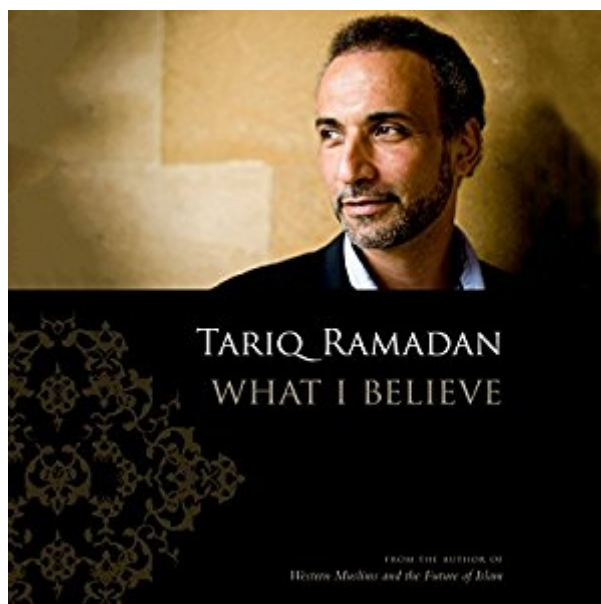


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What I Believe



Synopsis

Tariq Ramadan is very much a public figure, named one of Time magazine's most important innovators of the 21st century. He is among the leading Islamic thinkers in the West, with a large following around the world. But he has also been a lightning rod for controversy. Indeed, in 2004, Ramadan was prevented from entering the U.S. by the Bush administration and despite two appeals, supported by organizations like the American Academy of Religion and the ACLU, he was barred from the country until spring of 2010, when Secretary of State Hillary Clinton finally lifted the ban. In *What I Believe*, Ramadan attempts to set the record straight, laying out the basic ideas he stands for in clear and accessible prose. He describes the book as a work of clarification, directed at ordinary citizens, politicians, journalists, and others who are curious (or skeptical) about his positions. Aware that that he is dealing with emotional issues, Ramadan tries to get past the barriers of prejudice and misunderstanding to speak directly, from the heart, to his Muslim and non-Muslim readers alike. In particular, he calls on Western Muslims to escape the mental, social, cultural, and religious ghettos they have created for themselves and become full partners in the democratic societies in which they live. At the same time, he calls for the rest of us to recognize our Muslim neighbors as citizens with rights and responsibilities the same as ours. His vision is of a future in which a shared and confident pluralism becomes a reality at last.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ramadan, the Oxford University theology professor and radical reformist, points to a growing

negativity in perceptions of ordinary Muslims since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America. Other "crises" causing resentment have ranged from the Danish cartoons affair - when artists were threatened with death for insulting the prophet - to the headscarf controversy still raging in France as part of a divisive "national identity" debate. Ramadan singles out remarks by Pope Benedict XVI who, in his Regensburg address of 2006 about the founding of European civilisation, all but excluded the Islamic contribution. "The list is getting longer and longer," writes Ramadan, pointing to Muslims feeling "stigmatisation and constant pressure". The key to coping with such problems (ones which Ramadan, predictably but fairly, blames the media for magnifying into "juicy" scare stories) is "to resist the temptation to reduce one's identity to a single dimension". This means that western Muslims should not emphasise their religion as their unique defining characteristic. Instead, he writes, "our identities are multiple and constantly on the move". He urges members of marginalised communities to be "creative" in every field of life, to "fully participate in citizenship" and to escape the "minority reflex". Ramadan - whose academic background extends to a distinctly non-Islamic PhD on Nietzsche - sees societies achieving, as in his own studies, "a true philosophy of pluralism". This would mix a loyalty to classical religious texts with the imperatives of life in modern, multicultural, western societies.

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