A well-known spiritual leader in America, Shaykh Hisham Kabbani, is under attack for warning in the State Department Open Forum and other high-level meetings in Washington against a threat to America from militant Muslim extremists. The leaders of the foreign-born Muslims in America are organizing to brand him as obviously in the pay of the Zionists, or the CIA, or whoever is warning against the growing threat of terrorism.

For American-born Muslims, one of the most baffling characteristics of most Muslims from abroad is their tribal loyalty to themselves rather than to Islam. Americans embrace Islam because it provides the spiritual depth they have not found elsewhere or because it offers coherent solutions to the problems of their country. When Muslims from abroad are indifferent to what Islam has to offer to Americans and to America, the American-born Muslims either abandon Islam or organize independently to bring the wisdom of Islam as they understand it in their own culture.

American-born Muslims tend to have only peripheral loyalty to Muslims as a group and to maintain their primary loyalties to the wisdom of Islam as a revealed religion. When a Muslim is accused of terrorism, the first instinct of the American is not to defend the Muslim, right or wrong, but to denounce terrorism because it is so totally contrary to everything Islamic.

Many foreign-born Muslims, to the contrary, feel that any attack on a Muslim is an attack on themselves, and any Muslim who dares to point out that there are extremists and potential terrorists among Muslims in America is a traitor who must be destroyed. This tribal mentality may be inherent in primitive human nature, but those who are independent enough to embrace Islam in America usually have advanced to a more universal perspective.

A decade ago the foreign-born tended simply to dismiss such American Muslims as naive, misled, or irrelevant. During the last decade of the 20th century, however, a new generation of Muslims has arisen, including the children of the first-generation immigrants. Many or most of them have transcended the self-centered passions of their elders and have replaced the fear and hatred of the insecure with the confidence and love of those who submit their own future
and the future of the world to Allah. The leaders of the new generation, including Shaykh Hisham Kabbani, are rapidly replacing the first generation of immigrants, who control all the national Muslim political organizations. The "newcomers" therefore are treated as threats to the very identity of the governing elites. This may explain why on February 25th, 1999, the existing elites issued a formal statement attacking Shaykh Hisham for the exact opposite of what he said a month earlier in an Open Forum at the U.S. Department of State. Shaykh Hisham in his presentation was defending Muslims from the perversions of extremists among them, not attacking Muslims and the entire Muslim community in America. He stated that extremist ideology had "spread" to 80% of the Muslims in America, not that 80% of Muslims in America are extremists and potential terrorists. Shaykh Hisham emphasized in the portions of the statement deleted from the text distributed by the national organizations that, "We want to tell you that the Muslim community as a whole is innocent of whatever extremism and extremist ideology is being spread around the world." He carefully distinguished between extremist ideology that is not militant, and extremist ideology that is. Non-militant extremism is a threat to America because the frustration and rage of extremists often leads them to violence.

From my own experience giving talks around America, including almost one hundred to Muslim student organizations during the years 1985-1986 alone, I would estimate that there is not a single mosque in America that has not suffered from take-over attempts by extremists, many or most of them funded or at least backed by the Wahhabi cult originating in Arabia. Like all totalitarian fanatics, these Wahhabis, who prefer to use the more respectable name Salafi, insist that the Muslim umma must be united in order to fight the infidels or kuffar, the enemy, and that it can be united only by imposing uniformity from above, not building unity from below, of course under their own censorship and control. A more insidious threat to the freedom and equality that undergird the American system of justice cannot be imagined, because the enemy in their primitive minds often is America.

Fortunately, the American-born Muslims have leaders who understand the traditional teachings of Islam and can promote the truth, because truth is stronger than error. Together with enlightened Muslims in all the countries of the world, we can help build a new world, not based on imperial control, but on cooperation among peoples of diverse cultures and religions following the wisdom of their own spiritual leaders. To deny this possibility is to deny the power of God.