not say this.” Actually, Zaid *did* say this, as my notes and Aaron Wolf can confirm. Still, I am puzzled by the objection. My point in mentioning it (as well as in mentioning Zaid’s desire to memorize the whole Koran) was to illustrate the depth of commitment that the students and their families have to both the Rockford Iqra School and to their religion, a depth of commitment that most Christians today, sadly, lack. The only way “A Parent” could reasonably think that I was attacking Zaid or his family would be if “A Parent” thought memorizing the Koran or moving one’s family to enroll one’s children in the school was intrinsically wrong.

The closest “A Parent” comes to a valid criticism of my article is when he accuses me of trying “to link the community library to Ahmed Deedat and to Osama bin Laden and Iqra School.” The fact that I have copies of *The Communist Manifesto*, *Mein Kampf*, the *Book of Mormon*, and the Koran on my bookshelf at home does not mean that I endorse the ideas found in any of them. But I simply reported on what Aaron Wolf and I found in the library, and I let the reader draw his own conclusions. The only person to mention Osama bin Laden during our visit to the school was Dr. Siddiqui, the chairman of the board, and again, I leave it to the reader to determine whether his remarks constitute praise.

Finally, speaking of Dr. Siddiqui, I feel compelled to quote, in full, the letter that his wife, Dr. Sabet Siddiqui, sent in the packet from the law firm: “This is a notice to withdraw immediately any permission on our behalf and rescind any article, pertaining to Zaid, Zafar, and Sariya Siddiqui. You are asked to specifically [sic] remove any picture, any excerpts from the interview, and the article itself from the website; and also any future publication or propagation arising out of the visit to Rockford Iqra School by Scott P. Richert in April 2002 issue of *Chronicles*.” During our visit, Dr. Siddiqui assured Aaron and myself that Americans should not fear the imposition of Islamic law (*sharia*), because, in his words, “If you look at the Constitution, it is a pure Islamic document.” If the letter from his wife is any indication, however, the Bill of Rights apparently is not.

CHILD MOLESTATION has been much in the news in the past few months, and as always in such debates, the issue of homosexuality is never far from the surface. For decades, conservative activists have argued that homosexual behavior is closely related to molestation and pedophilia, so that tolerating homosexuals ultimately endangers children. According to the slogan, “Homosexuals aren’t born, they recruit.” Homosexual activists angrily deny these charges.

Recently, though, the substance of the debate has changed significantly, as the homosexual rebuttal has become much more aggressive. As expressed in op-ed pieces and talk shows across the country, a new liberal orthodoxy not only denies the gay/pedophile link but explicitly charges that pedophiles are virtually always heterosexual, even when they victimize boys. When pressed on this point, activists respond that this is something that “studies have shown.” In fact, studies have shown no such thing, and only one significant study has even claimed to prove such a point. What we have here is a classic example of a popular myth drawn from the misinterpretation of social science.

The legend grew out of an article in *Pediatrics* magazine in 1994 by Carole Jenny, Thomas Roesler, and Kimberly J. Poyer, who wrote a study entitled “Are children at risk for sexual abuse by homosexuals?” Based on an examination of 352 young children who had been diagnosed as sexually abused, the authors answered that question with a resounding “No.” In only two of these cases was the perpetrator clearly a homosexual—a homosexual man and a lesbian, respectively. Overall, the authors found that the children studied “were unlikely to have been molested by identifiably gay or lesbian people.” As the study entered popular discourse, however, the claims based on it expanded somewhat, to boast that pedophiles were virtually never homosexuals. In this case, it was necessary to determine why *heterosexuals* were so likely to abuse: Just what kind of pathology followed from that deeply unnatural state? I have not yet seen the further claim that “heterosexuals recruit”—but it should not be too far down the road.

Unfortunately, the famous “Jenny Study” is deeply flawed, at least in what it

can possibly tell us about any linkage between homosexuality and molestation. The problems of the study should be immediately apparent from the sample used. Reviewing their cases, the authors found 269 children who had clearly been abused by adults, including 219 girls and 50 boys. Right there, we know there is something wrong, since no study of molestation victims has ever suggested such a large disparity between the sexes. Probably as many boys as girls are victims of abuse, and the hospitals and clinics used by Jenny and the others *must* have been disproportionately treating female victims, while missing boys. Many reasons can be suggested for this fact—perhaps the doctors referring children were better able to recognize abuse in girls, perhaps parents were more sensitive to the dangers faced by their daughters—but whatever the reasons, the boys are lacking. Since men are far more likely to abuse than women, this logically means that the sample is also ignoring the men who abused these boys. If men abuse little girls, we call them “heterosexual pedophiles”; if men abuse little boys, we call them “homosexual pedophiles.” By definition, the study is simply failing to detect a large number of homosexual pedophiles, a type of deviant that undoubtedly does exist.

Though this logic seems unassailable to me, it would not be accepted by Jenny *et al.*, whose article is frankly presented as a polemical contribution to political debates over homosexual rights. Even in the cases in which men clearly abused boys, the authors still deny that this act involved any element of homosexuality. In their view, the term “homosexual” (or “lesbian”) can only be applied to individuals who are clearly and identifiably “out”: It reflects social status rather than behavior. With such an incredibly narrow definition, and such a flawed sample to begin with, it is remarkable that Jenny and Co. were prepared to admit the possibility of any homosexual misconduct with minors occurring at all.

Based on the Jenny Study, we can say absolutely nothing positive or negative about any possible association between homosexuality and child molestation. My impression of the evidence accumulated over the years is that there is no terribly direct linkage either way, that homosexuals are neither more nor less

likely than heterosexuals to molest. A desire to avoid false charges against homosexuals, however, should not lead us to the opposite extreme, to favor an exoneration that is ultimately derived from deeply flawed social science. If you ever hear the “Jenny Legend” in the media, recognize what it is, and be prepared to confront it.

—Philip Jenkins

PUBLIC-SCHOOL FINANCE, as a topic of concern, reminds us that the egalitarian impulse lives on imperishably. Mankind must be hard-wired to scratch the ears of the perceived—generally self-defined—underdog, before siccing him on the perceived top dog.

Public schools, financed with public monies, were probably overdue their share of the action; but, boy, are they catching up.

Consider this tidbit several months back from the *Dallas Morning News*: “The Highland Park Independent School District asked parents and community members this month to raise \$900,000 in individual contributions to pay for a 3 percent teacher raise. The fund-raiser may be the first time a Texas school district has used donations to pay for a core element of its operating budget, state school finance authorities say. Under the state’s [property tax] recapture system, the Highland Park district is required to send \$52.5 million from its 2001-02 budget for redistribution to poorer districts.”

The district’s plight—which has worsened in recent months—stems from a financial whammy put on “property wealthy” districts a few years ago at the behest of “property poor” districts seeking bigger bucks. First, in 1993, the Texas Supreme Court found the school-finance system—the normal mix of state and local dollars, though with the state share in decline—unconstitutional. Legal and political maneuvers ensued. At length, with Supreme Court approval, a brand-new system emerged, known as “Robin Hood.” No legislative act was ever more appropriately dubbed. It robs the “rich” and gives to the “poor.” Why? Don’t ask silly questions. Because the “rich” are rich, and the “poor” are poor.

Oh—and because the “poor” tend to outvote the “rich”: meaning it’s very, very