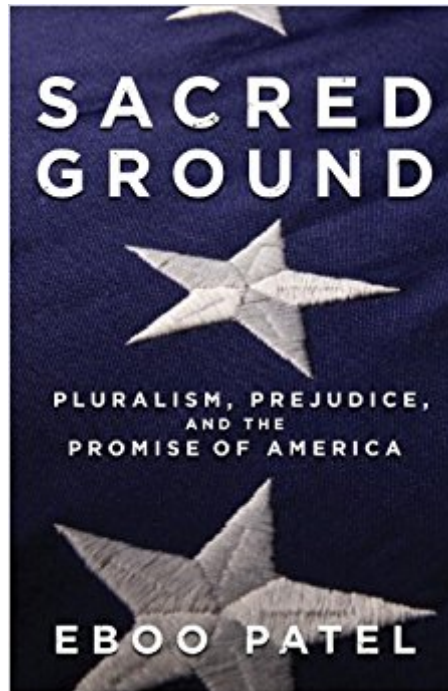




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# Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, And The Promise Of America



## Synopsis

There is no better time to stand up for your values than when they are under attack. In the decade following the attacks of 9/11, suspicion and animosity toward American Muslims has increased rather than subsided. Alarmist, hateful rhetoric once relegated to the fringes of political discourse has now become frighteningly mainstream, with pundits and politicians routinely invoking the specter of Islam as a menacing, deeply anti-American force. In *Sacred Ground*, author and renowned interfaith leader Eboo Patel says this prejudice is not just a problem for Muslims but a challenge to the very idea of America. Patel shows us that Americans from George Washington to Martin Luther King Jr. have been “interfaith leaders,” illustrating how the forces of pluralism in America have time and again defeated the forces of prejudice. And now a new generation needs to rise up and confront the anti-Muslim prejudice of our era. To this end, Patel offers a primer in the art and science of interfaith work, bringing to life the growing body of research on how faith can be a bridge of cooperation rather than a barrier of division and sharing stories from the frontlines of interfaith activism. Patel asks us to share in his vision of a better America—a robustly pluralistic country in which our commonalities are more important than our differences, and in which difference enriches, rather than threatens, our religious traditions. Pluralism, Patel boldly argues, is at the heart of the American project, and this visionary book will inspire Americans of all faiths to make this country a place where diverse traditions can thrive side by side. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Eboo Patel is a remarkable young man with the wisdom to seek truth and the courage to speak it. One of America’s foremost advocates and practitioners of interfaith understanding, he has written a book that combines timely social commentary with compelling history and a wealth of personal anecdotes. Sacred Ground is a refreshing, thought-provoking, myth-smashing, and deeply patriotic exploration of American identity and ideals.”

•Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright “Sacred Ground is simultaneously a chronicle of religious tensions in post-9/11 America and an account of how to create, through trial and error and critical self-reflection, the most successful interfaith movement in the country. Patel probes like a professor, inspires like a preacher, and writes like a poet. I really loved this book; it is a tale that is truly hard to put down.”

•Robert D. Putnam, author of American Grace “Interfaith cooperation is one of America’s founding ideals. It still sets us apart from much of the world. Eboo Patel has lived that value and, in this book, spreads that good word. Uplifting and invaluable, Sacred Ground is essential reading for our polarized era.”

•Walter Isaacson, author of Steve Jobs and Benjamin Franklin “Eboo Patel has been a transformative force in our young and tumultuous century. And he has an utterly original experience of what robust religious identity can mean in modern lives. With this book, he opens the idea of inter-faith into a vision of America that is practically informative, refreshingly challenging, and full of hope.”

•Krista Tippett, host of public radio’s On Being “At a time when ignorance and suspicion are holding us back from building true community with our neighbors, Eboo Patel offers a light in the darkness. He challenges the bigotry and intolerance that is seeping into our political rhetoric, reminding us that America is a country built on the pillars of pluralism and tolerance. In both Sacred Ground and his wonderful interfaith work, Eboo offers an opportunity for us to move to higher ground in our relationships with our Muslim brothers and sisters, and to play our part in building a beloved community for all people, both in the United States, and around the world.”

•Rev. Jim Wallis, author of God’s Politics “Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, lets his love for his work and his country shine through in this brief but charming introduction to the importance of interfaith work in America. [H]is expertise and blend of compelling personal anecdotes with researched argumentation makes this work an accessible and inspiring introduction to the meaning and practice of pluralism.”

•Publishers Weekly

Eboo Patel is the founder and president of Interfaith Youth Core and the author of Acts of Faith. He was a member of President Obama's inaugural faith council, is a regular contributor to the Washington Post, Huffington Post, CNN, and public radio, and speaks frequently about interfaith cooperation on college campuses. He lives in Chicago with his wife and two boys.

Patel is always a clear and thoughtful writer. This book develops the fundamental approach to interfaith relationships that he has developed over his many years leading the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago. It's the most comprehensive and direct argument for the need for interfaith work and workers that I have ever read. I've been working in the field of interreligious relationships for many years, and this is the first time that I have heard anyone ask how we measure the effectiveness of that effort. He makes an important distinction between diversity, which is a fact of modern life, and pluralism, which is developing understanding and appreciation for the diversity. Observing the example of the Dalai Lama, he points out that pluralism requires developing "appreciative knowledge about other traditions," an effort to identify "values that all religions share," understanding "the history of interfaith cooperation" here and around the world, and developing one's own "interfaith theology," based in one's own tradition. In a time when interreligious conflict is so much in the news, and the US is challenged to include more and more religious diversity, Patel's book offers clear direction towards the strength that can come from mutual understanding and appreciation.

Eboo Patel masterfully weaves together stories of several divisive religious happenings that have made headlines in a post-9/11 America, his own life experiences and those of the Interfaith Youth Core, and a vision for a pluralistic nation that emphasizes commonality while celebrating diversity. Since pluralism is a "responsibility" not a "birthright," he encourages people to move beyond the mere acquisition of new knowledge by engaging in interfaith conversations and forming interfaith relationships. Authentic, well researched, and timely Sacred Ground belongs on the reading list of all who value religion and/or America. While the work of the Interfaith Youth Core is now focused on a college audience (an intentional mid-course correction Patel relates in detail), this book effectively spans generations and religions providing wisdom for all.

A wonderfully honest account from Eboo Patel, a Muslim, concerning his feelings, perceptions, and life as an American and who founded the Interfaith Youth Core. He wrote, "The idea is that serving others is a common value to all traditions-- including secular ones-- and when religiously diverse

young people engage in volunteer projects together, they become both committed to the cause of interfaith cooperation and ambassadors for its importance."Patel, Eboo (2012-08-14). Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America (p. xii). Random House Inc Clients. Kindle Edition.

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In a time where the anti rhetoric is poisoning so many relationships, it was a powerful read to be reminded of how open the founding fathers were of other religions and cultures.

Thought provoking. Inspiring. Insight into the current situation in the struggle for understanding.

Sacred Ground is a profoundly refreshing look at how faith intersects with American ideals, or more accurately how American ideals should protect everyone's faith. Sacred ground refers to the fundamental American commitment to freedom of religion. Patel describes the promise of America as pluralism - equal rights for a multicultural society .Following the Harvard University Scholar Diana Eck, Patel makes an important distinction between diversity and pluralism: "diversity is simply the fact of people from different backgrounds living in close quarters. Baghdad is diverse. Belfast is diverse. Bosnia is diverse. Each of those places ... had also experienced serious religious violence... Where diversity is a fact, pluralism is an achievement - it means deliberate and positive engagement of diversity" (pg. 70-71).Sacred Ground will equip you to positively engage with diversity. It will help you live with the shift of colors and creeds in your neighborhoods. Patel will help you overcome the poison of prejudice and work towards the achievement of pluralism.Patel brilliantly illustrates how the forces of prejudice have squared off against the forces of pluralism repeatedly in our history. He notes the famous and obvious example of the Civil Rights movement in the 60's. But he also draws out important parallels between the strong anti-Catholic sentiment in the 60's and present day Islamophobia. I was shocked to read of the religious prejudice and discrimination faced by Catholics only half a century ago.Patel writes about the "science of interfaith cooperation." He points out that social scientists measure diversity in three ways: through people's attitudes, knowledge and relationships. This triangle of knowledge, relationships and attitudes becomes not only descriptive of religious diversity but also prescriptive of how we actually engage positively with different ethnic and religious groups.For example, people's attitudes toward Muslims in general change when they have a meaningful relationship with one Muslim. In the same way,

people's attitudes toward Muslims change when they have greater knowledge of Islam. I have seen this happen repeatedly. We in Peace Catalyst International have been doing this intuitively from the beginning. Thank you Eboo for showing the scientific basis for this! Interfaith cooperation smacks of compromise for many evangelicals. I realize that much interfaith cooperation is in fact a "dumbing down" of our respective faiths to build bridges. It is compromise. But that is NOT the focus of Sacred Ground. Patel emphasizes a robust interfaith cooperation without compromise. He demonstrates that we can and even should engage with the "other" while remaining resolute in our own faith. We can build bridges without denying our own faith. Patel's goal? "How can Cassie be a righteous Christian while remaining friends with a good Muslim? (pg. 141)" Sacred Ground is an important book about relevant issues - a must read for peacemakers and anyone engaging Muslims in the U.S.

Great book on pluralism. Although it doesn't mention the intercultural competency model, it seems to work with in its framework. This book can be read by just about anyone who is interested in this work. At the same time, it carries academic gravitas with its research and larger points. An important read for American's today, religious or not.

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