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VIOLENCE: IS INTOLERANCE REALLY THE CAUSE?

By Steve Bakke  March 28, 2019



Leonard Pitts recently concluded that the mass killing of 50 worshipers in New Zealand mosques “is the predictable result of rising international intolerance, of singling out this group or that...” I’ll respond with two points.

First, Pitts doesn’t acknowledge the changing definitions for “tolerance” and “intolerance.” I remember when “being tolerant” meant genuine acceptance, but didn’t require agreement or approval. That definition evolved and expanded, and now, “being tolerant” requires approval, cheerleading and promotion. Peaceful acceptance, without agreement or support, is labeled by the likes of Pitts as intolerance. Pitts, himself is a “poster boy” for intolerance, should be careful upon whom he lays blame for violence. Most people are genuinely tolerant, in a quiet, old-fashioned way.

Second, tolerance taken to the extreme is a big part of the problem. We’ve had an expansion of acceptable activities, along with far less personal accountability. Moral absolutes have been set aside in favor of unlimited tolerance. We’ve had an incremental disregard for the lives of others and violent behavior is more easily forgiven, or rationalized, with more violence the inevitable result.

Please think about those points before jumping on board with Mr. Pitts and his simplistic explanation.