Keysar Trad

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Chair

Worked in the Australian Public Service for 14 years. Started volunteering with a wide range of Muslim community organisations in the late eighties. Served on the boards of numerous Muslim community organisations from the early nineties. Shared platforms with senior faith, political, community and academic leaders. Authored and translated a number of faith based books. Jointly convened many interfaith events. A regular commentator on Muslim issues and a bridge builder between Muslims and others in society. A vocal defender and advocate for equal rights for minorities.

Breaking the Vicious Cycle of Minority-Blame

In my considered view, the dominant obstacles to social cohesion that confront Australian society are:

1. Othering, and
2. Australia's invasion anxiety.

A trend recently salient in public discourse has given false legitimacy to xenophobia through an invasion anxiety in a society that wants to believe itself tolerant and respectful of others. The make-shift social engineers in public life have engaged in a targeted process of Othering and supremacist projectionism that are at times excused as some sort of initiation ceremony and at other times, presented as the only means to protect an artificial utopian status quo.

To the victim minority, the process of Othering is seen as coercion towards unnatural assimilation and blatant active blackmail to relinquish original identities (that now compound to create a new migrant identity) and links to these original identities and completely dissolve into a host culture whose elites are blaming them for many social woes.

To advance community cohesion, we need to bring to account every self-anointed social engineer who insists on assimilation or on xenophobic Othering. We must promote and cherish cross-cultural respect for the individuals who belong to those cultures whilst restricting criticisms to valid academic critique.