



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AFTER 9/11:
Debating Park51 2010-2015



OVERVIEW

Students will explore the debate over Park51 by watching video footage, analyzing historical speeches, and conducting independent research.

STUDENT GOALS

- Students will analyze video footage of protests from September 11, 2010 to reveal the positions of Park51 opponents and supporters.
- Students will be able to articulate the political debate over Park51 by examining speeches from New York City's former mayors.
- Students will research the three names of the Islamic Cultural Center – Cordoba House, Park51, and Ground Zero Mosque – to discover their history and meaning.

COMMON CORE STATE
STANDARDS

Grade 4:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3

Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

Grade 6:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.7

Integrate information presented in different media or formats as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

Grade 9-10:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

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KEY TERMS/VOCABULARY

- Connotation
 - Controversy
 - Cultural Center
 - Debate
 - Ground Zero
 - World Trade Center
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ACTIVISTS

- Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf
- Mayor Michael Bloomberg
- Mayor Rudy Giuliani
- Timothy Brown

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INTRODUCING RESOURCE 1

Nicholas Loomis. "Islamic Center: 9/11/2010." New York Times video, 1:54. September 12, 2010.

<http://www.nytimes.com/video/nyregion/1248069013001/islamic-center-9-11-2010.html>

Beginning in 2009, the plan to build an Islamic Cultural Center at 51 Park Place in lower Manhattan, two blocks from the World Trade Center site, stirred new activism around familiar issues in New York's history: religious tolerance, cultural diversity, and the uses of urban space. Controversy over this building divided New Yorkers, propelling family members of the victims, workers at the Ground Zero construction site, and others to form organizations and attend rallies and marches supporting and opposing the plan. Watch the video of a protest on September 11, 2010, to explore different sides of the debate.

DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS

- Describe the scene. What are the activists doing in this video?
- Why is the building of an Islamic Cultural Center at 51 Park Place so controversial?
- Read the activists' signs from either side of the debate. What do the signs say? Which sign do you think most effectively conveys the activist's message?

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INTRODUCING RESOURCE 2

“Bloomberg on Mosque Vote,” *The Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 2010.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703545604575407673221908474>

Maggie Haberman, “Rudy: GZ Mosque is a ‘Desecration,’ ‘Decent Muslims’ won’t be Offended,” *Politico*, August 2, 2010.

http://www.politico.com/blogs/maggiehaberman/0810/Rudy_Mosque_is_a_desecration_.html

Continue to explore the debate over Park51 with an analysis of the following quotations from New York’s former mayors.

Former Mayor Michael Bloomberg

August 3, 2010

“Whatever you may think of the proposed mosque and community center, lost in the heat of the debate has been a basic question – should government attempt to deny private citizens the right to build a house of worship on private property based on their particular religion? That may happen in other countries, but we should never allow it to happen here [in the US]. This nation was founded on the principle that the government must never choose between religions, or favor one over another. The World Trade Center Site will forever hold a special place in our city, in our hearts. But we would be untrue to the best part of ourselves – and who we are as New Yorkers and Americans – if we said ‘no’ to a mosque in Lower Manhattan.”

Former Mayor Rudy Giuliani

August 2, 2010

“So [Park51] not only is exactly the wrong place, right at Ground Zero, but it’s a mosque supported by an Imam who has a record of support for causes that were sympathetic with terrorism. Come on! We’re gonna allow that at Ground Zero? This is a desecration. Nobody would allow something like that at Pearl Harbor. Let’s have some respect for who died there and why they died there. Let’s not put this off on some kind of politically correct theory. I mean, they died there because of Islamic extremist terrorism. They are our enemy. We can say that. The world will not end when we say that. And the reality is, it will not and should not insult any decent Muslim because decent Muslims should be as opposed to Islamic extremism as you and I are.”

DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS

- Why do Mayor Bloomberg and Mayor Giuliani disagree about the construction of Park51?
- What references do Mayor Bloomberg and Mayor Giuliani make to American values and history? How do these references contribute to their arguments?

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Since 2009, the proposed Islamic Cultural Center in downtown Manhattan has been called three different names: The Cordoba House, Park51, and The Ground Zero Mosque. Split your class into three groups and assign each group to one of these names. Each group will research this name to discover its political connotations. Ask them to consider the following questions:

- Who gave the building this name?
- When was the building given this name?
- What aspects of the building's function does the name emphasize/de-emphasize?
- Which activist organizations use this name to refer to the building?
- Does this name imply support, opposition, or indifference to the building?

Have each group present their findings to the class. Discuss how terminology can carry a political message. Brainstorm other examples that demonstrate the power of naming.

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ADDITIONAL READING

THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLES

“Building on Faith” by Feisal Abdul Rauf, September 7, 2010, describes the mission of Park51 from the perspective of the chairman of the Cordoba Initiative.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/08/opinion/08mosque.html?_r=0

“On Sept. 11 Anniversary, Rifts Amid Mourning” by Anne Barnard and Manny Fernandez, September 11, 2010, outlines the heated demonstrations in downtown New York on the ninth anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/12/nyregion/12sept11.html?_r=0

“Fight on Islamic Center Flares Anew as Ex-firefighter Takes His Case to Court” by Colin Moynihan, March 15, 2011, covers ex-firefighter Timothy Brown’s lawsuit to prevent the building of Park51.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/nyregion/16mosque.html?module=ArrowsNav&contentCollection=N.Y.%20%2F%20Region&action=keypress®ion=FixedLeft&pgtype=article>

CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

“Developer Scales Back Plans for Muslim Center Near Ground Zero” by Sharon Otterman, April 29, 2014, describes a recent proposal to build a museum instead of a cultural center at Park51.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/30/nyregion/developer-scales-back-plans-for-muslim-center-near-ground-zero.html?ref=topics&_r=0

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SOURCES

"Bloomberg on Mosque Vote," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 2010.

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Haberman, Maggie, "Rudy: GZ Mosque is a 'Desecration,' 'Decent Muslims' won't be Offended," *Politico*, August 2, 2010.

http://www.politico.com/blogs/maggiehaberman/0810/Rudy_Mosque_is_a_desecration_.html

Iyer, Deepa. *We Too Sing America: South Asian, Arab, Muslim, and Sikh Immigrants Shape Our Multiracial Future*. New York: The New Press, 2015.

Loomis, Nicholas. "Islamic Center: 9/11/2010." *New York Times* video, 1:54. September 12, 2010.

<http://www.nytimes.com/video/nyregion/1248069013001/islamic-center-9-11-2010.html>