

# Beyond Us and Them

## First reflections on the Charlie Hebdo affair

February 2015

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Headline writers and politicians throughout the western world have been in agreement – the attack on Charlie Hebdo on 7 January was part of a war on freedom, a war on the foundations of western democracy. Anyone who does not express total solidarity with the victims by, for example, holding up a Je suis Charlie slogan, and does not declare their unwavering commitment to freedom of speech, may be assumed to be on the side of the terrorists. This has been the dominant narrative in virtually all the coverage so far in the mainstream media, and in the vast majority of speeches and statements by political leaders.

Only a handful of voices have so far queried this dominant narrative – only a handful have stressed that you can NOT ONLY have profound sympathy for the victims and for their families, friends, colleagues and close followers; and can NOT ONLY deplore the cruelty and callousness of the murderers; and can NOT ONLY care about freedom of expression; but can ALSO deplore the simplistic, hypocritical, racist, Islamophobic and deeply damaging us-and-them thinking that has been at the heart of the mainstream media coverage, and of most political speeches.

Here are links to 80 articles that query and deplore the dominant narrative, and that indicate alternative approaches to understanding what is going on. They are from a wide range of countries throughout the world, and are listed in no particular order.

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1. Je ne suis pas Charlie Hebdo  
by Jon Wilson  
<http://labourlist.org/2015/01/je-ne-suis-pas-charlie-hebdo/>
2. The moral hysteria of Je suis Charlie  
by Brian Klug  
<http://mondoweiss.net/2015/01/moral-hysteria-charlie>
3. Charlie Hebdo and the hypocrisy of pencils  
by Corey Oakley  
<http://redflag.org.au/node/4373>
4. I am Charlie, and I guard the Master's house  
by Nadine El-Enany and Sarah Keenan  
<http://criticallegalthinking.com/2015/01/13/charlie-guard-masters-house/>
5. Where monoculturalism leads  
by Liz Fekete  
<http://www.irr.org.uk/news/where-monoculturalism-leads/>
6. Why I am not Charlie  
by Scott Long  
<http://paper-bird.net/2015/01/09/why-i-am-not-charlie/>

7. No, we're not all Charlie Hebdo, nor should we be  
by Ben Hayes  
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/ben-hayes/no-we-re-not-all-charlie-hebdo-nor-should-we-be>
8. Equal in Paris  
by Thomas Chatterton Williams  
<https://nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/equal-in-paris/>
9. Mourning the Parisian journalists, yet noticing the hypocrisy  
by Michael Lerner  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabbi-michael-lerner/mourning-the-parisian-jou\\_b\\_6442550.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabbi-michael-lerner/mourning-the-parisian-jou_b_6442550.html)
10. The danger of polarised debate  
by Gary Younge  
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/11/charie-hebdo-danger-polarised-debate-paris-attacks>
11. Smiling Muslims: leave the gun, take the cannoli  
by Hamid Dabashi  
<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/c7c085dd-968d-4995-8f1f-314806a0d748>
12. We must not forget the responsibility that goes with free speech  
by Tariq Modood  
<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2015/01/12/in-remembering-the-charlie-hebdo-attack-we-must-not-forget-the-responsibility-that-goes-with-free-speech/>
13. When blasphemy is bigotry  
by Chloe Patton  
<http://mondoweiss.net/2015/01/recognise-historical-discussing>
14. From the radical left towards Islamophobia  
by Alain Gresh  
<http://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/18705071-5026-49d5-9bc7-e7c2ab282941>
15. Free speech does not mean freedom from criticism  
by Jacob Canfield  
<http://www.hoodedutilitarian.com/2015/01/in-the-wake-of-charlie-hebdo-free-speech-does-not-mean-freedom-from-criticism/>
16. Fed up with the hypocrisy of the free speech fundamentalists  
by Mehdi Hasan  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/mehdi-hasan/charlie-hebdo-free-speech\\_b\\_6462584.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/mehdi-hasan/charlie-hebdo-free-speech_b_6462584.html)
17. Piety or rage?  
by Seyla Benhabib  
<http://www.hannaharendtcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Piety-or-Rage.pdf>
18. Moral clarity  
by Adam Shatz  
<http://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2015/01/09/adam-shatz/moral-clarity/>
19. The Charlie Hebdo tragedy  
by Christopher Page  
<https://inaspaciousplace.wordpress.com/2015/01/10/charlie-hebdo-tragedy/>

20. Heroic but also racist  
by Jordan Weissmann  
[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/politics/2015/01/charlie\\_hebdo\\_the\\_french\\_satirical\\_magazine\\_is\\_heroic\\_it\\_is\\_also\\_racist.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2015/01/charlie_hebdo_the_french_satirical_magazine_is_heroic_it_is_also_racist.html)
21. West's sickening moral hijack of Paris massacre  
by Finean Cunningham  
<http://mycatbirdseat.com/2015/01/89159wests-sickening-moral-hijack-of-paris-massacre/>
22. Is the Charlie Hebdo attack really a struggle over European values?  
by Myriam Francois-Cerrah  
<http://www.newstatesman.com/myriam-francois-cerrah>
23. Free speech is not an absolute value  
by Simon Dawes  
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/simon-dawes/charlie-hebdo-free-speech-but-not-as-absolute-value>
24. Is solidarity without identity possible?  
by Cinzia Arruzza  
<http://www.publicseminar.org/2015/01/is-solidarity-without-identity-possible/#.VLLvpJlgGK0>
25. Unmournable bodies  
by Teju Cole  
<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/unmournable-bodies>
26. Four reasons why I'm tired of Islamophobia  
by Khalishah Stevens  
<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/01/09/4-reasons-why-je-suis-fatigue-from-islamophobia/>
27. Rival sanctities  
by Glen Newey  
<http://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2015/01/09/glen-newey/rival-sanctities/>
28. Us and them  
by Matt Carr  
<http://infernalmachine.co.uk/us-and-them/>
29. The truth is that freedoms are not sacrosanct  
by Ratna Lachman  
<http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/debate/columnists/ratna-lachman-the-truth-is-that-freedoms-are-not-sacrosanct-1-7053887>
30. Why Charlie Hebdo attack is not about Islam  
by Mark LeVine  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/01/charlie-hebdo-islam-cartoon-terror-20151106726681265.html>
31. The Muslim's guide to self-condemnation  
by Belen Fernandez  
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/muslim-s-guide-self-condemnation-853371649>
32. The freedom to take offence  
by Hatem Bazian  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/01/freedom-offence-charlie-hebdo-is-20151148547873899.html>

33. 'Not afraid'  
by Ghassan Hage  
<http://criticallegalthinking.com/2015/01/11/not-afraid/>
34. Paris – and then?  
by Johan Galtung  
<http://blog.transnational.org/2015/01/paris-and-then/>
35. Why French law treats Dieudonné and Charlie Hebdo differently  
by Alexander Stille  
<http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/french-law-treats-dieudonne-charlie-hebdo-differently>
36. Charlie Hebdo cartoons are bigoted  
by Mahmoud Mamdani with Vidya Venkat  
<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/charlie-hebdo-cartoons-are-bigoted/article6789470.ece>
37. Why we must resist simple explanations of the Charlie Hebdo massacre  
by Laila Lalami  
<http://www.thenation.com/article/194593/why-we-must-resist-simple-explanations-charlie-hebdo-massacre>
38. Theater of the Absurd  
by Eric Alterman  
<http://www.thenation.com/article/195025/theater-absurd>
39. Bibi: il n'est pas Charlie  
by Richard Silverstein  
<http://www.richardsilverstein.com/2015/01/14/bibi-il-nest-pas-charlie/>
40. Outrage over massacre should not blind us to the hurt Muslims feel  
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/outrage-over-massacre-should-not-blind-us-hurt-muslims-feel-119640672>
41. History did not start in Paris on Sunday  
by David Hearst  
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/history-did-not-start-paris-sunday-1915039627>
42. Rewinding the Battle of Algiers in the shadow of the attack on Charlie  
by Tithi Bhattacharya and Bill Mullen  
<http://criticallegalthinking.com/2015/01/14/rewinding-battle-algiers-shadow-attack-charlie-hebdo/>
43. Je suis juste moi – I am just me  
by Zehra Mehdi-Berias  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zehra-mehdibarlas/je-suis-juste-moi-i-am-ju\\_b\\_6448428.html?utm\\_content=buffer779ef&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zehra-mehdibarlas/je-suis-juste-moi-i-am-ju_b_6448428.html?utm_content=buffer779ef&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)
44. A symbol that lends itself to misconceptions and polarisation  
by Sabine Schiffer  
[http://www.medienverantwortung.de/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/EN\\_20150109\\_IMV-PM\\_CharlieHebdo.pdf](http://www.medienverantwortung.de/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/EN_20150109_IMV-PM_CharlieHebdo.pdf)
45. Satire  
by Richard Seymour  
<http://www.leninology.co.uk/2015/01/satire.html>

46. European lives have always mattered more than others  
by Ajamu Baraku  
<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/01/15/european-lives-have-always-mattered-more-than-others/>
47. Why free speech supporters should still criticise Charlie Hebdo  
by Daniel Pryor  
<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/01/15/why-free-speech-supporters-should-still-criticise-charlie-hebdo/>
48. Free speech hypocrisy in the aftermath of the attack on Charlie Hebdo  
by David North  
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/93702>
49. Outrage over massacre should not blind us to the hurt Muslims feel  
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/outrage-over-massacre-should-not-blind-us-hurt-muslims-feel-119640672>
50. Bibi: il n'est pas Charlie  
by Richard Silverstein  
<http://www.richardsilverstein.com/2015/01/14/bibi-il-nest-pas-charlie/>
51. Charlie Hebdo: some tough quandaries  
by Boaventura de Sousa Santos  
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/93711>
52. Paris attacks: let's talk about the 'war on terror'  
by Hamza Hamouchene  
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/93714>
53. Paris terror can be traced back to Algeria in 1954  
by Robert Fisk  
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/93706>
54. History did not start in Paris on Sunday  
By David Hearst  
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/history-did-not-start-paris-sunday-1915039627>
55. Charlie Hebdo: Je suis white people  
by Margaret Kimberley  
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/93720>
56. Je suis Baga!  
by Ian Taylor  
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/93717>
57. Swift had a point about religion. Did Charlie Hebdo?  
by Richard Harries  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/paris-attacks-jonathan-swift-had-a-point-about-religion-did-charlie-hebdo-9985522.html>
58. Looking for Charlie Hebdo  
by Jeremy Harding  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zehra-mehdibarlas/je-suis-juste-moi-i-am-ju\\_b\\_6448428.html?utm\\_content=buffer779ef&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=twitter.com&utm\\_campaign=buffer](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zehra-mehdibarlas/je-suis-juste-moi-i-am-ju_b_6448428.html?utm_content=buffer779ef&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

59. I am proudly Baga!  
by Carlos Sanvee  
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/93713>
60. A postcard from Paris  
by Jason Stanley  
[http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/08/a-postcard-from-paris/?\\_r=0](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/01/08/a-postcard-from-paris/?_r=0)
61. Unending Muslim anger at the west  
Abdulrazaq Magaji  
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/93705>
62. The Charlie Hebdo white power rally in Paris – a celebration of western hypocrisy  
by Ajamu Baraka  
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/93715>
63. Why Charlie Hebdo offends me  
by Hicham Tiflati  
<http://mondoweiss.net/2015/01/charlie-hebdo-offends>
64. France: the ground shifts  
by Mark Lilla  
<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2015/jan/14/france-after-terror-ground-shifts/>
65. French Muslims feel deeply torn by viral 'I am Charlie' slogan  
by Anthony Faiola  
[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/they-are-not-charlie/2015/01/13/7c9d6998-9aae-11e4-86a3-1b56f64925f6\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/they-are-not-charlie/2015/01/13/7c9d6998-9aae-11e4-86a3-1b56f64925f6_story.html)
66. Let's not fall for the terrorists' trap (again)  
by John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-l-esposito/lets-not-fall-for-the-ter\\_b\\_6465580.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-l-esposito/lets-not-fall-for-the-ter_b_6465580.html)
67. The Charlie Hebdo attack and what it reveals about society  
by Zygmunt Bauman  
<http://www.socialeurope.eu/2015/01/charlie-hebdo/>
68. On Charlie Hebdo: a letter to my British friends  
by Olivier Tonneau  
<http://blogs.mediapart.fr/blog/olivier-tonneau/110115/charlie-hebdo-letter-my-british-friends>
69. Charlie Hebdo and Europe's rising right  
by Anne Norton  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anne-norton/charlie-hebdo-and-europes\\_b\\_6444368.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anne-norton/charlie-hebdo-and-europes_b_6444368.html)
70. Ahmed Merabet's eulogy is the most important thing you'll read **on** Charlie Hebdo  
by Max Fisher  
<http://www.vox.com/2015/1/11/7527697/ahmed-malek-merabet-eulogy-charlie-hebdo>
71. Three words for the dead and the living  
by Etienne Balibar, translated by David Broder  
<http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1810-etienne-balibar-three-words-for-the-dead-and-the-living>

72. A message from the dispossessed  
by Chris Hedges  
[http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/a\\_message\\_from\\_the\\_dispossessed\\_20150111](http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/a_message_from_the_dispossessed_20150111)
73. Eleven reflections that mean I am not Charlie  
by Jan Oberg  
<http://www.thelocal.se/20150113/eleven-reflections-that-mean-i-am-not-charlie>
74. Why I am not Charlie  
by Gus John  
<http://www.gusjohn.com/2015/01/why-i-am-not-charlie/#more-1936>
75. Paris attacks show hypocrisy of West's outrage  
by Noam Chomsky  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/01/19/opinion/charlie-hebdo-noam-chomsky/>
76. The red flag and the tricolore  
by Alain Badiou, translated by David Broder  
<http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/1833-the-red-flag-and-the-tricolore-by-alain-badiou>
77. In solidarity with a free press: some more blasphemous cartoons  
by Glenn Greenwald  
<https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/01/09/solidarity-charlie-hebdo-cartoons/>
78. Charlie Hebdo and the wisdom of expression  
by Jan Oberg  
<http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/01/26/charlie-hebdo-and-the-wisdom-of-expression/>
79. Am I Charlie?  
by Ben Cashdan  
<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2015-01-09-am-i-charlie/#.VLE19BcqXX4>
80. France tries to mask its Islamophobia behind secular values  
by Tariq Ali, interviewed by Pranay Sharma  
<http://www.outlookindia.com/article/France-Tries-To-Mask-Its-Islamophobia-Behind-Secular-Values/293132>