



Children pose for a cell phone photo during an April open house at the Islamic Center of Central Missouri. The mosque's families host open houses to help educate the public on Islam's faith and culture.

we don't want to use the term West, because this concerns Japan, Korea and China as much as it does England, Germany and the United States."

STRUGGLE FOR FAITH AND FUTURE

Moderate Muslims in America are reaching out in far greater numbers than a few years ago, investing in interfaith relations and getting more involved with cultural affairs, says Karamustafa of Washington University.

Last year, the Council on American-Islamic Relations posted an online petition "designed to disassociate the faith of Islam from the violent acts of a few Muslims." The petition has been signed by about 700,000 Muslims so far.

"Enough apologetics, more action, both in deed and in word," Karamustafa says. "Muslims need to diversify and be active in all walks of life in American society."

Still, Wallace has found his college students to be in the dark about Islam despite the fact that the religion has been heavily covered since Sept. 11. He says the development of stereotypes is

easy, and the portrayals of Muslims over the years in the news and in movies helped enforce associations with violence.

"Every group that came into the United States suffered at one point or another: the Irish, the Hungarians, the Italians, the Poles, the Jews," Wallace says. "Every group had a derogatory term, which meant they were illiterate, dirty, subhuman, uneducated — they're scum. Sept. 11 brought out this hate dimension of the U.S., and we've turned it towards Muslims. We blamed that on Islam rather than a group that hijacked Islam and wanted precisely that reaction. They wanted a clash of civilizations."

Muslims don't deny the existence of people who use the Quran to justify violence. The problem, says Nizam of the local Islamic Center, is that people criticize the religion itself and not the conduct of some individuals. Nizam tells his own children that Sept. 11 does not represent Islam, and acts of violence are not encouraged by the Quran, which says killing one person is like killing all of humanity.

Columbia had its share of events that put Muslims in the spotlight. Federal prosecutors alleged that a former Columbia College student bought a satellite phone that Osama bin Laden later used in the bombings of two American embassies in Africa in 1998. Also, the local Islamic American Relief Agency was raided by the FBI in October for allegedly channeling charitable donations to terrorist organizations.

"Some incidents made it tougher (to engage in dialogue), but we cannot relent," says food scientist Nabil Rashidi, a Muslim who has lived in Columbia for more than two decades. "We should continue the struggle — there is light at the end of the tunnel. We cannot afford to isolate ourselves and our children from the community they grew up in."

Ibrahim and others, such as Roxanne Euben at Wellesley College, believe that making the debate about whether Islam is right or wrong is flawed and unproductive.

Given the fact that all religious texts are susceptible to different interpretations, the question shouldn't be ▶▶▶

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
ISLAM IN THE MODERN ERA	1916: The Sykes-Picot agreement between Great Britain and France divides the Middle East into a handful of states.	1923: The Ottoman Empire disbands, and the caliphate is abolished.	1930: W. D. Fard forms the Nation of Islam in the United States. He teaches Elijah Mohammad, who assumes control after Fard disappears in 1934.	1947: India achieves its independence. The Muslim state of Pakistan is created.
		1928: The Muslim Brotherhood is established in Egypt. It is one of several movements calling for an adoption of Islam by society.	1938: Oil is discovered in Saudi Arabia.	1948: Israel is established.