

LINDA SARSOUR



Biography

Linda Sarsour has served as the Director of the Arab American Association of New York¹ since December 2001² and as the Advocacy and Civic Engagement Coordinator for the National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC) - a project of ACCESS, since 2004. She was a 2009 Fellow³ with the American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute (AMCLI), housed at the University of Southern California's Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC), [which] works **in partnership with the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim Christian Understanding (ACMCU)** at Georgetown University.⁴ In December 2011, Sarsour was honored by the Obama White House as a "Champion of Change."5

Downplaying Terrorism Plots, Attacking Counterterrorism Measures, Use of Informants

¹ "Linda Sarsour," Arab American Association of New York, http://www.arabamericanny.org/staff/ (accessed August 8, 2012).

² http://www.linkedin.com/pub/linda-sarsour/34/960/131

³ http://crcc.usc.edu/initiatives/amcli/linda-sarsour.html

⁴ http://crcc.usc.edu/initiatives/amcli/alumni.html. ACMLI's mission is "[b]uilding the capacity of American Muslim leaders to participate in the public square." Its funders include the Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Ford Foundation, McCormick Foundation, One Nation for All, Open Society Foundation, Pillars Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Security and Rights Collaborative, (a project of the Proteus fund), and Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program. http://crcc.usc.edu/initiatives/amcli/linda-sarsour.html.

⁵ http://www.whitehouse.gov/champions/giving-back-to-community/linda-sarsour.

- "Underwear bomber⁶ was the #CIA all along. Why did I already know that?! Shame on us scaring the American people."⁷
- "I mean the Patriot Act is now going to be reauthorized as part of our job creations bill with no open debate or opportunity for amendment. Looking at cases⁸ of Fahad Hashmi, Aafia Siddiqui, Siraj Matin, these are things that are happening every day in our community."9
- "I mean, when was the last time that you can give me an example of a potential, quote-unquote, "terrorist" who came out specifically from an MSA in the recent years, or someone that came out of a particular mosque that was on the list of those surveilled by the NYPD."10
- "And the other thing I wanted to refer to was one case that's not highlighted, which is the Siraj Matin case in Brooklyn, a young Pakistani young man who is serving more than life in prison because of a not because of a not an FBI agent but an NYPD Intel fishing expedition that included an informant, a Muslim informant."
- "The NYPD continues to boast that they have foiled 14 terror plots based on this investigation and we obviously think that it's absolutely false... And the other example I'll give you also is the cases that they have supposedly foiled, we believe many of those cases are entrapment cases. We believe that the NYPD

⁶ This comment apparently refers to a second plot to blow up a US bound plane from Yemen, involving a bomb hidden in a passenger's underwear. The would-be bomber was reportedly an undercover agent. John Miller, "Would-be underwear bomber a double agent," CBS News, May 8, 2012 http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563 162-57430472/would-be-underwear-bomber-a-double-agent/. The first plot involved Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who was arrested in Detroit on Christmas Day 2009. "CIA thwarts new al Qaeda underwear bomb plot," CBS News, May 7, 2012. http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201 162-57429468/cia-thwarts-new-al-qaeda-underwear-bomb-plot/7 Claiming the May 2012 capture of an al-Qaeda bomber was a CIA inside job, she posted her comment on Twitter on May 8, 2012 at https://twitter.com/lsarsour/status/200052719178883073. 8 Syed Hashmi (a.k.a. "Fahad) was charged with supplying money and military gear to Al Qaeda to fight American forces in Afghanistan. Hashmi pleaded guilty in Manhattan federal court to providing material support to Al Qaeda. http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1219.pdf. Aafia

support to Al Qaeda. http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case docs/1219.pdf. Aafia Siddiqui was arrested in 2008 in Afghanistan with "2 pounds of poisonous chemicals, bomb-making instructions and a list of New York landmarks. She grabbed a rifle at an Afghan police station and started shooting at the Americans sent to grill her." Alison Gendar, "'Lady Al Qaeda' Aafia Siddiqui convicted of attempted murder," New York Daily News, February 3, 2010. http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-02-03/news/27055245 1 afghan-police-station-aafia-siddiqui-defense-lawyer. She was charged only with attempted murder and assault on US officers, but was found guilty and sentenced to 86 years in prison. http://www.investigativeproject.org/case/267. Siraj Matin was found guilty and sentenced to 30 years for plotting to bomb a major subway station in New York City. US Department of Justice press release, January 8, 2007 http://www.justice.gov/siraj-pr.pdf.

⁹ Question by Linda Sarsour, Q&A session, John Brennan: A Dialogue on Our Nation's Security, New York University, February 13, 2010.

¹⁰ Talk of the Nation, "Ethnic Mapping: Prophylactic Or Offensive?," National Public Radio, March 8, 2012, Guests: Jawad Rasul, James Lebeau, Linda Sarsour, Zuhdi Jasser.

¹¹ Question by Linda Sarsour, Q&A session, ISNA 2010 Conference, "Free to Pray: Strengthening Our Communities, Protecting Our Rights," July 3 2010.

informants actually manufacture these cases so they can justify the funding that comes to the NYPD... So as an American I would question the plots that the NYPD talks about. "12

- Referring to NYPD informants: "They think we don't know, but we know who they are." ¹³
- "And so this informant was sent into our community ... So what he did was he started hanging out at this bookstore and just befriended this young man, his friend, and obviously you know similarly to what Cyrus explained to you how they kind of, they create the, they create these props, put them in the hands of these young people, many of them who really can't, don't have the capacity to think for themselves, and criminalize our young men in our community."14
- "If you are instilling fear into people and you are not allowing people to live a comfortable life where everywhere they go into the mosque and they look at the person next to them and they say 'is this an informant, is that an informant?' The fact that they have to have these thoughts in their mind is really not fair to this community." ¹⁵
- "Sarsour called on Occupy Wall Street's supporters to, 'stand up and say no.
 Stop spying and harassing and intimidating the Muslim community for being Muslim... I commit myself and our community to the Occupy Wall Street movement and look for your solidarity with our community,' she said."16
- "... Today we are here to tell Commissioner Kelly and Chief NYPD Spokesperson Paul Browne that they need to go. Enough is enough."¹⁷
- "'[The Third Jihad is] clearly a propaganda, anti-Muslim film. It's overly dramatic, piecing together things out of context and threading it together to make

¹² Statement by Linda Sarsour, Arab Voices radio show, March 28, 2012, http://arabvoices.net/archives-2012.htm

Andrea Elliott, "Undercover Work Deepens Police-Muslim Tensions," New York Times, May 27, 2006.
 Statement by Linda Sarsour, speaking at 'Muslim American Identity': 'Reclaiming "Radical": The Criminalization of Dissent & How to Empower Voices of Change', Pace University, Left Forum, Mar. 17, 2012. http://www.leftforum.org/panel/reclaiming-radical-criminalization-dissent-how-empower-voices-change. Speakers: Cyrus McGoldrick, CAIR-NY; Linda Sarsour, Arab American Association of New York (AAANY); Arshad Ali, Columbia University; Imam Talib Abdur-Rashid, Islamic Leadership Council of NY.
 "US Muslims Say Aggressive FBI Tactics Spark Resentment," VOANews.com, February 16, 2010, http://www.investigativeproject.org/1800/us-muslims-say-aggressive-fbi-tactics-spark.

¹⁶ Ryan Devereaux, "Occupy Wall Street joins communities in call for NYPD commissioner to quit," *The Guardian* (UK), March 20, 2012 http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/mar/20/occupy-wall-street-communities-ray-kelly-resignation.

¹⁷ Statement by Linda Sarsour, speaking at Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC) Press Conference, Jan. 26, 2012, New York City Hall (outside steps).

this very false narrative about Muslim-Americans."18

- "They are sending in informants, people who look like us, who speak like us to try
 to rake out what they say are potential terrorists, which we don't have in
 our communities." 19
- "NYPD has instilled fear in New Yorkers and has used talking points like the last 14 foiled plots were by the NYPD which is absolutely incorrect. It's actually been by citizens who have helped in foiling these plots. So this national security paradigm is really causing fear amongst people to believe that what the NYPD is doing is ok, to profile and surveille and spy on an entire community in the name of national security. So **it's just a smokescreen**, and it's very unfortunate."²⁰
- "Well, the way that works in our country right now is that there is law and then there is national security. So anything in the name of national security, every law goes out of the window ... So yes the FBI is if not the same worse than the NYPD. And it's not just the FBI. Let's talk about our CBP, border patrol, between the American and Canadian border."²¹

Asserting Conspiracy Theories, & Claiming the U.S. is Facilitating War on Islam and Muslims

- "It's not just the department of defense. It's not just the military. It's anywhere from showing a movie like the Third Jihad to 1,500 New York City police officers to training FBI agents that Muslims are easily radicalized to become terrorists.' Sarsour said the Islamophobic lessons taught to US military and law enforcement personnel have further damaged national security. 'There's already a deficit of trust between the community and law enforcement.' Sarsour argued that such revelations feed the narrative offered by extremist groups. 'We're basically confirming what al-Qaida is telling Muslims across the world... Our government should be up in arms to know that this is happening, particularly at the department of defense, in a very fragile time in the Middle East.'"22
- "[Islamophobia] has happened throughout the history of our country; our country was based on, you know, genocide on native Americans, based on

¹⁸ "New York mayor criticizes film used in NYPD training alleging extremists are out to control the world," AlArabiya.net, January 24, 2012.

¹⁹ Dean Meminger, "Muslim Activists Protest Alleged NYPD Spying Effort," NY1.com, Nov 22, 2011, http://www.ny1.com/content/news-beats/political-news/151004/muslim-activists-protest-alleged-nypd-spying-effort.

²⁰ "NYPD racially profiling Muslims confirmed," YouTube video, Uploaded February 23, 2012. Available at: http://www.voutube.com/watch?v=i24wcAJaTHA.

²¹ Statement by Linda Sarsour, Arab Voices radio show, March 28, 2012, http://arabvoices.net/archives-2012.htm.

²² Ryan Devereaux, "Anti-Islam teachings 'widespread in US law enforcement, campaigners warn," *The Guardian*, May 11, 2012 http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/may/11/anti-islam-teachings-us-law-enforcement.

slavery, racial profiling has existed for centuries in this community."23

- "As a matter of fact, the chief body guard of Malcolm X was an NYPD informant and we know that Malcolm X was assassinated in cooperation with the government."²⁴
- "And I wanted to just give you some examples... that really give me a hard time to put ... a good face to the American government, which include infiltration of mosques, which has been an issue for us and our community." 25
- "[B]ut racism against blacks in the United States is completely different from intolerance against Muslims, as to talk or display racism against blacks is unacceptable in public in the United States even if in secret, **but unfortunately intolerance against Islam is totally acceptable, and promoted by the media through the statements of American presidential candidates, some of which bear hatred of Islam and Muslims."**²⁶
- "In general I am not surprised by these events after listening to the public movements hostile to Muslims in Congress, and against Islamic rituals, which generated an increase in hatred and intolerance against Muslims, but it is serious to find ordinary people who have nothing to do with religion or politics, practice blind bigotry against Muslim[s]."²⁷
- "Bigotry against Muslims is quite acceptable. From media pundits to elected officials to presidential hopefuls, spewing misinformation and hatred about Muslims and Islam has been normalized." 28
- "How come in the U.S., when a non-Muslim man is killing his wife or daughter, we call it a crime, but when it happens in a Muslim family, it's an honor killing?'...²⁹
- "And I think right now in this country there's a war on women, there's a war on immigrants, there's a war on people of color, war on our civil liberties, war on all the morals and ideals that our country was not necessarily found on, but what we

²³ "NYPD racially profiling Muslims confirmed," YouTube video, Uploaded February 23, 2012. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i24wcAJaTHA.

²⁴ "NYPD racially profiling Muslims confirmed," YouTube video, Uploaded February 23, 2012. Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i24wcAJaTHA.

 $^{^{\}rm 25}$ Question by Linda Sarsour, Q&A session, John Brennan: A Dialogue on Our Nation's Security, New York University, February 13, 2010.

²⁶ "Activist: Discrimination against Muslims in America worse than what happened to blacks," CNN, May 19, 2012 http://arabic.cnn.com/2012/world/4/20/sarsour.blog/index.html.

²⁷ "Activist: Discrimination against Muslims in America worse than what happened to blacks," CNN, May 19, 2012 http://arabic.cnn.com/2012/world/4/20/sarsour.blog/index.html.

²⁸ Linda Sarsour, "My Take: My hijab is my hoodie," *Special to CNN, CNN Wire*, April 9 2012.

²⁹ Souad Mekhennet, "New York Police Video Complicates Muslim Engagement Efforts," *International Herald Tribune*, Feb. 15, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/15/us/15iht-letter15.html.

were supposed to be as a country ... **But because we stand up against NYPD and FBI and those who oppress our communities, we are then criminalized.** We are then the radicals. Right? And what we say to our youth is that – you know what? It's OK to be a radical. That's not a bad thing.."³⁰

• "Along the way there are gonna be some of us that are gonna get picked up. There are gonna be some of us that are gonna get arrested. There are gonna be some of us that are going to be slandered. **There are gonna be some of us that are gonna be painted as radicals and as you know jihadis, and all the other beautiful words that we've made up in this country.** But in order for us to move forward, that has to happen. Right? And there are gonna have to be some of us that are gonna be having, that have to take and be willing to take that chance. Right? Because other people before us took that chance."31

Sarsour's Online Youth Web Magazine Casts America as Authoritarian, Bloodthirsty³²

- "Today the United States is still a democratic nation with authoritarian undertones but the events of the last 11 years suggest that it is becoming an authoritarian nation with democratic undertones. The process began on a day we all remember vividly. On September 11th, 2001, two planes crashed into the two twin towers of the World Trade Center and a plane bound for the White House crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The response of the government was very draconian. Instead of standing up for democracy, it began a decade-long assault on civil liberties." 33
- "The government has been attacking democratic freedoms more than expanding them. To save our freedoms, a nationwide revolution must occur. The system will be changed only if the people realize that the government has been screwing around with their freedoms and rebel against the

 $\frac{http://www.theamplifyer.com/index.php/o4/o7/2012/america-democratic-nation-with-authoritarian-undertones-or-authoritarian-nation-with-democratic-undertones/.$

³⁰ Statement by Linda Sarsour, speaking at 'Muslim American Identity': 'Reclaiming "Radical": The Criminalization of Dissent & How to Empower Voices of Change', Pace University, Left Forum, Mar. 17, 2012. http://www.leftforum.org/panel/reclaiming-radical-criminalization-dissent-how-empower-voices-change. Speakers: Cyrus McGoldrick, CAIR-NY; Linda Sarsour, Arab American Association of New York (AAANY); Arshad Ali, Columbia University; Imam Talib Abdur-Rashid, Islamic Leadership Council of NY. ³¹ Statement by Linda Sarsour, speaking at 'Muslim American Identity': 'Reclaiming "Radical": The Criminalization of Dissent & How to Empower Voices of Change', Pace University, Left Forum, Mar. 17, 2012. http://www.leftforum.org/panel/reclaiming-radical-criminalization-dissent-how-empower-voices-change. Speakers: Cyrus McGoldrick, CAIR-NY; Linda Sarsour, Arab American Association of New York (AAANY); Arshad Ali, Columbia University; Imam Talib Abdur-Rashid, Islamic Leadership Council of NY. ³² "The AmpliFyer is a youth publication at the https://www.theamplifyer.com/index.php/about/, (accessed Sept. 7 2012). ³³ Jeff Nalotoff, "America: Democratic Nation with Authoritarian Undertones or Authoritarian Nation with Democratic Undertones?" AmplifYer website, April 7, 2012,

system ... [T]he people need to rebel by voting and by going out on the streets and protesting."³⁴

• "Even though both [Muammar] Gaddafi and Osama [bin Laden] committed vile and heinous acts during their lives, death is never something anyone deserves. To deserve death means that one is entitled to it, that one person has done something to justify death. Osama Bin Laden killed innocents; there is no doubt about that. Gaddafi undoubtedly oppressed his people. Both men were unnecessarily militant and precariously violent, as they murdered civilians and military personal nearly with indifference. Both were extremists in their own rights who propelled misconceptions about Islam.
Nevertheless, did these men really do anything to justify their own deaths? By celebrating death and parading throughout the streets, the Libyans and Americans are bedaubing their own reputations. They are now no better than the slimes that Gaddafi and Osama were. People claim that it is socially acceptable to celebrate the deaths of evil men. However, a society that celebrates death loses all sense of righteousness, compassion and sympathy..."35

Sarsour's Denial of Family Ties to Hamas

- In 2004, Sarsour reportedly said that Israel suspected that her brother-in-law, serving a 12-year sentence, was a Hamas activist. ³⁶
- However, in June 2012, Sarsour denied having family ties to Hamas after opponents to her appointment by the Brooklyn, New York, borough president to a neighborhood advisory panel mentioned such ties.³⁷ "If I had any ties to Hamas, I don't think I'd be honored by our government," Sarsour said.³⁸

Sarsour in defense of Saddam Hussein, and on Israel and the Palestinians

 $\frac{http://www.theamplifyer.com/index.php/o4/o7/2012/america-democratic-nation-with-authoritarian-undertones-or-authoritarian-nation-with-democratic-undertones/.$

³⁴ <u>Jeff Nalotoff, "America: Democratic Nation with Authoritarian Undertones or Authoritarian Nation with Democratic Undertones?"</u> AmplifYer website, April 7, 2012,

^{35 &}lt;u>Ameen Khdair</u>, "Morality of Celebrating Death," AmplifYer website, Nov. 20, 2011, http://www.theamplifyer.com/index.php/11/20/2011/morality-of-celebrating-death/ (accessed Sept. 7, 2012)

³⁶ Ali S. Sarmad, "Kerry Drew Disenchanted Arabs in Bay Ridge," *Columbia Journalism Review*, Elections 2004, Minority/Ethnic Vote,

http://web.archive.org/web/20041115120337/http://www.jrn.columbia.edu/studentwork/election/2004/minority_alio1.asp (accessed November 1, 2012).

³⁷ Will Bredderman, "Lightning rod Sarsour joins Ridge community board," *Brooklyn Daily*, June 27, 2012 http://www.brooklyndaily.com/stories/2012/26/br-sarsouronboard-2012-06-29-bk.html (accessed August 8, 2012).

³⁸ Will Bredderman, "Lightning rod Sarsour joins Ridge community board," *Brooklyn Daily*, June 27, 2012 http://www.brooklyndaily.com/stories/2012/26/br-sarsouronboard-2012-06-29-bk.html (accessed August 8, 2012).

- Following Saddam Hussein's death: "[Sarsour] said many Palestinians viewed Hussein as a hero because he steadfastly supported Palestinians in their struggle against Israel. She and other Palestinian New Yorkers felt humiliated by the way Hussein was caught and shown, disheveled and pathetic-looking, on international television, Sarsour said.' ... 'I think he's done a lot of things he shouldn't have done, but I was hurt. My Arab pride was hurt,' and, 'Palestinians are under so much oppression and no other Arab country ever helped them." 39
- "The value of Arab life whether nameless Palestinian children bombed by American-funded fighter jets or American youth profiled, questioned and incarcerated for frequenting a particular mosque is spiralling downwards rapidly in the US and at a more accelerated rate in the Arab World." 40
- "As you know as an Arab and a Muslim we want our children **to continue the causes that we bring with us from the Middle East**. For example we want our kids to continue to educate folks about the just cause of Palestine for example. And the fact that these kids are now afraid to talk about politics within their schools is very concerning to me because this is where the seed is planted for future political activism and young activists in our community." 41
- "Israel is there, and **it is going to be there whether we like it or not**... We have to learn to deal with that."⁴²

Ad hominem attacks on critics of radical Islam

- "The **Third Jihad is an anti-Islam propaganda film ...** The narrator of the Third Jihad is a gentleman from our community unfortunately, from the Arab American community, Dr. Zuhdi Jasser from Arizona, who is a **known Islamophobe**, who has been **co-opted by the government** to speak up against the Muslim American community and to **be their kind of sock puppet** ..." ⁴³
- "Salaam alaikum. Salaam alaikum. Hey, hey, Ho, ho, Ray Kelly's got to go. [Repeated three more times with audience.] My name is Linda Sarsour. On behalf of the Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition, we stand here in solidarity with our community, the Muslim American community, and all communities of color affected by the dangers and abusive tactics of the New York City Police

³⁹ Ron Howell, "Capture Elicits Joy, Hurt Pride" Newsday, December 16, 2003.

http://www.newsday.com/news/capture-elicits-joy-hurt-pride-1.260551 (accessed August 28, 2012).

⁴⁰ http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/03/2012321910466650.html.

⁴¹ Statement by Linda Sarsour, Arab Voices radio show, March 28, 2012, http://arabvoices.net/archives-2012.htm

⁴² Russell Berman, "New York Muslim Leader Backs Iranian In Saying Holocaust Is 'Exaggerated'," *The New York Sun*, January 13, 2006.

⁴³ Statement by Linda Sarsour, Arab Voices radio show, March 28, 2012, http://arabvoices.net/archives-2012.htm.

Department. We demand the resignation of Commissioner Kelly and Deputy Police Commissioner Paul Browne, a police commissioner and his deputy who believe that it is OK to continuously lie to the media and to New Yorkers on the public record..."44

- "It goes back to 2007 with the NYPD radicalization report, Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat, that says normal things that Muslims do like go to mosque and grow beards and pray five times a day, is a potential threat to New York City. In order to maintain order and security in our city, we cannot afford to have liars and people who need to lie on the record, when the largest police force in the country and when NYPD boasts as the seventh largest army if it were an army. But having said all that, this is not about the Muslim community; this is about NYPD accountability, this is about the stopping and frisking of young black and Latino males, this is about drugplanting, gun-running corruption, arrest the peaceful Occupy Wall Street protesters, harassment of journalists."45
- And listening to our presidential hopefuls and the Republican Party, just listening to the type of rhetoric they are using against what they call radical Islam or radical Muslims and talking about the Palestinian people are an invented people; I mean the kind of rhetoric coming out from this particular political party just goes to show that talking about Muslims in a negative way is ok and when we watch pundits on CNN and other shows and radio shows depicting our community and calling us unpatriotic and telling us we need to go back to our countries, I think that Islamophobia has been mainstreamed."46
- "People are angry at what's happening and the rhetoric they are hearing from the anti-Muslims and by some of the politicians using Park51 as an issue to separate voters," said Linda Sarsour, one of the organizers of the candidates night, and director of AAANY. "We as a community hope to take our anger to the polls and the actions will be the vote, and vote against politicians who are spreading hate, who are against religious freedom and who are against Park51."⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Statement by Linda Sarsour, Rally Calling for NYPD Accountability, New York, NY (Foley Square, Worth Street), Feb. 3, 2012.

⁴⁵ Statement by Linda Sarsour, Rally Calling for NYPD Accountability, New York, NY (Foley Square, Worth Street), Feb. 3, 2012.

⁴⁶ Statement by Linda Sarsour, Arab Voices radio show, March 28, 2012, http://arabvoices.net/archives-2012.htm.

⁴⁷ From CAIR SFBA Listserv: Mohsin Zaheer, "Muslim Voters Face Difficult Choice in Tuesday's Election," November 1, 2010.