

# Obama, Madonna and us

Thursday 11 October 2012, by [HELIE LUCAS Marieme](#) (Date first published: 10 October 2012).

I was utterly delighted when Madonna labelled Obama a 'black Muslim' [1] ; she paid him back, quite involuntarily, for his Cairo speech in which he dared call 'Muslims' all the inhabitants of the Middle East, i.e. all the free thinkers, agnostics, atheists, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, etc... who are citizens of these countries.

A 'mistake' for which he is still to apologize to us - while Madonna had the grace to pretend she was just being facetious and always knew he actually was not a Muslim....

I won't comment on present day ignorance of what 'Black Muslims' stood for. I won't recall the unforgettable, formidable, political figure of Malcom X (and the distance he finally had to take from the reactionary - should i say, fundamentalist - elements in his party), a figure which inspired many struggles of the oppressed in the rest of the world.

But let's look at the reasons for the confusion. Obama was labelled 'Muslim' because one of his names is Hussein . As we all know, this is an Arabic name, hence all Arabs are Muslims, and all Muslims are.... No ! I won't say it, for Republicans may quote me and Madonna, and label Obama ...a terrorist...

But Obama should indeed reflect on the automaticity of religious labeling, that he himself indulged in, against us, not so long ago. He should realize that what happened to him is exactly what happens to us all the time, and why we have to fight against such erroneous labels. It is a denial of our freedom of thought, freedom of conscience.

Unfortunately, this is exactly what tyrants such as Muslim fundamentalists, GIA, FIS, Taliban, Al Qaeda, AQMI and the like do : they force us into a religious identity ; then they also re-define religion, its rules and rituals, from dress codes for women to how to pray or bury the dead. And they enforce the supposedly religious rules they just invented.

So, the worst thing Obama did when calling us all Muslims is not to deprive us of our most fundamental human rights, but actually to reinforce Muslim fundamentalist ideology, to give it credentials, and to comfort its claim that anyone born into a family or a country that calls itself Muslim is and must be automatically a believer in Islam.

Considering that renouncing Islam (or breaking the rules they pass in its name) entails, for fundamentalists, the obligation to carry out a death sentence -as, just yesterday, we were reminded by the attempted murder on teenaged women's rights defender Malala in Pakistan -, it is to be hoped that Obama will not speak so lightly, next time he visits one of our countries.

Faith should not be a matter of where one was born, nor what first name one was given at birth... Obama, as a Christian named Hussein, should understand that.

As for us, free thinkers, the only identity we want for ourselves is that of humans and citizens; we just don't need any additional religious label.

My most sincere thanks to Madonna, for raising such a crucial and timely question.

**Marieme Helie Lucas**, October 10, 2012

---

---

**P.S.**

\* <http://www.siawi.org/article4180.html>

---

## **Footnotes**

[1] On September 26, 2012, pop star Madonna endorsed US President Barack Obama during a performance in Washington, DC, calling him a black Muslim.  
<http://rt.com/usa/news/madonna-obama-house-president-978/>