

# MAMDANI LIKES ANTI-RELIGIOUS BIGOTS

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani likes to hire anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic bigots. This is incontestable: see our website for the proof.

Everyone on the list was either on his transition team or served in an advisory capacity. Some are now working in his administration.

Many hate Israel and are trying to weaken its economy through their BDS efforts (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions). Some have defended Al Queda terrorists while others have organized pro-Hamas demonstrations. Anti-Semitic comments abound. Anti-Catholic remarks have also been voiced, and one hire organized an obscene demonstration during Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

None of this is surprising. Mamdani hates Israel and blames it—not Hamas—for the Hamas massacre of Jews in Israel on October 7, 2023. Anyone who harbors that much hostility to Jews obviously wants to surround himself with people just like himself. Moreover, his decision to reward a vile anti-Catholic organizer tells us that he wants people like that working for him, not practicing Catholics.

Spellcheck does not recognize the word Mamdani, offering as a substitute the word "Madman." Looks like it is a lot smarter than the people who voted for him.

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# MAMDANI'S ANTI-RELIGIOUS MESSAGING

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani wasted no time sending a message to the city's faith communities: on his first day in office, he said they would not be afforded heightened protection at their houses of worship. Indeed, he rescinded an executive order to this effect signed by his predecessor, Eric Adams.\*

Most of the news stories on Mamdani's decisions affecting religious liberty focused on his rulings overturning Adams' executive orders on Israel, but too many neglected to cite his policy on houses of worship.

It is true that he has scratched a definition of anti-Semitism that includes opposition to the existence of the state of Israel, a definition accepted by 40 nations, including the European Union and Canada. It is also true that he has given the green light to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which is designed to cripple Israel's economy. Scurrilous as these two decisions are, his executive order affecting churches, synagogues, mosques and temples hit a wider section of New Yorkers.

Adams did not overreact last month when he directed the New York City Police Department to provide stronger protection for houses of worship. His executive order of December 2, which authorized enhanced protection "of both houses of worship and persons exercising their rights to free assembly and free speech near houses of worship," was occasioned by what happened on November 19.

It was on that evening that a crowd of 200 anti-Jewish protesters assembled outside Manhattan's Park East Synagogue screaming, "Death, death to the IDF" [Israel Defense Forces],

“globalize the intifada,” and “take the settler out.” Others yelled, “We need to make them scared.” And what was Mamdani’s response? A spokesman slammed the synagogue for abusing “these sacred spaces” by “promot[ing] activities in violation of international law.”

This should concern all New Yorkers, not simply Jews. Catholics should be particularly troubled, given all the protests that have taken place during Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in recent years; the cathedral has also been vandalized.

In August 2025, Bill Donohue wrote an 18-page report, “The Inauthenticity of Zohran Mamdani.” Regarding his position on religious liberty, Donohue noted that “a Lexis-Nexis search reveals he has never addressed this subject.” He also mentioned that “He is very protective of Islam, but a search of his remarks objecting to anti-Catholicism, or anti-Christian words or deeds, failed to turn up one comment.”

It should be noted that at his inauguration, clergy from the Muslim, Protestant, Hindu, Jewish and Sikh communities were invited on stage, but there was no Catholic priest in attendance. Typically, the archbishop of New York is in attendance, but Cardinal Timothy Dolan was not invited. This speaks volumes about Mamdani’s purported interest in “diversity.” His idea of “inclusion” apparently stops at the door of Catholics.

In January, the House Appropriations Committee introduced a bill that directs \$5 million in federal funding to protect religious sites and fight hate crimes against people of faith. It is outrageous that New York City has a mayor who finds such a policy morally objectionable.

*Be sure to read our “Mamdani Watch” file, regularly updated, that is posted on the front page of our website, [www.catholicleague.org](http://www.catholicleague.org)*

\*It was subsequently reported that Mamdani, bowing to pressure, quietly reinstated Adams' executive order on this issue.

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## **ERRATUM**

In the last edition of *Catalyst*, it was reported in a book review that Detroit Archbishop Edward J. Weisenburger had "banned" the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM) at the end of June. His Excellency wrote a very kind letter to Bill Donohue that provided detailed information how this account was not accurate. Changes were made before and after he took over as archbishop in Detroit in February 2025, but the bottom line is TLM is not banned. He graciously did not ask for a correction, but he deserves one.

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## **LANGUAGE            CONTROL            ABETS THOUGHT CONTROL**

Orwell warned us about elites who manipulate the masses by manipulating the language, and subsequent events have proven him to be more accurate than previously believed. It is our secular elites, in particular, who seek to control language so as to abet thought control. Before examining some recent examples, it is important to recognize that changes in our lexicon are not always the result of some sinister scheme.

For many years, those with low mental attributes were mostly

called "imbeciles," "morons," and "idiots," but in 1895 a new term was introduced that was considered less stigmatizing, "mental retardation." But the shorthand, calling someone a "retard," was later seen as patently offensive, so by the 1960s terms like "intellectual disability" became more acceptable. There was nothing nefarious about these linguistic transitions.

The same is true for describing the races.

"Colored people" was such a customary term in the early twentieth century that black Americans of African ancestry decided to call a newly established civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Founded in 1909, it goes by the same name today. The United Negro College Fund, founded in 1944, also goes by the same name today, even though "negro," like "colored people," has fallen out of favor.

In the 1960s, "black" became the popular racial descriptive, and in the early 1990s it was replaced by "African American," even though polls showed that the preferred term was still "black." Again, this transition was not done to serve some political agenda.

The politicization of language today is most evident in the way we think about immigrants who have come to the United States illegally. Virtually everyone called such people "illegal aliens," and that is because they were foreigners who entered the country by breaking the law. But in 2010, a "Drop the I-Word" campaign was launched to get rid of "illegal aliens" and replace it with "undocumented immigrant." In 2013, the Associated Press dropped "illegal immigrant" from its stylebook after liberal scholars protested.

In 2014, under Obama, the government adopted more "inclusive" language. But it wasn't until the Biden administration that "illegal aliens" was summarily rejected; this was in keeping

with its “open borders” approach to immigration. Now that Trump is back in the White House, “illegal aliens” is also back. Unfazed, the *New York Times* likes to talk about “noncitizens.”

The best examples of twisting the language to accommodate the politics of elites are found by studying matters sexual.

Anyone doing research on violence committed by people who falsely claim to belong to the opposite sex will notice that what we call today “transgender” people were either called “transsexuals” or “transvestites” in the late 1990s. This can get really confusing. Before this century, reporters accurately referred to Jim, who chose Jane as his “transition” name, as Jim. Today he is called Jane and is falsely referred to as “she/her.”

Megyn Kelly created a firestorm in November when she said it was inaccurate to call Jeffrey Epstein a “pedophile.” She was not dismissing his monstrous acts, only pointing out that most of his victims were not prepubescent. Bill Donohue defended her, pointing out that when homosexual priests were being outed for abusing minors, they were falsely called “pedophiles,” so as to avoid calling them homosexuals. Yet only 3.8 percent of the victims of clergy sexual abuse met the clinical definition of pedophilia. The reaction against him was voluminous and vicious.

Another lexicon game is being played by those who refer to men who have sex with adolescents as “ephebophiles.” It’s a game because heterosexuals who abuse minors are never called “ephebophiles”—it’s selectively invoked to avoid referring to homosexuals when adult men molest teenage males.

Homosexuals began referring to themselves as “gay” in the 1920s, a decade of decadence in the West, and it became routine in the 1960s, another morally debased decade. The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the Associated Press ended

their usage of “homosexual” in the 2010s and started using “LGBT,” which by now has taken on a never-ending alphabet of “persons.”

It was left to a New Zealand psychologist, Dr. John Money, to scrap our vocabulary of the term “sexual preference,” substituting “sexual orientation” instead. The Johns Hopkins professor was active in the mid-twentieth century manipulating the language to serve his sexual agenda. “Sexual preference” indicated that our attraction was a matter of choice, and that was taboo; “sexual orientation” accomplished his goal.

Money was not some disinterested “scientist.” He was a pedophile who sought to normalize man-boy sex, lobbied to eliminate the age of consent, and wanted to legalize father-daughter and mother-son sex.

When language is used to obfuscate, to confuse, and to manipulate, it is done to serve a cause, and should be condemned as such. When innocent people are hurt as a result, we are dealing with evil. Such persons—always the elites—do not want to elucidate, they want to dominate.

Language evolves, sometimes for noble purposes. Beware of instances when the motive is corrupt. When the end result is thought control, we are dealing with totalitarians.

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## **THE “WALL OF SEPARATION” MYTH**

As America nears its 250th anniversary, fierce disputes over religion in public life increasingly stem from a widely accepted myth: that the First Amendment erected a rigid “wall of separation,” forcing government to shun any cooperation, accommodation, or recognition of religion. This narrative,

pushed by judges, advocacy groups, and cultural lore, treats religion like radioactive waste to be quarantined from civic spaces.

Consider Americans United for Separation of Church and State (AU), the nation's leading advocate for strict church-state separation and a group with anti-Catholic roots. It goes beyond opposing an official state church, demanding a "naked public square" where religion is limited to private beliefs. When faith enters the public realm via equal access to government programs for religious schools, accommodations for believers, or government officials using religious language, AU and its allies raise alarms. They insist this "wall" reflects the Constitution's original meaning: essentially, freedom *from* religion. But that's a modern secularist invention—a constitutional canard grafted onto the First Amendment—not what the Founders intended in 1791.

The Constitution's text mentions no "wall of separation." The First Amendment states simply: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The phrase "wall of separation" originates in Thomas Jefferson's 1801 letter to the Danbury Baptists, penned fourteen years after ratification. Jefferson wasn't even present for the drafting; he was in Paris. His letter is an interesting bit of history, but not an authoritative constitutional hermeneutic. Courts largely ignored it for decades. Even Chief Justice William Rehnquist deemed Jefferson a "less than ideal source" for the clause's original meaning.

Catholics have particular cause for wariness of Jefferson; he scorned biblical miracles as a "dunghill" and called priests "enemies of liberty." More crucially, the First Amendment's meaning shouldn't hinge on a belated metaphor from someone absent from its drafting and ratification.

To understand the Establishment Clause properly, examine its

text and Founding-era context. At the time, nine states had established or state-supported churches; Massachusetts retained its established church until 1833. The clause served mainly as a federalism safeguard: It barred *Congress* from creating a national church or interfering with state religious establishments. Religion remained in the domain of the states, permitting public acknowledgment and collaboration; a far cry from today's supposed blanket prohibitions.

James Madison, who actually drafted the First Amendment, viewed it this way. Scholars from diverse perspectives—Robert P. George, Akhil Reed Amar, Steven D. Smith, Kurt T. Lash, Carl H. Esbeck, Daniel L. Dreisbach—and Supreme Court justices like Clarence Thomas and Potter Stewart concur: It was a federalism provision, not a mandate to purge religion from public life.

Aggressive “no-contact” separationism arose later, driven by anti-Catholic sentiments. As law professor Philip Hamburger explains in *Separation of Church and State*, post-Civil War theological liberals and American nativists saw Catholic immigration and hierarchy as dangers to American individualism. They repurposed “separation” as a weapon against “popery,” fighting funds for Catholic schools and churches’ public influence. This prejudice, later echoed by groups like the Ku Klux Klan in the name of American “liberty” and “rights,” elevated Jefferson’s phrase into a patriotic sword and shield.

By the 20th century, this ideology had infiltrated the law. In 1947’s *Everson v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court applied the Establishment Clause to state and local governments for one of the first times, embedding Jefferson’s “wall of separation” in legal precedent. Justice Hugo Black—a former Klansman—proclaimed it “high and impregnable,” forbidding direct government support for religion. Justice Wiley Rutledge’s private notes and correspondence, written after the justices met to discuss the case, exposed the true

agenda: keeping Catholic influence out of public schools. *Everson* entrenched separationism, fueling decades of rulings that disadvantaged Catholic and other religious institutions.

AU, founded that year as “Protestants and Other Americans United” in response to *Everson*, claimed the Court hadn’t discriminated enough against Catholics. It pushed an even more extreme “no-aid” policy: no generally available government benefits for religious groups, even basics like police or fire protection.

This “wall of separation” dogma isn’t a timeless constitutional truth; it’s a modern secularist fabrication, forged in anti-Catholic bias. It inverts the First Amendment, pitting the Establishment Clause against the Free Exercise Clause. As Professor Mary Ann Glendon notes, these clauses “were meant to work together in support of a single value: religious freedom. The framers of the Constitution considered religion to be a great public good to be carefully protected.” By reclaiming the First Amendment’s original federalist meaning, we can return to what Professor Richard Garnett calls “freedom for religion”: a public square where faith is valued, accommodated, and even supported.

The Catholic Church itself echoes this vision of religious liberty in *Dignitatis Humanae*. It was further endorsed by Pope Benedict XVI during his 2008 visit to the United States, where he praised the Founders’ model as a “healthy secularism.” Ultimately, “freedom for religion,” not “freedom from religion,” remains true to the Founding era’s intent, offering a framework that Catholics can embrace and promote in public life.

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# RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY FREAKS ATHEISTS

On January 16, President Donald Trump forever declared this day to be Religious Freedom Day, honoring the central place that religion has played in anchoring our freedoms. He specifically cited the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which was codified on January 16, 1786; it is the foundation of the First Amendment.

Only someone who holds an animus against religion would find fault with Trump's statement. Enter the militant atheists from the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). They detest it, declaring it to be a "Christian nationalist manifesto."

As we have said many times, "Christian nationalism" is a bogeyman, a term invented by those who seek to curb the influence of Christianity in American life. But FFRF is nonetheless right to target Christianity: the United States was founded exclusively by Christians, resting their convictions on Judeo-Christian tenets. It was not founded—this has to be said—by those who belong to Eastern religions or by pagans, and it certainly wasn't founded by atheists. Lucky for them, they are the beneficiaries of our Judeo-Christian heritage.

FFRF is angry at Trump because he "repeatedly invokes 'God-given rights.'" If anything, Trump could be criticized for downplaying this verity. Has FFRF read the Virginia Statue for Religious Liberty? It should not do so standing up.

It begins by acknowledging that "Almighty God hath created the mind free." It pays homage to the "Holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind," further recognizing "his Almighty power." That makes what Trump said tame.

FFRF hates to admit that the Founders were right to maintain that our rights do not come from government—which can take them away—but from God. They are therefore inalienable, not subject to whim.

This speaks to the “free exercise of religion” provision in the First Amendment. FFRF likes to emphasize the first part, not the latter. It never mentions the “free exercise of religion,” preferring to talk about the “Establishment Clause” (which is not a clause). It cites this provision to advance its cause of protecting “the constitutional wall separating church and state.”

But there is no wall. Jefferson wrote the Virginia law, and he never said anything about this mythical wall. He mentioned this phrase years later in 1801 in a letter he wrote to Baptists in Danbury, Connecticut stating his support for federalism. He wanted no federal laws governing religion, but he said nothing about state-sponsored churches, which existed until 1833. Moreover, he used the phrase “separation of church and state” to guarantee religious liberty, not to curtail it.

The “wall of separation between church and state” appears nowhere in the U.S. Constitution or the Bill of Rights. It found its way into constitutional law in 1947 when Justice Hugo Black broached it in the *Everson v. Board of Education* decision. Black wanted to make sure no public funds directly went to Catholic schools. This made sense given he was a former member of the Ku Klux Klan. He joined the Klan not to condemn blacks or Jews, but Catholics.

We are proud of Trump’s promotion of religious liberty. Without it, we would not enjoy the freedoms we take for granted, FFRF protestations to the contrary.

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# CHINESE COMMUNISTS PUNISH JIMMY LAI

Jimmy Lai, the 78-year-old British citizen and convert to Catholicism, was sentenced in Hong Kong on February 9 to twenty years in prison for protesting human rights abuses in China. He was accused of being the “mastermind” of protests against the Communist regime. He was arrested in 2020 under a new law that restricted freedom of the press, citing his “seditious” articles in *Apple Daily*, a newspaper he founded in 1995.

Chinese Communist chief Xi Jinping said the conviction has his “strong support.” But his voice was not echoed abroad.

Volker Türk, the chief human rights commissioner at the United Nations, said Lai was being punished for “exercising rights protected under international law.” Elaine Pearson, the Asia director for Human Rights Watch, said that trials like this send “a message to anyone who dares to criticize the Chinese Communist Party.”

Reporters Without Borders issued a statement saying, “Today the curtain falls on press freedom in Hong Kong.” The Committee to Protect Journalists maintained that “this egregious decision is the final nail in the coffin for freedom of the press in Hong Kong.”

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio called the sentence “an unjust and tragic conclusion to this case.” The European Union slammed what it called the “politically motivated prosecution of Jimmy Lai.” Many leaders in democratic nations, including Taiwan, voiced similar comments. Nathan Sharansky, the former Soviet dissident who was imprisoned for his human rights protests, said Lai was an “heroic freedom fighter and my dear friend.”

The Vatican has said nothing.

It is not clear whether Pope Leo XIV will depart from Pope Francis' policy of appeasement with Communist China. Hong Kong Watch had accused Pope Francis of turning a blind eye to the oppression of Catholics in China, a sentiment shared by Cardinal Joseph Zen, former Bishop of Hong Kong.

In 2024, Ed Pentin, senior Rome correspondent for the *National Catholic Register*, said that unlike many other countries, "the Vatican has continued its silence on Lai's plight." Last year, Anne Hendershott, a sociology professor at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, wrote that Lai's tenuous condition "underscores the Vatican's failure to exercise meaningful leadership in defending justice—serving as a stark reminder of the Catholic Church's compromised role, with the Vatican retreating instead of defending Jimmy Lai..."

(Pentin and Hendershott serve on the Catholic League's board of advisors.)

Jimmy Lai became a human rights advocate after the Communists squashed the pro-democracy movement in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989. Appeals are now being made by influential heads of state to void his sentence. The Holy See should do the same.