United States Department of State / Bureau of International Information Programs

Being Muslim in America

The young women pictured on our cover are both Muslim. They live near Detroit, Michigan, in a community with many Arab-American residents. Each expresses her faith in her own way, with a combination of traditional and modern dress. Here, they compete fiercely on the basketball court in a sport that blends individual skills and team effort. They — along with the other men, women, and children in this publication — demonstrate every day what it is like to be Muslim in America.

Being Muslim in America

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"I Am an American With a Muslim Soul"

I love America not because I am under the illusion that it is perfect, but because it allows me — the child of Muslim immigrants from India — to participate in its progress, to carve a place in its promise, to play a role in its possibility.

Eboo Patel

John Winthrop, one of the earliest European settlers in America, gave voice to this sense of possibility. He told his compatriots that their society would be like a city upon a hill, a beacon for the world. It was a hope rooted in Winthrop's Christian faith, and no doubt he imagined his city on a hill with a steeple in the center. Throughout the centuries, America has remained a deeply religious country, while becoming a remarkably plural one. Indeed, we are the most religiously devout nation in the West and the most religiously diverse country in the world. The steeple at the center of the city on a hill is now surrounded by the minaret of Muslim mosques, the Hebrew script of Jewish synagogues, the chanting of Buddhist sangas, and the statues of Hindu temples. In fact, there are now more Muslims in America than Episcopalians, the faith professed by many of America's Founding Fathers.

One hundred years ago, the great African-American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois warned that the problem of the century would be the color line. The 21st century might well be dominated by a different line — the faith line. The most pressing questions for my country (America), my religion (Islam), and all God's people may well be these: How will people who may have different ideas of heaven interact together on Earth? Will the steeple, the minaret, the synagogue, the temple, and the sanga learn to share space in a new city on a hill?

I think the American ethos — mixing tolerance and reverence — may have something special to contribute to this issue.

America is a grand gathering of souls, the vast majority from elsewhere. The American genius lies in allowing these souls to contribute their texture to the American tradition, to add new notes to the American song.

I am an American with a Muslim soul. My soul carries a long history of heroes, movements, and civilizations that sought to submit to the will of God. My soul listened as the Prophet Muhammad preached the central messages of Islam, tazaaqa and tawhid, compassionate justice and the oneness of God. In the Middle Ages, my soul spread to the East and West, praying in the mosques and studying in the libraries of the great medieval Muslim cities of Cairo, Baghdad, and Cordoba. My soul whirled with Rumi, read Aristotle with Averroes, traveled through Central Asia with Nasir Khusrow. In the colonial era, my Muslim soul was stirred to justice. It marched with Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Khudai Khidmatgars in their satyagraha to free India. It stood with Farid Esack, Ebrahim Moosa, Rahid Omar, and the Muslim Youth Movement in their struggle for a multicultural South Africa.

In one eye I carry this ancient Muslim vision on pluralism; in the other eye I carry the American promise. And in my heart, I pray that we make real this possibility: a city on a hill where different religious communities respectfully share space and collectively serve the common good; a world where diverse nations and peoples come to know one another in a spirit of brotherhood and righteousness; a century in which we achieve a common life together.

Author Eboo Patel is executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago, Illinois. He is a leader in the interfaith movement.

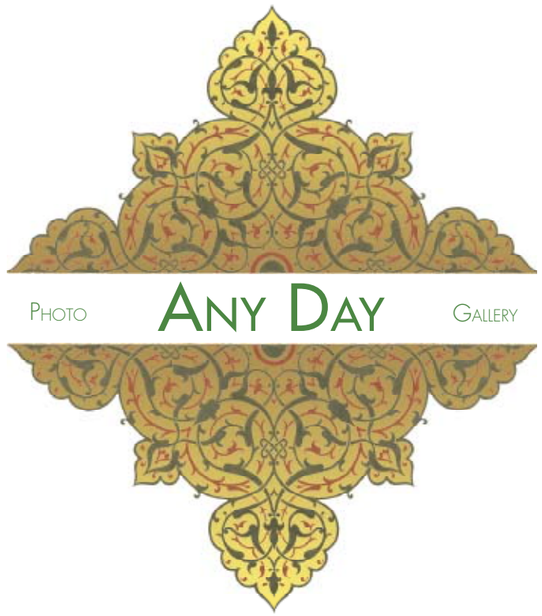
Building a Life in America

Abdul and Majida Alsaadi shop at a Wal-Mart in Dearborn, Michigan.

Immigrants have come to America from every corner of the globe. The people are diverse but their reasons similar: Some sought to escape an old way of life, others to find a new one. Some were escaping violence, others the shackles of custom, poverty, or simple lack of opportunity. They came largely from Europe in the 19th century and from the rest of the world — Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South America — in the 20th and 21st.

They arrived with hope, and often little else.

Their initial reception was frequently mixed. These new Americans found a vast new land hungry for their labor. But some, unfamiliar with these newcomers' customs and religions, treated the new Americans as outsiders and believed they could never be real Americans. They were wrong. With freedom, faith, and hard work, each successive wave of immigrants has added its distinctive contributions to the American story, enriched our society and culture, and shaped the ever-dynamic, always-evolving meaning of the single word that



binds us together: American. And today, this story is the Muslim-American story too.

In 1965, a new immigration law reshaped profoundly the inward flow of new Americans. No longer would national-origin quotas determine who could come. In their place were categories based on family relationships and job skills. With this change, immigration numbers soared, bringing the first significant numbers of Muslims from South Asia and the Middle East to the United States. They arrived in a nation very different from the one experienced by 19th-century immigrants, but today's new Americans face the old immigrant challenge of defining their place in America's social, economic, and political fabric.

Consider two sisters, Assia and Iman Boundaoui. Their parents are from Algeria, and the girls were raised near Chicago, Illinois, as Muslim Americans. As reported by National Public Radio (NPR), Assia and Imam grew up watching both the

Opposite page: Top left, Sadaf Butt adjusts her hijab; above left, Muslim congressional staff members take a break from their work on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. This page: Above, clothing designer Brooke Samad compares fabric swatches; right, Tahqiq Abbasi at his textile shop in Union City, New Jersey.

children's Nickelodeon station and the news channel Al Jazeera. When they got takeout food, they sometimes chose Kentucky Fried Chicken and sometimes their favorite falafel restaurant.

"In America, we would say we're Muslim first, because that's what makes us different, I guess," Assia, age 20, told NPR. "But in another country, like in a Muslim country, we would say we're American."

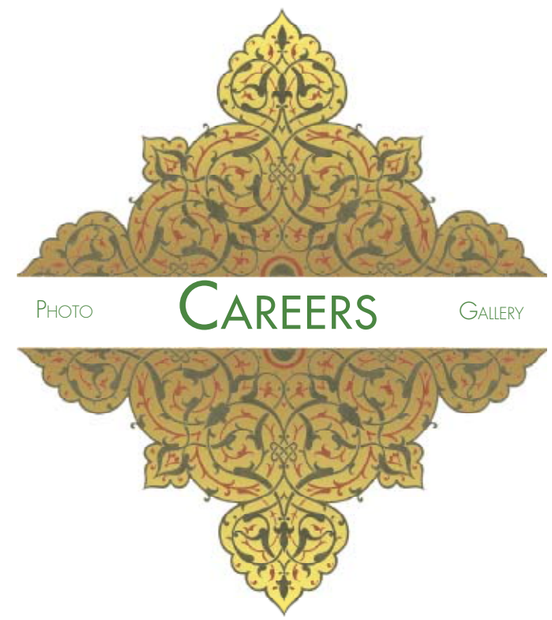
Their story is both remarkable and not so, for there is nothing more American than new generations — from kaleidoscopic combinations of ethnicity and religion — defining themselves as Americans.

"America has always been the promised land for Muslims and non-Muslims," observes Iranian-American Behzad Yaghmaian, author of *Embracing the Infidel: Stories of Muslim Migrants on the Journey West*. She told the *New York Times*, "They still come here because the United States offers what they're missing at home."

The tales of Muslim Americans track a familiar arc, but individually they add immeasurably to the vibrant diversity of a nation founded not on common ancestry, but on the shared values of freedom, opportunity, and equal rights for all.

"In every era of U.S. history, women and men from around the world have opted for the American experience," writes historian Hasia Diner. "They arrived as foreigners, bearers of languages, cultures, and religions that at times seemed alien to America's essential core. Over time, as ideas about U.S. culture changed, the immigrants and their descendants simultaneously built ethnic communities and participated in American civic life, contributing to the nation as a whole."

Clockwise from left, Abdi Mohamed says evening prayers in his Omaha, Nebraska, grocery store; at home in Brooklyn, New York, a family searches the Internet; Susan Fadlallah prepares the meal to break the Ramadan fast. Center, butcher Nehme Mansour grinds halal meat in Michigan.



Clockwise from left, Dr. Maya Hammoud holds the medical handbook in Arabic that she wrote; Samiul Haque Noor, winner of New York City's annual Vendy Award for best street vender food; Mohamad Atwi's Wal-Mart name tag is in two languages.

Muslim Americans possess a diversity that is extraordinary even by American standards. In sharp contrast to other immigrant groups, Muslim Americans cannot be defined by race or nationality; in this sense, they more closely resemble the Hispanic Americans whose origins lie in Spain, the many nations of Latin America, and the islands of the Caribbean.

Muslim American diversity may be greater still, encompassing origins in South Asia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Europe's Balkan region, and Africa, as well as a small but growing group of Hispanic Muslims.

Because the United States does not track population by religion, there is no authoritative count of its Muslim population. Estimates range widely, from 2 million to 7 million or more. Of that number, approximately 34 percent are of Pakistani or South Asian origin and 26 percent are Arab.

Another 25 percent of Muslim Americans are indigenous, largely African American, and this adds still more layers to the rich Muslim-American experience. In other words, the Muslim-American saga is not just one of immigration and Americanization, but part of one of the most powerful themes in American history: the struggle for racial equality.

There are mosques and Muslim social and cultural institutions throughout the country, in urban centers and rural communities alike. Want to visit the International Museum of Muslim Culture — the first Islamic history museum in the United States? Forget about traveling to New York or Washington; instead you must head for the Arts District of Jackson, Mississippi. Dearborn, Michigan, is home to the nation's largest Arab-American population. Muslims from South Asia and Africa form vibrant

and growing communities in the New York-New Jersey area. Somalis have settled in substantial numbers in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, and Southern California is home to the country's largest Iranian-American population.

Yet even these ethnic communities are hardly monolithic. Many of the Arabs living in Dearborn and elsewhere are Christian, not Muslim, and a number of Iranian Americans living in Los Angeles are Jewish.

Generalizing about such a diverse a population can obscure more than it explains. Better, perhaps, to study representative experiences.

"We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry," says the noted African-American poet Maya Angelou, "and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter their color; equal in importance no matter their texture."

Iman Boundaoui of Chicago, for example, found that freedom involved her decision to wear a head scarf. She recalls a vivid incident during a high school trip to Paris, France, when her group talked with girls at a private Muslim school founded in response to a French law banning head scarves in public schools: "And me and my friends were

"We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter their color; equal in importance no matter their texture."

— Maya Angelou

Clockwise from left, former director of the National Institutes of Health Dr. Elias A. Zerhouni gives a presentation; comedian Maysoon Zayid does her stand-up routine; Sacramento Kings forward Shareef Abdur-Rahim goes up for a jump shot; Staff Sargeant Magda Khalifa in her U.S.Army uniform.

Clockwise from bottom left, Muslims march to support volunteerism; young Muslim activists brainstorm ways to solve problems in their community; Farooq Aboelzahab talks about the diversity at his mosque; religious leaders gather to celebrate peace and tolerance; Sarah Eltantawi answers questions at a news conference.

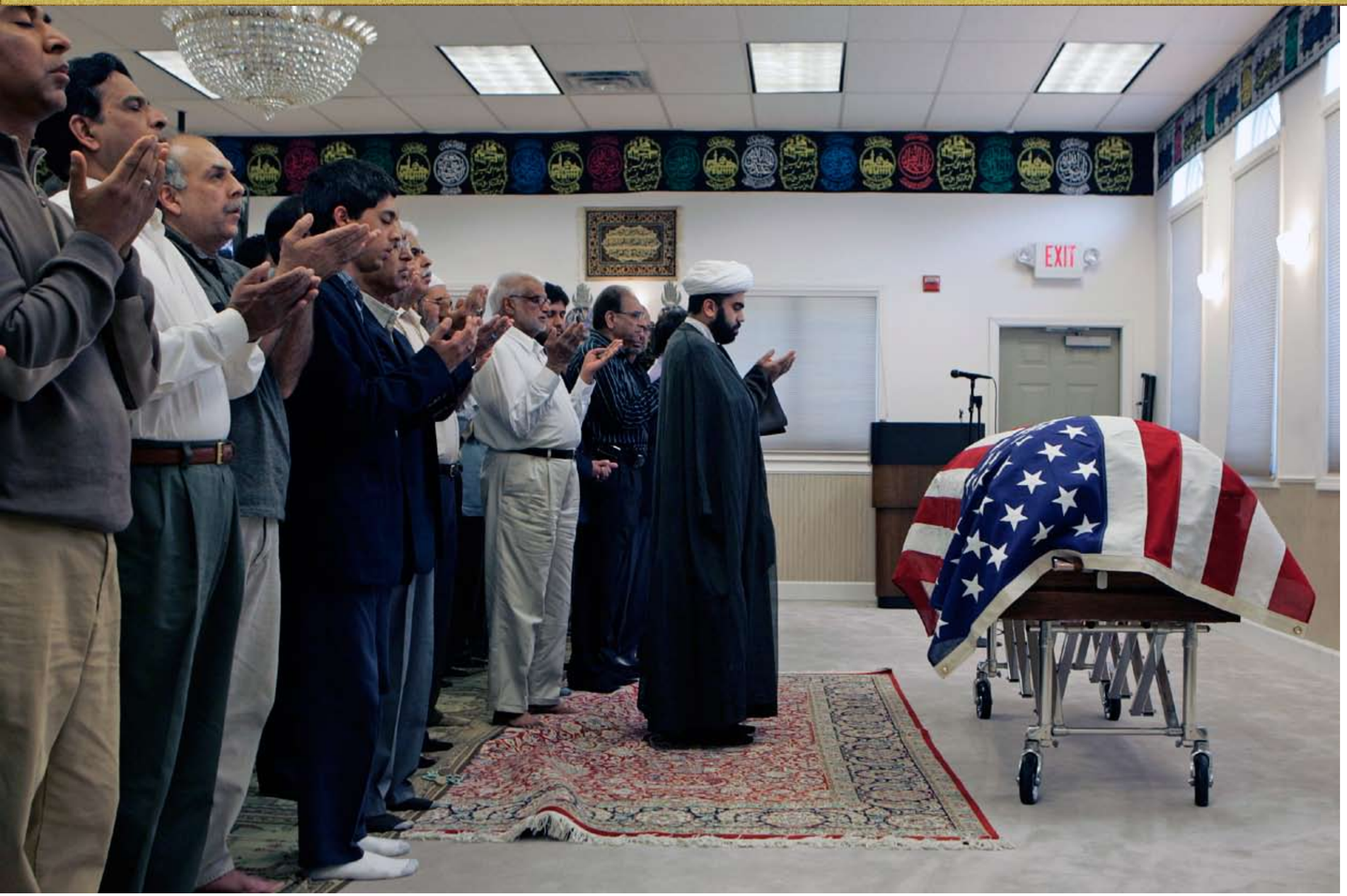
looking at them," Boundaoui told NPR, "and at that moment we were like, 'Thank God we live in America,' that I can walk down the street with my scarf on without having to decide to take it off because I have to go to school."

For Pakistani immigrant Nur Fatima, freedom instead means that after moving to an area of Brooklyn, New York, known as Little Pakistan, she could choose to remove her head scarf, reveling in the fact that Americans generally regard these social and religious choices as private matters. "This is a land of opportunity, there is equality for everyone," Fatima told the *New York Times*. "I came to the United States because I want to improve myself. This is a second birth for me."

Today, in a thousand different circumstances, Americans of Islamic faith embrace their heritage as a crucial part of a self-fashioned identity in which they choose from among all the possibilities of freedom that this land bestows upon all its citizens. As they explore the possibilities, they discover that they, too, have become Americans.

"We stress the American Muslim identity, that home is where my grandchildren are going to be raised, not where my grandfather is buried," Salam Al-Marayati, executive director of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, told California's *Sacramento Bee* newspaper.

With growing numbers, confidence, and organization, Muslim Americans contribute in every field, from business and scholarship to sports and the arts. Their stories range from Pakistan-born Samiul Haque Noor, whose spicy halal dishes earned him the 2006 award for best food street vendor



Imam Hashim Raza leads the prayers during a funeral at the al-Fatima Islamic Center in Colonie, New York, for Mohsin Naqvi, a U.S. Army officer killed by a roadside bomb in Afghanistan.

in New York City, to Dr. Elias Zerhouni, from Algeria, head of the National Institutes of Health from 2002 to 2008; from *Newsweek* commentator and editor Fareed Zakaria, to actor and hip-hop artist Mos Def; from professional basketball star Dikembe Mutombo of the Houston Rockets, to Representative Keith Ellison of Minnesota, the first Muslim member of the U.S. Congress.

A new generation of Muslim Americans enriches American medicine, science, and literature. Obstetrician and gynecologist Nawal Nour, born in Sudan and raised in Egypt, pioneers women's health issues as founder of the African Women's Health Center in Boston, Massachusetts. She received an esteemed MacArthur Fellowship (nicknamed the "genius grant") in 2003 and Stanford University's Muslim Scholar Award in 2008.

Iranian-American scientist Babak Parviz of the University of Washington has made exciting breakthroughs in nanotechnology — ultra-small electronic and biological applications at the cellular and molecular level — including tiny devices that can assemble and reassemble themselves independently.

Writer Mohja Kahf, who came from Syria as a child, has skewered American culture generally and Muslim Americans themselves with gentle irony and razor-sharp observations in her poetry (*E-mails From Scheherazad*) and an autobiographical novel set in Indiana (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*) — books that have drawn fervent admirers, especially among younger Muslim-American women.

She also writes a frank online column about relationships and sex for younger Muslims and believes that with such works as *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* Muslim-American literature can now legitimately be considered a distinct genre.

Fady Joudah, born to Palestinian parents in Texas, grew up to become an emergency-room physician, now working in Houston, and has served with Doctors Without Borders at refugee camps in Zambia and in Darfur, Sudan. He is also a major new poet and winner of the prestigious Yale Series of Younger Poets competition for his collection *The Earth in the Attic*.

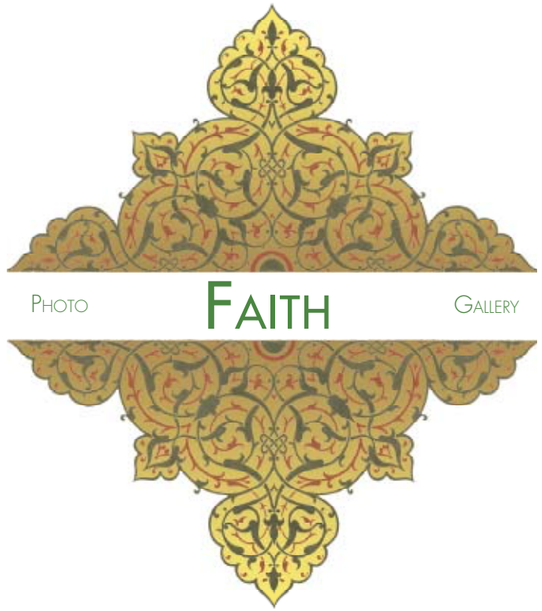
"These are small poems, many of them, but the grandeur of conception inescapable," wrote poet and critic Louise Glück in her introduction to Joudah's book. "Fathers and brothers become prophets, hypothesis becomes dream, simple details of landscape transform themselves into emblems and predictions. The book is varied, coherent, fierce: impossible to put down, impossible to forget."

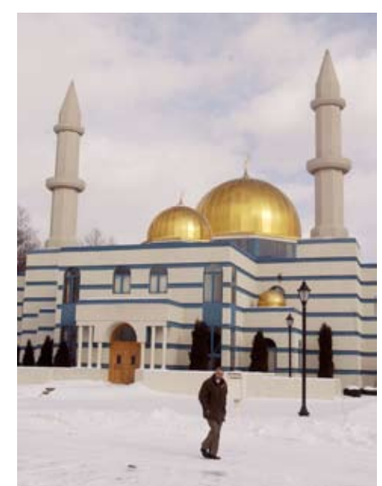
A new, truly American Islam is emerging, shaped by American freedoms, but also by the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks. Even as surveys by the Pew Research Center and others show that Muslim Americans are better educated and more prosperous than the average, the terrorist attacks — planned and executed by non-Americans — raised suspicions among other Americans whose immediate responses, racial profiling among them, triggered in turn a measure of Muslim-American alienation. Sadly, suspicions of this kind are not uncommon — in the United States or in other nations — during wartime or when outside attack is feared. But 2008 is not 2002, when fears and suspicions were at their height. Context is also important: Every significant immigrant group has in the United States faced, and overcome, a degree of discrimination and resentment.

Nur Fatima, for example, celebrated her newfound freedom in a New York Pakistani communi-

Above, students and advisers paint a mural that recognizes diversity in faith in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Right, Yasmine Asfoor answers a question in government class at Mountain Pointe High School near Phoenix, Arizona.

This page: Clockwise from left, Sister Hala Hazimi, standing, assists Zeinab Ghanem with a math problem in Michigan; Adnan Kasseem bows during a class on prayer etiquette in New Mexico; on a field trip, students visit the International Museum of Muslim Culture in Jackson, Mississippi. Opposite page: Clockwise from top, high school basketball players prepare for a game in Michigan; in North Carolina, Ruhi Brelvi, at left, and Hebah Sedak prepare their basketball uniforms for game day; Laila Alkahlout, front, and Sasha Khaffed battle for a basketball during a national youth tournament in Florida.





ty where, a few years earlier, fear was high and both businesses and schools closed in the wake of 9/11, according to the *New York Times*. By the time Fatima arrived, Little Pakistan had recovered under the leadership of local businessman Moe Razvi, who helped start English and computer classes, opened a community center, and led community leaders to meet and improve relations with federal authorities.

"The annual Pakistan Independence Day parade is awash in American flags," the *Times* reported. "It is a transformation seen in Muslim immigrant communities around the nation."

Among the healthy responses to the tensions triggered by the terrorist attacks is an expansion of the interfaith dialogue in the United States.

"Anytime you share a space with someone of another culture, you are bound to grow as an individual and learn to see things from another perspective," said Kareema Daoud, a doctoral student in Arabic language and literature at Georgetown University who has served as a volunteer citizen ambassador for the Department of State. "There is beauty in diversity," Daoud concludes.

Clockwise from left, Mohamad Hammoud prays at the Islamic Center of America mosque in Dearborn, Michigan; Mariam Motala, at right, prays at the Islamic Center of Hawthorn, California; a young boy hopes to join in on prayers in Brunswick, New Jersey; the Islamic Center of Cleveland, in Parma, Ohio, is home to more than 300 worshippers.

Above, top, children attend evening prayers; above, women worship at Masjid Al-Rahman in California. Opposite page: Top, Muslims pray in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.; bottom, men gather during the annual meeting of the Islamic Society of North America in Chicago, Illinois.

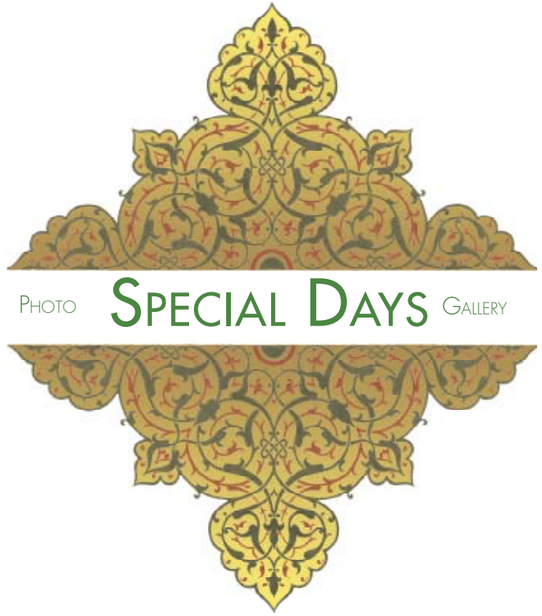
The 9/11 attacks also galvanized the Muslim-American community to become more active in civic and political activities — to advocate for issues of concern, to build alliances with non-Muslim organizations — and to confront intolerance and threats of violence.

"Active engagement and involvement in politics reflects the fact that American Muslims are part of the social fabric of America, and also reflects their patriotic concern for this country," says editor and writer Nafees Syed of Harvard University in a commentary on the free-wheeling discussion Web site altmuslim.com

Paraphrasing President John F. Kennedy, Syed continues, "The question is not only how taking part in the political process will aid American Muslims, but how American Muslims can help this country."

Like the global population, the majority of American Muslims are Sunni, although there are large numbers of Shia and groups who actively follow Sufi traditions. Despite this diversity, says Paul Barrett, author of the 2007 book *American Islam: The Struggle for the Soul of a Religion*, "distinctions that possibly loomed larger elsewhere are instead in America 'diluted' in the deep pool of pluralism that characterizes American society. … Many immigrants have taken the ambitious step of crossing continents and oceans because they want to escape old-world antagonisms, to pursue education, economic betterment, and a more hopeful life for their children."

Progressive forms of belief, a more prominent role for women, even the recent evolution of "mega-mosques" resembling in size the large evangelical Christian churches — are among the characteristics of a rapidly evolving, uniquely American Islam.



"I have found that Muslims in America are melding their faith, ethnic background, and the folkways of their adopted land in many different ways," Barrett said in an interview on altmuslim.com. "There is no one formula, just as there hasn't been a formula for past immigrant groups. ... I'm confident that there won't be one story about how Muslims assimilate. There will be many stories."

Clockwise from above, Nawal Daoud holds the Quran over the heads of girls as they walk underneath it during a Takleef ceremony; Hafiz Azzubair posts a sign urging people to vote; Rutgers University students Lelia Halwani, at left, and Nadia Sheikh attend a reception at the interfaith dorm where they live in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

"I have found that Muslims in America are melding their faith, ethnic background, and the folkways of their adopted land in many different ways. … I'm confident that there won't be one story about how Muslims assimilate. There will be many stories."

— Paul Barrett

This page: Clockwise from bottom left, halal turkey is served for Thanksgiving dinner in St. Louis, Missouri; girls in Paterson, New Jersey, break the Ramadan fast with dates; Fawad Yacoob speaks during the Blessing of the Waves ceremony in California; in Tyler, Texas, men embrace during Eid al-Fitr celebrations. Opposite page: Members of the Malaysian Students Association celebrate their graduation from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

American Profiles

Young Muslims Make Their Mark

Top row, from left, Imam Khalid Latif; filmmaker Lena Kahn; artist Heba Amin. Bottom row, from left, businessman Moose Scheib; fashion designers Nyla Hashmi and Fatima Monkush; singer Kareem Salama; journalist Kiran Khalid. Opposite page, far right, Bedouin Girl *by Heba Amin.*

Artist Heba Amin

The contemporary artist Heba Amin, 28, has been drawing for as long as she can remember, but pursuing art full-time did not occur to her until she was a junior in college. At the time, Amin, who now lives in Minneapolis, was a math major and first envisioned herself as an architect.

Amin was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt. Her late father was an interior designer; her mother, an administrative worker at the private American school Amin attended from kindergarten through 12th grade.

After high school, Amin traveled to the United States to attend Macalester College, a private, liberal arts school in St. Paul, Minnesota. By her third year, Amin realized that her heart lay in art, not math, and in 2002 she earned a bachelor's degree in studio art, with a concentration in oil painting.

Living in the United States, she told Fayeq Oweis, editor of the *Encyclopedia of Arab American Artists*, allowed her "to take the role of the outside observer" and opened her eyes to the richness of Arab and Egyptian culture that she had "previously overlooked or taken for granted."

For several years, Amin's work revolved around portraits of Bedouin women, who, she said, "are known for their embroidered and beaded crafts.

"The European Union had a program designed to preserve these crafts, funding the work and encouraging older women to teach younger ones. I became interested in that and stayed with different tribes to see the process working. I also apprenticed with a Bedouin artist who created sand paintings."

As Amin spent time with different Bedouin tribes, she realized she was even more interested in their way of life than their craft.

"I was struck by how attached they were to their surroundings and the land, and how sad it was that their culture was deteriorating due to urban sprawl and modernization," she recalled.

Amin began painting brightly colored portraits of Bedouin women juxtaposed with urban geometric patterns. "The patterns overwhelm the paintings, representing how the city is taking over the Bedouin culture," she said.

Eventually, Amin's Bedouin paintings led her in a different artistic direction, toward three-dimensional installation pieces. "As I did the portraits, I found I was really interested in the city structure format," she explained.

The next time she was in Cairo, Amin said, "I noticed how many abandoned structures there were — expansive masses of land were covered with unfinished buildings. I took photos of these structures, and then started doing a series of works about them, investigating them. What they were, why they were abandoned, their effect on people."

Amin became fascinated with the thought of the city as an emotional idea, rather than a structural one, and that led her to a different medium.

Above, installation piece Root Shock *by Heba Amin.*

"I found that painting was a little restrictive — I couldn't really relay the emotion I was after," she said. "I wanted to move into something that was more experiential. Installation art allowed me to create a space that expressed the emotional ideas I was after."

Amin's work has been shown at a number of galleries in Minneapolis, New York, and Washington.

"I look at city infrastructure as representation of the progression of a society," she wrote on her Web site. "Urban planning is indicative of a society's political situation, and I am interested in investigating Middle Eastern cities where the infrastructure is an obstacle and a burden to people's daily lives. I am interested in the city's effect on personal space, where city structure begins to take precedence over individuality and where buildings and humans begin to overlap and layer on top of one another instead of coexisting.

"These installations are simply intended to address the idea that one's surroundings play an immense role in behavior," she wrote.

In addition to her installations, Amin recently illustrated a book that profiles Muslim women in history called *Extraordinary Women from the Muslim World*.

In spite of her artistic success, Amin is reluctant to depend on her art for her living. "I'm not focused on selling my work," she said. "And that frees me from the obligation of making work that other people want. I've been in school now for 10 years, and ultimately, I'd like to stay in academia."

As for living in the United States, she said, "I love it. I love being in the academic environment, where I have time to explore my ideas and how to express them."

Imam Khalid Latif

At the age of 25, Imam Khalid Latif already has achieved important leadership responsibilities as chaplain and director of the Islamic Center at New York University (NYU) and the Muslim chaplain for the New York Police Department.

"The university and police department are obviously very different," Latif said. "But they're also very similar as American institutions with growing Muslim populations who are trying to find their way."

Latif is deeply committed to interfaith dialogue and community service as integral parts of what it means to be Muslim in a modern, multicultural world. "Each of these interactions can be an opportunity for spiritual growth," he said.

As head of the rapidly growing Islamic Center at New York University, Latif is planning an ambitious fundraising campaign that he hopes will allow him to hire a full-time staff and appoint a scholar-in-residence within three to five years.

However, Latif never forgets that he is, above all, the spiritual leader of a young and varied congregation. Most are students seeking to find their spiritual path as Muslims while facing the challenges of young college-age people anywhere.

In 2007, he was named as only the second Muslim chaplain to the New York Police Department. Latif, who serves with Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish clergy, already has been called to hospitals several times to comfort injured officers and their families, none of whom has happened to be Muslim.

Latif grew up in Edison, New Jersey, the son of Pakistan-born parents. He was one of only a small number of Muslim students at school. But in a pattern that has carried on through his life, Latif also sought out wider leadership positions, becoming student council president and captain of his football and track teams.

Inquiry Into Faith

Latif majored in Middle Eastern and Islamic studies at New York University and found himself continuing his inquiry into his faith and his role as a Muslim American in perhaps the most ethnically and religiously diverse metropolitan area in the world.

He also began to perceive the extraordinary diversity of Islam itself. "As a freshman, I met an Indonesian with a scraggly beard — and a surfboard. That was something new.

But I also met Muslims who were African American, African, converted Muslims, and the children of converts."

Throughout his university years, Latif continued his informal study of Islam, and at age 18 he was cajoled into giving his first sermon. "It seemed to go fairly well, and I was asked to give them on a regular basis," he said.

In 2005, after graduating from NYU, Latif entered the Islamic Chaplaincy Program at the nondenominational Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, the only accredited program of its kind in the country.

Around the same time, Latif volunteered as the first chaplain of NYU's Islamic Center. He also co-taught courses on conflict resolution at Abraham's Vision, a Muslim-Jewish interfaith organization for young people.

In 2006, Latif accepted a part-time position as the first Muslim chaplain of Princeton University in New Jersey; soon he was commuting between Princeton and NYU. Both schools offered him full-time positions, and Latif accepted NYU's offer to serve as director of its Islamic Center.

School Chaplain

In many respects, Latif is a pioneer at a time when the growing Muslim student population, coupled with large numbers of international students, has greatly increased the need for Muslim chaplains on campus.

One of Latif's most successful undertakings was almost an afterthought: podcasts of his 20-minute Friday sermons. A friend suggested they record and post them on the Islamic Center Web site.

The response far exceeded expectations. The podcast Web site averages 15,000 visits a month. He has listeners from 40 to 50 different countries, notably Indonesia and Malaysia, although he also receives appreciative messages from schoolteachers and followers in Europe.

Latif regards his commitment to interfaith activities as central to his mission as an imam in today's multicultural world. "Interfaith work can be frustrating at times," Latif said, and requires both time and hard work.

He cites a trip to New Orleans with members of the Islamic Center and NYU's Jewish Bronfman Center to help with Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts.

By working and living together over a period of time, he said, they overcame their mistrust "and they all learned not to define students by religion or background as the 'Other.'"

"This is real, effective change," Latif said, "change that can emanate into the broader community."

Above, the cover of Newsweek *magazine featured American Muslims from all walks of life. Khalid Latif is at center left in cap and police uniform.*

Filmmaker Lena Khan

On a parched August afternoon in Los Angeles, Lena Khan peruses the aisles of Hand Prop Room, a company that supplies stage props for major Hollywood movies such as *The Aviator* and *The Departed*. From *faux* meat carcasses to bronze Thai Buddhas, the shelves are stuffed with gizmos, gadgets, and curiosities that help make the magic of cinema. Wearing a pale green head scarf and a demure beige cardigan, Khan discovers and unsheathes a two-foot long ninja sword with a mischievous look on her round, pale face. "This will work," she says.

Though she defies expectations of what a filmmaker should look like — she is young, female, devoutly Muslim, and Indian American — the 24-year-old film school graduate writes and directs music videos and short films, as well as commercials for a restaurant called Crave. (In one ad, a ninja throws whirling samosas).

Khan won $5,000 for *Bassem is Trying*, a one-minute short that humorously demonstrates how a Muslim-American man tries to fit in — for instance, by blasting hip-hop music on his car radio. Her three-minute short *A Land Called Paradise*, essentially a music video set to a song of the same name by Muslim country singer Kareem Salama, won a $20,000 grand prize from One Nation, a Muslim advocacy group that sponsored the film competition. Khan directed dozens of men and women of diverse backgrounds to hold up handwritten signs that express messages they want the world to know about them as Muslim Americans. The statements are as whimsical as "I, too, shop at Victoria's Secret," and as serious as "My sister died on September 11."

One of the judges for the 2007 One Nation competition, former professional basketball player Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, gave *A Land Called Paradise* high marks for its "beautiful

Top, still frame from Bassem is Trying. *Below, three stills from* A Land Called Paradise. *Opposite page, filming* Bassem is Trying.

cinematic language," while journalist Mariane Pearl commended the film "for its freshness and sense of humor while addressing vital emotions felt by the Muslim population and the rest of us."

Pulling off *A Land Called Paradise* was a major effort, Khan recalled. The project started with a question: "If you could say something to everybody in the world who is not Muslim, what would you say?"

"I sent out e-mails; I went to mosques; I used every major Muslim Listserv I could think of," she said.

The first response Khan received was "Islam inhibits my suicidal thoughts." "That's when I knew that this was the video I was going to do," she said. "I wouldn't have thought of that. I was trying to fix the representations of Muslims, but I don't think I can speak for all of them. And this was my first clue. I got 2,500 responses, collected them, narrowed them down, and made the video."

Since the video's launch, Khan has received hundreds of e-mails from people who say the video has made them cry, inspired them to open a discussion about Islam with their families, or broken down walls built by stereotypes. The video also opened professional doors for Khan, such as a meeting with the documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock. The Muslim Public Affairs Council, at a dinner in Hollywood, recognized her as a filmmaker to watch.

"If I hadn't entered the contest, I'd be at the same place as I was before," said Khan, a graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) film school.

Khan became interested in cinema as a form of social activism, which she considers an important tenet of her faith. Because she is about to get married, she was expected to accept a diamond engagement ring. "I didn't want to have anything to do with the diamond industry, the blood diamonds. It's just really bad," Khan said. "My parents are like, 'Why are you being so lame? Just go buy a diamond. It's not that big a deal.' But I do think it's a big deal. It's a test to see if you can sacrifice your own things for other people." She chose a big moissanite ring instead.

And when shooting on location, she insists on using caterers who cook only free-range chicken. "My brother always makes fun of me and calls me Lisa Simpson," Khan said, referring to the wonky, intellectual younger sister from the American cartoon television series *The Simpsons*.

As an undergraduate majoring in political science and history at UCLA, Khan noticed that students would become interested in genocides such as those in Rwanda and Darfur only if they saw a movie about the topic or if an actor publicized the cause. She also was tired of seeing Hollywood films such as *The Siege* and *Black Hawk Down* use images to connect terrorism to ritual ablutions and the call to prayer.

"These things ate at me. So I decided that instead of complaining about them, I would enter the field and do something about it," Khan said. "I wanted to make movies about social issues because it seems like movies are the best way to tell a story — that's when people really listen and relate to people who are going through those things." She went on to get a master of arts degree in film at UCLA.

Back at Hand Prop Room, Khan digs into a box of ninja stars. Once she has selected her props, she hops in her dusty red Toyota Prius and drives over the Hollywood Hills to Western Costume Company in search of ninja masks and suits.

In addition to her ninja commercials, her future projects include a set of commercials about the presidential election and another music video for Salama.

But when it comes to a 40-minute personal film that she is making, she said only, "They expect something big and popular. So yeah, I have a little bit of pressure there." It's up to Khan to make it look like magic.

Lena Khan's videos *Bassem is Trying* and *A Land Called Paradise* can be seen on YouTube.com.

Businessman Moose Scheib

It could be a scene from a movie. A young man, the son of immigrants, excels in his studies, attends a distinguished law school, and lands a job at a top law firm. One day, he walks into the restaurant where his mother has worked as a cook for years, takes off his gloves, and says: "Mom, come home with me. You're never going to have to work again."

But it's not a movie. It is part of the story of Moose Scheib, 28, who today heads a company that has saved thousands of families from losing their homes through foreclosure.

"The main thing is to be able to help people stay in their homes — that is the most exciting thing for me," Scheib said.

School and Work

Scheib was born in Beirut, Lebanon, and some of his early memories are of the shock and strangeness of a child's life during wartime. In his application to law school, Scheib later wrote, "Such experiences ... instilled in me an unwavering passion for the pursuit of knowledge and justice."

The family of six immigrated to the United States when Scheib was seven years old, living first in Toledo, Ohio, and then in Dearborn, Michigan. When his father suffered the first of several strokes, Scheib's mother became a full-time restaurant cook.

"My mother never complained," he said. "'Your father can't do it, I will,' she said, and took a tough job at minimum wage. ... All she told us was to focus on our education and make sure to get scholarships, 'as money for college is something I don't have for you at this point in our lives.'"

Scheib graduated with honors from Albion College in Michigan, where he founded the Muslim Student Association, then attended Columbia Law School in New York City, where he served as a board member for the Muslim Law Students Association.

Scheib's one escape from the unrelenting pressures of work and study was sports — especially American-style football. "On the field, I shed barriers that language, poverty, and race had previously imposed on me," he wrote in his law school application.

The Legal World

Scheib found law school a challenge. "The combination of law school and the big city was a big shock — and Columbia was the most competitive environment I'd ever been in," he said.

But Scheib persevered and succeeded. He received an award for public service from the Arab American Institute in 2004 and served as a clerk for a New York Supreme Court justice.

In 2005, Scheib joined the prestigious New York law firm Proskauer Rose LLP. He valued the business and legal experience he gained there — even though he knew the corporate world didn't represent his long-term future.

"One of the factors that led me to Proskauer is because it's the largest Jewish law firm in the world," he said. "I'm all about building bridges between our diverse communities."

Saving Homes

In October 2005, with law school behind him, Scheib decided the long-anticipated day had arrived. He went to the restaurant where his mother had cooked for so many years and gave her the gift of being able to quit work for good.

Above, Moose Scheib, center, celebrates his graduation from law school with members of his family.

"My parents sacrificed so much for us," he said. "They gave up a good life in Lebanon for us, their children, and I wanted them to know that the sacrifices had been worth it."

In 2006, Scheib returned home to Dearborn to launch his business venture, LoanMod.com. LoanMod renegotiates home mortgages to avoid foreclosures in a "win-win" manner that benefits both the homeowner and the bank or financial institution holding the mortgage.

With a successful restructuring of the mortgage loan — usually a simple lowering of the interest rate — the family stays in its home and the bank avoids the much higher expense of taking control of a foreclosed property.

Scheib believes his company is the first of its kind in the country. "We pioneered this business, starting by helping my uncle out, then friends, and realized that we had a viable business model," he said.

The company has completed more than 5,000 successful negotiations that have allowed families to keep their homes and banks to avoid the high costs of foreclosure. The company anticipates completing 20,000 loan modifications by the end of 2009.

Looking Ahead

Scheib plans to have more than 100 people on staff to meet the increasing need for his services. As government puts pressure on lenders and mortgage servicers to modify their portfolios to help homeowners avoid foreclosure, Loanmod.com is well-positioned

with its network of 19,000 notaries in all 50 states. "Our counselors will guide homeowners through the loan mod process, and our notaries will help them properly execute the paperwork at their kitchen table," he says.

"Helping people save the most important material thing in their life is the best reward of all," Scheib said. "When you save a home, it helps the neighborhood, the community, and ultimately the whole country."

Scheib has big changes happening close to his home as well: A daughter, named Sophia June, was born in 2008. Scheib grew up in the same Dearborn neighborhood as his wife, Natalie, who is half Lebanese and half American Indian.

"I am lucky ... and truly blessed, no doubt," Scheib said. "But I've also found that the harder I work, the luckier I am."

Above, Moose Scheib, wife Natalie, and daughter Sophia June pose for a family portrait.

Fashion Designers Nyla Hashmi and Fatima Monkush

Nyla Hashmi, 23, and Fatima Monkush, 25, are uncommon women with a lot in common. They grew up best friends in Hartford, Connecticut. Both of them have Muslim fathers from South Asia and American mothers who converted to Islam.

And now, both are committed to designing chic clothing that offers Muslim women a way to dress both modestly and fashionably.

The two hope to launch their new clothing line, called Eva Khurshid. Although the designers have a specific market in mind, they also hope to reach a broad base of potential customers.

"The name will be recognizable as Muslim, but any woman would look great in our clothes," said Hashmi. She describes the line as "American clothing for working women 25 to 34 years old with an on-the-go lifestyle."

Clothing Dilemmas

Hashmi and Monkush first became interested in clothing design in their teens. Hashmi's family moved to Pakistan in 1995, when she was 10, although she continued to spend summers in Connecticut. (The family moved back to the United States permanently after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.)

"When we came back the summer I was 13, I went through a huge culture shock," Hashmi said. "I saw how different the Pakistani and American adolescent cultures were. My parents wanted me to start dressing more modestly, because I was growing up. I wanted to dress cool like the other kids, but there was nothing in the stores."

Monkush had a similar experience. "It was really difficult to find anything ready-made that I could wear," she said. The girls often resorted to layering, "the Muslim girl's best friend," Monkush said with a laugh.

Both Hashmi and Monkush learned to sew from their mothers. "My mom taught me to follow a pattern and also to change it to create something completely different, something that was exactly what I wanted," Monkush said. "I was 16 when I started making all my own clothes. That was the summer Nyla and I set our course."

Comfort and Clothes

Both women have developed their own definitions of appropriate attire. "I grew up in a very conservative home, and my parents were adamant about dressing modestly," Hashmi explained. "I eventually found my comfort zone. I will wear short sleeves, but nothing low cut or body hugging. Everyone has their own comfort level."

Monkush's approach "is not about rules, but about what feels right," she said. "For myself, I'm not going to walk around in a tank top or a short dress — I'm just not comfortable. I do cover my hair and have since I was 14."

Growing Up in a Mixed Family

Nyla Hashmi's mother was raised a Catholic. Her father, a Pakistani, came to the United States in the 1970s and is a U.S. citizen. "My mother was studying to be a nurse when she met my father, who's a heart surgeon. My mother was so inspired — he is so kind and generous — that she became interested in his religion and converted," Hashmi said.

Right, Fatima Monkush models one of her designs for Elan *magazine.*

Hashmi attended Islamic school on Sundays in Hartford, along with her three siblings.

Monkush's father is from Bangladesh. He came to the United States in 1971 to stay with a cousin in West Virginia. Monkush's mother met him while visiting a friend, and she, too, converted to Islam before the two married.

Path to the Fashion World

After public high school, Monkush went to the University of Connecticut and Central Connecticut State University, where she majored in art. After graduation she moved to New York City and shared an apartment that first summer with Hashmi, who was a student at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT).

Armed with a bachelor's degree from FIT, Hashmi found a job creating women's sweaters for noted Israeli designer Elie Tahari. Monkush, too, has been working in fashion, first with Coogi, which makes hip-hop urban menswear, and then with Married to the Mob, an edgy streetwear label for women, where she is today.

Hashmi and Monkush have been working in the evenings and on weekends to put together their fledgling collection. It's a struggle — Hashmi lives in Queens and Monkush lives in Brooklyn with her husband — but both women are committed to their dream.

The thought behind their clothing extended to their choice of a name. "Eva is the name of Fatima's maternal grandmother," Hashmi explained, "and Khurshid is my dad's mother's name." Like their designs, it marries the two cultures.

Hashmi and Monkush aren't quitting their day jobs just yet, but they're hopeful their collection will fill a need in the industry. "We want to be the biggest and best in what we're doing," Hashmi said. "This is not like any other brand."

Above, Fatima Monkush, second from right, gathers with other young Muslim fashion designers at a photography session for Elan *magazine.*

Songwriter Kareem Salama

For Kareem Salama, home is the American Southwest, where country music provides much of the soundtrack to daily life. But home also meant growing up in a devout Muslim household and studying the rich textures of classical Arabic literature and poetry.

So when Salama, 30, started writing and singing his own songs, it was quite natural that he would combine a sensibility rooted in his Muslim faith with a compelling voice and a distinctive southern accent — even if others find the combination startling.

Oklahoma and Music

Salama's parents are Egyptians who moved to Oklahoma, where they raised him along with two brothers and a sister. As a child, Salama traveled to rodeos, county fairs, and Indian powwows, and he was exposed to traditional bluegrass and country music in places like Branson, Missouri, and the legendary Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, Tennessee.

"Oklahoma, like me, is a place where cultures meet and dance," Salama wrote on his Web site. "Oklahoma is a hybrid of southern, western, and Native American culture, and thanks to my mother's insatiable desire to learn and experience new things, she made sure that I and everyone in my family was immersed in it."

Faith and Music

At the same time, Salama's parents didn't neglect his Muslim religious training. Despite his distinctive southern accent and American music style, he is serious about his faith and draws on its rich religious and cultural heritage in his compositions.

His songs are neither overtly political nor religious, but they do reflect his remarkable background, which the Web site altmuslim.com calls "a living dichotomy" on the American musical landscape.

In one song dealing with the theme of tolerance, for example, Salama quotes the proverb of the noted Islamic scholar and poet Imam Shafi'ee: "I am like incense — the more you burn me, the more fragrant I become."

He acknowledges how his father's example shaped both his outlook and music: "He lives the maxim 'Be hard on yourself, but easy on others.'"

He finds the songwriting process deeply intertwined with his faith. "I pray before and after I write a song," he said in a University of Iowa interview. "I choose each word carefully. I try to be very honest and hope that God brings this song into people's hearts."

Country Connections

Salama's perspective on country music can be surprising, especially for those familiar only with the dominant commercial strain that leans toward lyrics celebrating the open road, honky tonk bars, and lost loves.

"There is a kind of soul in country music ... something that comes from deeper down. ... You can still hear something very old and very traditional," Salama said in an altmuslim interview.

In fact, Salama is drawing on a much older tradition that hearkens back to the roots of so-called bluegrass from the Appalachian region of the southeastern United States.

Salama also studied English literature, especially a celebrated spiritual poem by John Donne (1572-1631), "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," for which he wrote a melody to help himself memorize it.

Composing and Performing

Salama wrote songs and lyrics while earning an engineering degree at the University of Oklahoma and then attending law school at the University of Iowa, where he met musician Aristotle Mihalopulos.

In a quintessential American moment, the sons of Egyptian and Greek immigrants decided to collaborate on American country music. Over the next several years, Salama performed before predominately Muslim audiences in the United States and Europe, accompanied by Mihalopulos on the guitar.

With his trim good looks, conservative haircut, and country-classic black cowboy hat, Salama recognizes that people may come for the novelty of a Muslim country-music singer.

He hopes they'll stay because they find his songs compelling.

He may be succeeding. On his summer 2008 tour in Europe, Salama played to enthusiastic Muslim and non-Muslim audiences in London, Berlin, Paris (at Euro Disney), Rome, Genoa, and Amsterdam.

Salama's first album, *Generous Peace*, appeared in 2006, followed by *This Life of Mine* a year later. His song "A Land Called Paradise" provided the soundtrack for an award-winning music video celebrating the diversity and vitality of the American-Muslim community.

He is now working on a commercial debut album that will feature the best material from the first two albums and several new songs.

But Salama is not focusing exclusively on a singing career. Having completed law school, he is preparing for the licensing (bar) examinations and is interested in practicing patent law.

He summarizes some of his thoughts about his music on his MySpace page: "My hope is that my words will fall upon ears and hearts that may be seeking the same thing I am seeking ... the inspiration to live a virtuous life that is pleasing to God."

Above left, the cover for Kareem Salama's second CD release, This Life of Mine. *Above, in concert in Berlin, Germany, 2008.*

Television Journalist

Kiran Khalid

As a child, according to her mother, Kiran Khalid used to sit inside a cardboard box facing outward — "so that I was literally in a TV, if not on it," Khalid said. Since then, Khalid, 35, has pursued a career as a television journalist, news broadcaster, and producer that has taken her from local news reporting to covering major national and international news events.

"I was the first Pakistani-American woman in broadcast news in the United States," she said. "If I'm wrong about that, I would love to meet the true pioneer because as far as I've been told, my road was untraveled."

Growing Up in Texas

Khalid's father was born in New Delhi, India, and her mother in Karachi, Pakistan, but Khalid herself grew up in suburban Houston, Texas, where her father was a land developer.

She focused on journalism early in life. "My interest was ignited through a love of writing," she said. "I was often busy writing short stories growing up."

Khalid, like her two brothers and her sister, excelled in school. The siblings' high performance helped them overcome the strain of being the only minority family in their small community.

"It was often a situation where you simply accepted that that's the way the world was," she said, "and I'm grateful for those early encounters because they prepared me for the post-9/11 backlash."

Local TV News

Khalid graduated with a major in journalism from the University of Texas in Austin, where she said she fell "for the immediacy of television, the idea of being on the air with breaking news."

In 1996, she went to work for the local CBS station in Corpus Christi, Texas, a job that she found both exciting and frustrating. Corpus Christi provided many news opportunities — storms, drug smuggling, and immigration — but the station had antiquated equipment, which made work difficult.

"Still, I enjoyed the work, being in front of the camera," she recalled. "I just knew I could be good at this."

At another TV station in Lake Charles, Louisiana, Khalid found the reverse situation: state-of-the-art equipment but a relatively quiet news environment. "I worked hard and became the weekend anchor," she said.

She also became something of a local celebrity. "Walking into the mall would be like walking on stage," she said with a laugh. "Everybody seemed to recognize me."

In Mobile, Alabama, Khalid was on the air as many as four or five times a day, but she found herself exhausted. "I felt I was just going in circles." She decided to try the riskier but freer life of a freelance journalist.

Looking back, "the most gratifying aspect of local news is consumer investigative reporting," Khalid said. "Holding shady businesses and people accountable for their actions through the glare of a television lens is a community service local news provides that is often overlooked."

She added, "The pressures are often immense as more and more news outlets value the breaking-news model over the virtue of substantive, thoughtful reporting."

Above left, Kiran Khalid stuck in mud on assignment in Africa, 2005. Above right, interviewing singer John Mayer at the annual Save the Music Foundation Gala, 2007.

Freelancing

In 2005, Khalid reported on the grim lives of subsistence farmers threatened by famine in Niger and Mali. Her documentary, *The Hunger Gap*, was a finalist in a United Nations film festival.

In the United States, Khalid worked as a field producer for a very different kind of news operation, Court TV, which covers major criminal and civil trials.

Khalid also became an active member of the South Asian Journalists Association (SAJA).

"I'm very proud of my role on SAJA's board," Khalid said. "I love working with an organization that does so much for young journalists, such as mentoring and scholarships."

Pakistan and America

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, Khalid quickly recognized that "Pakistan was going to be a central player, and I knew it was now or never to be part of the story."

Fluent in Urdu, she traveled to Pakistan and became one of the first Western journalists to report from inside the Pakistani religious schools, or madrassahs, that many accused of encouraging terrorism.

In 2007, Khalid returned for her most dangerous assignment, to film a documentary, called *We Are Not Free*, on media censorship and attacks on journalists by the Musharraf government in Pakistan.

In an interview with *AsiaMedia*, she said, "The thing that really struck me was how brave they were ... willingly to put their safety at risk in order to pursue what they think is a noble calling."

Since January 2008, Khalid has been working as a producer for one of television's most popular news and feature programs, ABC's *Good Morning America* (GMA).

"I like the intensity of the work," she said, which may mean preparing a story on gas prices one day and one on the 2008 presidential campaign the next.

"GMA has afforded me the opportunity to write and produce stories that are seen by millions," she said. "In 10 years I hope to still be working on stories that are relevant and serve a greater purpose."

Muslims in America

A Statistical Portrait

Today's Muslim American population is an extraordinary mosaic of ethnic, linguistic, ideological, social, economic, and religious groups. Native Muslim Americans are well integrated into American society, while many newcomers are just beginning to adapt to American life. In terms of religious devotion, Muslims range from highly orthodox to moderate to secular. Muslims resemble Christians, Jews, Hindus, and other American religious communities in that many of them seek full political and social integration, while others prefer to live primarily in the context of their communities and cultural practices. Many of the immigrants come from Muslim-majority countries and inevitably go through a period of adjustment as they learn the ways of a pluralistic society.

The size of the Muslim-American population has proved difficult to measure because the U.S. Census does not track religious affiliation. Estimates vary widely from 2 million to 7 million. What is clear, however, is that the Muslim-American population has been growing rapidly as a result of immigration, a high birth rate, and conversions.

According to a 2007 survey by the Pew Research Center, 65 percent of the Muslim-American population are first-generation immigrants, and 61 percent of the foreign-born arrived in the 1990s or this decade. Seventy-seven percent of Muslims living in the United States are citizens, with 65 percent of the foreign-born being naturalized citizens. As a point of comparison, 58 percent of foreign-born Chinese living in the United States are naturalized citizens.

A recent study by the Center for Human Rights and Global Justice at New York University's School of Law found that many Muslims were among the more than 40,000 people who have waited more than three years for a decision on their naturalization applications, a process that should take no longer than 180 days.

Estimates of the African-American Muslim population have ranged from approximately one-fifth to one-third of the total for all Muslim Americans. The other major ethnic groups are Arabs and South Asians (Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, and Afghanis).

Even though most Americans identify Islam primarily with Arabs, two-thirds of Arab Americans are Christian. However, most Arab immigrants

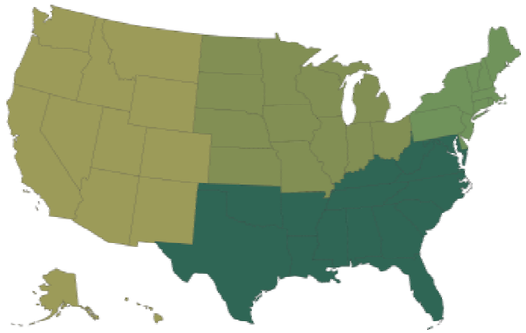
Level of education

	Muslims	General Public
Graduate study	10%	9%
College graduate	14%	16%
Some college	23%	29%
High school diploma	32%	30%
No high school diploma	21%	16%

Annual household income

	Muslims	General Public
$100,000	16%	17%
$75,000 - $95,000	10%	11%
$50,000 - $74,999	15%	16%
$30,000 - $49,999	24%	23%
Less than $30,000	35%	33%

In what regions do Muslims live in the United States?

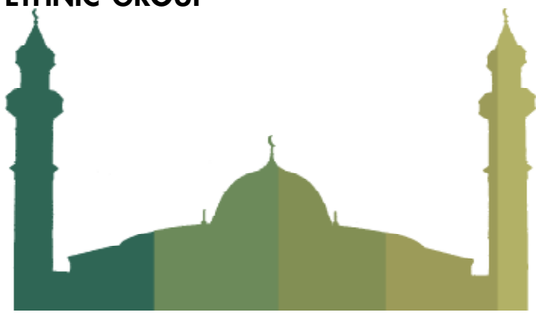


South	32%
Northeast	29%
Midwest	22%
West	18%

Age and gender distribution of Muslims in the United States

Age 18 - 29	29%
Age 30 - 49	48%
Age 50 - 64	18%
Age 65+	5%
Male	54%
Female	46%

U.S. mosques by dominant ethnic group



South Asian	28%
African American	27%
South Asian and Arab, mixed evenly	16%
Arab	15%
All other combinations	14%

How important is religion in your life? (all faiths)

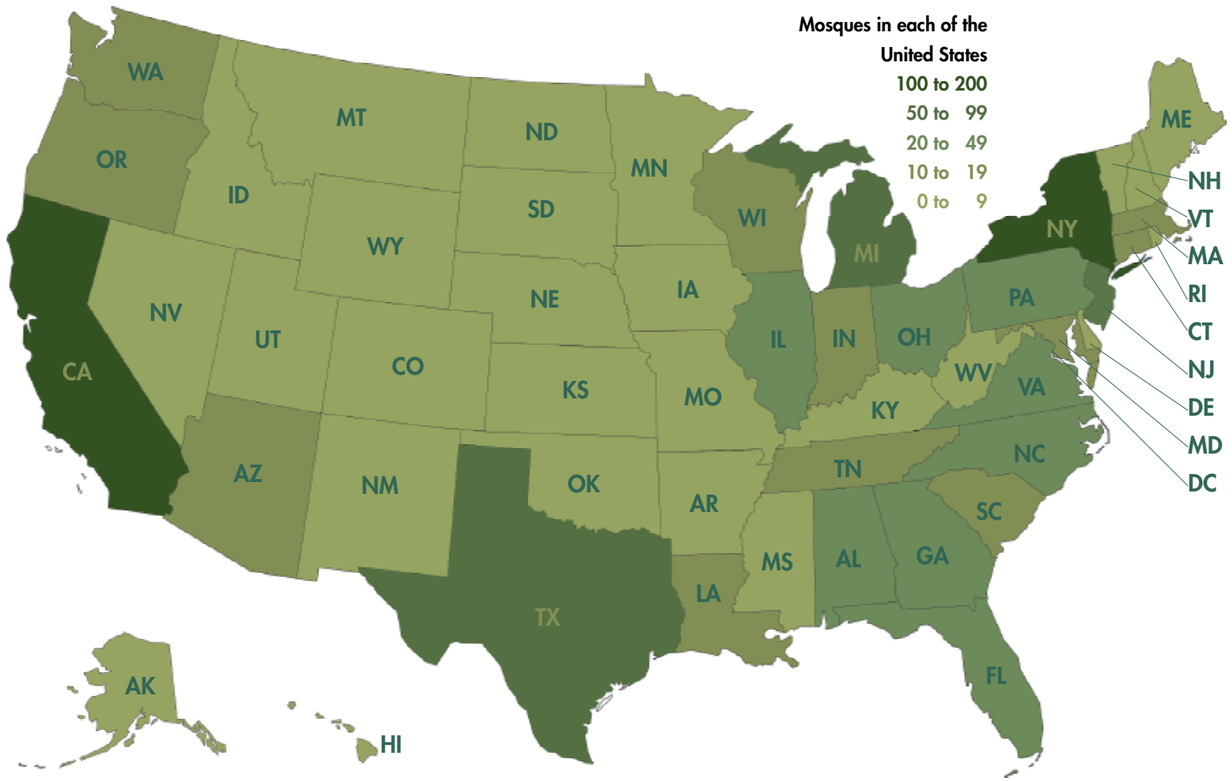
Very important	72%
Somewhat important	18%
Not too important	5%
Not at all important	4%
Don't know	1%

since World War II have been Muslims, and Muslims are the fastest-growing segment of the Arab-American population. South Asians constitute the fastest-growing Muslim community, perhaps accounting for a quarter of all Muslim Americans. The Muslim population of the United States also includes Turks, Iranians, Bosnians, Malays, Indonesians, Nigerians, Somalis, Liberians, Kenyans, and Senegalese, among others. In addition, there is a small but growing population of white and Hispanic converts, many of them women who have married Muslim men.

Although Muslims live in every corner of the nation, many have settled in major metropolitan areas along the two coasts and in the Midwest: New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit/Dearborn. The 10 states with the largest Muslim populations are California, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Indiana, Michigan, Virginia, Texas, Ohio, and Maryland. There are also established communities near state universities, which often have sizable numbers of foreign-born Muslim students and faculty.

The 2007 Pew survey found that Muslim Americans generally mirror the U.S. public in education and income levels, with immigrant Muslims slightly more affluent and better educated than native-born Muslims. Twenty-four percent of all Muslims and 29 percent of immigrant Muslims have college degrees, compared to 25 percent for the U.S. general population. Forty-one percent of all Muslim Americans and 45 percent of immigrant Muslims report annual household income levels of $50,000 or higher. This compares to the national average of 44 percent. Immigrant Muslims are well represented among higher-income earners, with 19 percent claiming annual household incomes of $100,000 or higher (compared to 16 percent for the Muslim population as a whole and 17 percent for the U.S. average). This is likely due to the strong concentration of Muslims in professional, managerial, and technical fields, especially in information technology, education, medicine, law, and the corporate world. There is some evidence of a decline in the wages of Muslim and Arab men since 2001, although more recent data suggest the trend might be reversing.

The Muslim-American journey is unique in that it is part of two quintessentially American experiences: the African American and the immigrant. Immigrant Muslims and African-American Muslims have worked to establish their voices in politics and society, sometimes together, but more often on their own. While they share an identity as Muslims, their racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and historical circumstances have differed widely. In working toward full political participation, immigrant Muslims have a great deal to learn from the successes of African-American Muslims, particularly in building institutional capacity and communicating effectively with other Americans.



MOSQUE DISTRIBUTION IN THE UNITED STATES

Calling itself the Global Muslim eCommunity, IslamiCity.com *has compiled information about Muslims in the United States since 1995. Its online database tallies more than 2,300 mosques, Islamic schools, and organizations in the 50 states. Listed here by state is the number of mosques in the* IslamiCity.com *database in December 2008. The statistic for the District of Columbia is from the Islamic Center of Washington, DC. The total is 1,018.*

AL	Alabama	20
AK	Alaska	0
AZ	Arizona	10
AR	Arkansas	1
CA	California	198
CO	Colorado	8
CT	Connecticut	17
DE	Delaware	2
DC	District of Columbia	8
FL	Florida	42
GA	Georgia	40
HI	Hawaii	1
ID	Idaho	3
IL	Illinois	43
IN	Indiana	14
IA	Iowa	5
KS	Kansas	2
KY	Kentucky	9
LA	Louisiana	17
ME	Maine	1
MD	Maryland	18
MA	Massachusetts	13
MI	Michigan	55
MN	Minnesota	3
MS	Mississippi	9
MO	Missouri	7
MT	Montana	2
NE	Nebraska	1
NV	Nevada	3
NH	New Hampshire	3
NJ	New Jersey	56
NM	New Mexico	7
NY	New York	131
NC	North Carolina	20
ND	North Dakota	4
OH	Ohio	41
OK	Oklahoma	8
OR	Oregon	10
PA	Pennsylvania	43
RI	Rhode Island	2
SC	South Carolina	12
SD	South Dakota	2
TN	Tennessee	10
TX	Texas	58
UT	Utah	5
VT	Vermont	0
VA	Virginia	27
WA	Washington	10
WV	West Virginia	3
WI	Wisconsin	13
WY	Wyoming	1

Sources: Statistical data excerpted from Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream *Pew Research Center, May 22, 2007. Text for this article excerpted from* Strengthening America: The Civic and Political Integration of Muslim Americans, *The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, © 2007.*

Neighborhood Mosques

Islamic Community Center / Tempe Masjid
131 E. Sixth Street, Tempe, Arizona

A cultural center, masjid, and school located just north of Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona, the Islamic Community Center welcomes members from more than 75 nationalities and all socioeconomic backgrounds. The center was founded in 1984 to bring together Muslims who had previously worshipped in small groups in homes across the area. About 300 attend Friday prayers, but the mosque is actively involved in both the Muslim Student Association at Arizona State and in the community at large. The center maintains a small library with resources on Islam and gives tours of the mosque, which is modeled after the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, for the general public. Providing social services such as marriage ceremonies and burials, the center also operates the Phoenix Metro Islamic School for elementary students.

Masjid Abu-Bakr (Colorado Muslim Society)
2071 South Parker Road, Denver, Colorado

With a weekly prayer attendance between 2,000 and 3,000 people, the Colorado Muslim Society is a pillar of Islamic life in Denver. It recently undertook a large expansion project that doubled the size of its prayer space in order to accommodate an increasing population of Muslims in the area. Located on one of the area's busiest thoroughfares, the society serves as the hub for Muslim civic life, especially for its younger members. Young adults serve as teachers in the society's Islamic Sunday school. In addition to the Sunday lessons, the society is involved with Islamic education through the Crescent View Academy. Educating Muslims and non-Muslims from kindergarten through eighth grade, the academy places strong emphasis on learning Arabic and general Islamic knowledge.

Islamic Society of Central Florida
1089 N. Goldenrod Road, Orlando, Florida

The Islamic Society of Central Florida had modest beginnings in Orlando in the early 1970s. The first mosque, Masjid al-Rahman, or Mosque of the Merciful, was built in the early 1980s. Rapid growth in the area led the society to expand. Today, the society has nine mosques throughout the area, serving 40,000 Muslims from ethnically diverse backgrounds. In 2001, the society founded the Center for Peace, which works to dispel stereotypes about Muslims and promote peace and understanding among people. The Islamic Society of Central Florida also supports the Muslim Student League at the University of Central Florida.

Masjid Abu-Bakr Al-Siddiq
4425 David Drive, Metairie, Louisiana

The architecture of the Masjid Abu-Bakr al-Siddiq is unique, as it is the only mosque in the New Orleans area that was built specifically as a mosque, with a geodesic dome and minaret. The 250 to 300 worshippers are mostly first- and second-generation Americans from Pakistan, India, and the Middle East. Twenty percent of the congregation are recent immigrants and converts. The mosque serves Muslims from bordering Kenner, Lousiana, and Orleans Parish. Fortunately, the mosque suffered little damage from Hurricane Katrina. Most members have returned to their homes, and the mosque has retained most of its members.

Albanian Islamic Center
19775 Harper Avenue, Harper Woods, Michigan

The Albanian Islamic Center was founded in 1962 by the Albanian-Muslim population in the Detroit area. Located in the suburbs of Wayne County, the center serves about 150 families of Tosk and Gega Albanians, as well as Iranians, Palestinians, Maltese, Arabs, and Indians. Worship styles have fluctuated with immigration. Tosk Albanians, from the southern region of the country, are considered reformed Muslims and have lived in the United States since the 19th century. Their worship style and social norms are more relaxed. The Gega Albanians, who are from northern Albania, tend to reflect more traditional Islamic practices. As immigration patterns have changed, so has the style of worship.

Islamic Society of Greater Kansas City
8501 E. 99th Street, Kansas City, Missouri

A group of residents in Kansas City began planning for a mosque in the early 1970s after the first Salah (prayer) for Eid al-Fitr. Ten years later, the Islamic Society of Greater Kansas City opened the doors of its mosque to the public and was incorporated as a nonprofit. The society has been expanding ever since, acquiring property for a community park and a Muslim cemetery. A full-time Islamic school opened at the center in 1987 and has more than 100 students. The society estimates that it serves more than 8,000 Muslims in the Kansas City area, but its reach extends into the non-Muslim community. Visits to the center are encouraged, and the center opens its study sessions on Arabic language, Islam, and the study of the Quran to the public.

Masjid Al-Islam
40 Sayles Hill Road, North Smithfield, Rhode Island

The largest masjid in Rhode Island, Masjid al-Islam was built in 1994 to serve the needs of the growing Muslim population in North Smithfield. The masjid openly welcomes Muslims of all religious affiliations from all racial and ethnic backgrounds, but holds primary the Quranic scriptures and the Sunnah. Governance of the mosque is democratic; a committee of six congregants attends to administrative matters, but all major issues are brought before the community before a decision is finalized. Masjid al-Islam works to build interfaith dialogue and actively reaches out to the Christian and Jewish communities for collaboration on community programming. Future plans include partnering with local hospitals for yearly health screening, as part of a health education day for the community. About 250 attend Jumah prayers, but no formal membership is required.

Masjid Al-Muslimiin (Islamic Center of Columbia)
1929 Gervais Street, Columbia, South Carolina

Five hundred Muslims worship at Masjid al-Muslimiin in downtown Columbia, South Carolina. With its close proximity to the University of South Carolina, the center, which began operation in 1981, often works with students to bring prominent Islamic speakers to the area. The center offers many services to its members, including Sunday school for Muslim children in Quranic recitation and Islamic history and a women's forum for educational development, health, and social activities. Actively involved in spreading the Muslim faith to the community at large through its prison outreach program, the center hopes to improve its transitional living assistance to Muslim ex-offenders and all Muslims new to the community. The center also plans to develop a Muslim community food co-op.

A Timeline of Key Events

1619-1800s An estimated 10 million Africans are brought to North America as slaves. Approximately 30 percent are Muslim.

1775 Former slave Peter Salem (Saleem) fights in the Battle of Bunker Hill and throughout the American Revolution. Muslim Americans have served with distinction in all U.S. wars.

1796 President John Adams signs a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary.

1819 Freed by his master in middle age, Yarrow (Mamout) Marmood, depicted here in 1819, establishes himself as a property owner and bank investor in Georgetown, today part of Washington, D.C.

ANOTHER DAILY NEWSPAPER.

The First One Published in America in the Arabic Tongue Comes Out To-day.

New York City has another daily newspaper this morning, the first one printed in the Arabic tongue in this country. This is The Kawkab America, or Star of America, which has been published for the last eight years, but never, before its issue of to-day, as a daily.

The Kawkab America was founded by Najeeb J. Arbeely, who was for a number of years its editor and is still interested in its publication. Mr. Arbeely came to this country from the Sultan of Turkey's domains when a four-year-old boy, and is a thorough American. He was United States Consul at Jerusalem in 1895 and is now an Inspector in the Immigration Service at

1898 *Kawkab Amrika* (Star of America), the first Arabic newspaper to appear in the United States, begins daily publication, as reported by the *New York Times* above.

1907 Tatar immigrants from Poland, Russia, and Lithuania found the American Mohammedan Society, the nation's the first Muslim organization.

1908 Large numbers of Muslim immigrants begin to enter the United States from parts of the Ottoman Empire, including today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.

1913 Noble Drew Ali (1886-1929) founds the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) in Newark, New Jersey. This religious group claims to be an Islamic sect but incorporates influences from many religions.

1919 The first Islamic association is founded in Highland Park outside of Detroit, Michigan, where many immigrants found work in auto manufacturing plants.

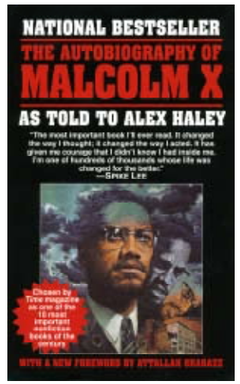
1924 The Johnson-Reed Immigration Act imposes national quotas that restrict sharply the number of new immigrants to the United States.

1934 The Mother Mosque, the first building built specifically to be a mosque, is established in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

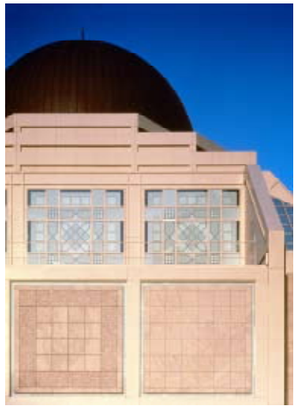
1934 Elijah Muhammad becomes Supreme Minister of the Nation of Islam (NOI), a black nationalist organization adhering to some Islamic practices.

1957 The Islamic Center of Washington, D.C., a mosque and Islamic cultural center, is dedicated, with President Dwight D. Eisenhower and First Lady Mamie Eisenhower in attendance.

1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson signs into law the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which abolishes the national-origin quotas established in 1924, and spurs non-European immigration to the United States.



1965 Published soon after its subject's assassination in February 1965, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* tells the story of one man's conversion to Islam in the larger context of the African-American experience. It remains one of the most influential books of the 20th century.



1991 The Islamic Cultural Center in New York City is completed. It is the first building erected as a mosque in New York City and regularly draws more than 4,000 faithful for Friday prayers.

1991 Charles Bilal is elected mayor of Kountze, Texas, the first Muslim to head a U.S. municipality.

1993 Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad is appointed as the U.S. Army's first Muslim chaplain.

1996 The first celebration of Eid al-Fitr is held at the White House.

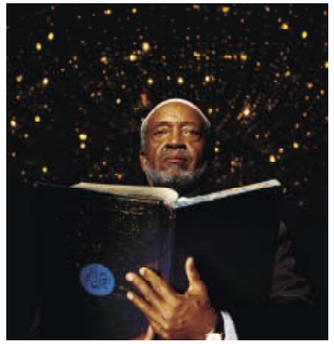
2001 The U.S. Postal Service issues the first stamp honoring a Muslim holiday. The 34-cent Eid stamp is part of the Holiday Celebrations series.

2005 The first Muslim national sorority in United States, Gamma Gamma Chi, is founded by the mother-daughter team of Imani Abdul-Haqq and Dr. Althia F. Ali to help improve the image of Muslim women and Islam in general.

2006 Canadian-born Ingrid Mattson is elected the first female president of the Islamic Society of North America.

2006 Keith Ellison becomes the first Muslim elected to the U.S. Congress, as a member of the House of Representatives from Minnesota.

2007 President Geroge W. Bush participates in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Islamic Center of Washington, D.C.



2008 Imam Warith Deen Mohammed dies. Known as "America's Imam," he was the first Muslim to offer the U.S. Senate's invocation (1990). He also offered prayers at President Bill Clinton's interfaith prayer services and headed The Mosque Cares, a dawah project.

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Web sites

The following web sites were used in the development of this publication:

The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology
http://web.mit.edu/akpia/www

Fazlur Rahman Khan Web site
http://fazlurrkhan.com

Gamma Gamma Chi Sorority, Inc.
http://gammagammachi.org

Heba Amin
http://hebaamin.com

Interfaith Youth Core
http://ifyc.org

The Islamic Center at New York University
http://icnyu.org

IslamiCity
http://www.islamicity.com

Kareem Salama
http://kareemsalama.com

LoanMod.com
http://loanmod.com

The Mother Mosque of America
http://mothermosque.org

Pew Research Center
http://pewresearch.org

The Pluralism Project at Harvard University
http://pluralism.org

Dalia Ghanem's t-shirtat.com
http://t-shirtat.com

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59: (left, top) Gamma Gamma Chi Sorority, Inc.; (right) courtesy *The Chicago Tribune*.
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Photo Researcher: Joann Stern

A Supplement to

Being Muslim in America

Did You Know?

Sixty-five percent of the Muslim American population are first-generation immigrants, and 61 percent of the foreign-born arrived in the 1990s or later.

Muslim Americans spend about $170 billion on consumer products annually, according to a 2007 figure by advertising agency JWT, and this figure is expected to grow.

Iftar dinners at the White House during Ramadan have become regular occasions since the mid-1990s.

An imam can serve in several different roles in the United States. In most African-American mosques, the imam operates in both spiritual and administrative capacities. In predominantly immigrant mosques, however, the imam is more likely to be a spiritual leader only.

Children's books bring the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, like other holidays, into the American mainstream.

The largest mosque in the United States, opened by the Islamic Center of America in 2005, is in Dearborn, Michigan.

Government

Muslim Americans work in federal, state, and local governments throughout the United States. At left, from top to bottom, is a sample.

Keith Ellison became the first Muslim elected to the U.S. Congress, as the representative from Minnesota's Fifth District, in 2006. He took his oath of office on a copy of the Quran once owned by Thomas Jefferson.

André Carson, a member of the Indianapolis City-County Council, became the second Muslim member of Congress after winning a special election in March 2008 to become the congressman for the Seventh District of Indiana.

Diplomat **Zalmay Khalilzad** has served as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, and as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Doctor **Elias A. Zerhouni** was director of the National Institutes of Health from 2002 to 2008.

Ambassador **Shirin Tahir-Kheli** served as senior advisor to the United States Secretary of State.

Representative **Saqib Ali** represents part of Montgomery County in the Maryland General Assembly's House of Delegates.

Business

Muslim Americans contribute to all aspects of U.S. business. Pictured at right, starting at the top, is a sampling.

New York fashion designer **Dalia Ghanem,** gives Arab traditions an American twist.

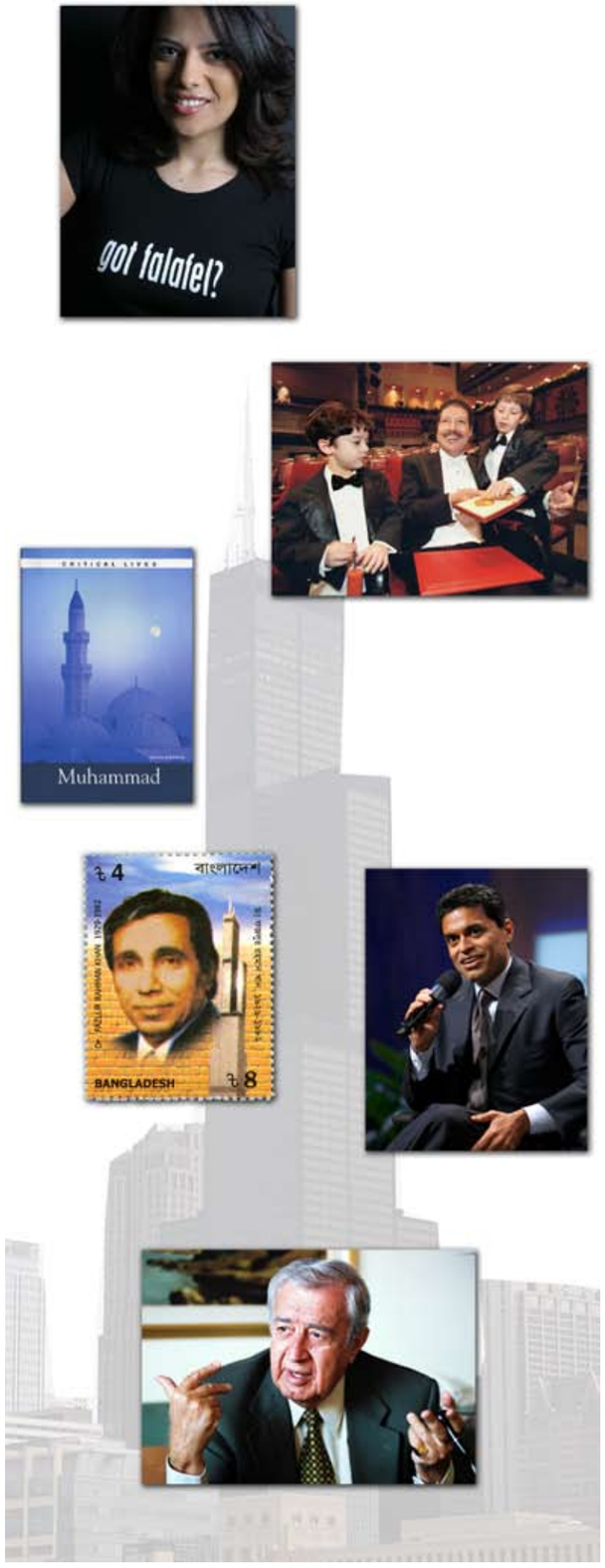
Scientist **Ahmed Zewail** of the California Institute of Technology won the Nobel Prize for chemistry.

The books of author **Yahiya Emerick** present Islamic themes and history to non-Muslim audiences.

The innovations of structural engineer **Fazlur R. Khan**, honored on this postage stamp from Bangladesh, led to Chicago's 110-story Sears Tower, the world's tallest building when completed in 1974.

Journalist **Fareed Zakaria** is the editor of *Newsweek* International magazine and host of the CNN interview program *Fareed Zakaria GPS*.

Hollywood producer and director **Moustapha Akkad** filmed stories of Islamic history such as *The Message* and *Lion of the Desert*, and the popular *Halloween* movies.



Sports

Sports in the United States have been an important route to prominence for many American Muslims.

At top, a young **Muhammad Ali**, who became heavyweight champion of the world in 1964. The boxer had changed his name and converted to the Nation of Islam. Later Ali became a Sunni Muslim, and he now practices Sufism.

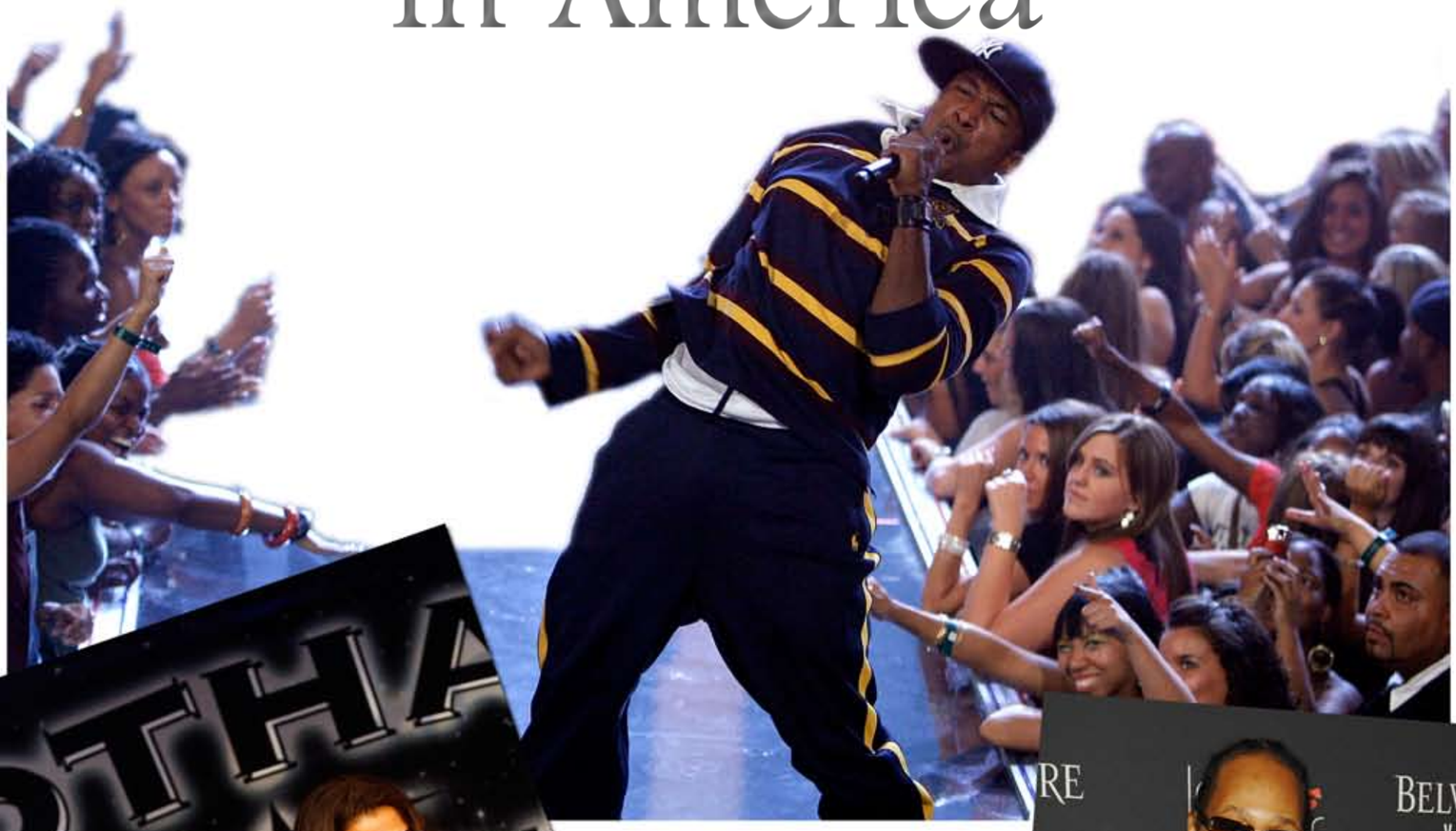
The basketball player **Kareem Abdul-Jabbar**, at far left, is also a Muslim convert. Jabbar, who retired from professional basketball in 1989, is the National Basketball Association's all-time leading scorer.

Jihad Muhammad, in the white headband, is another basketball player who recently starred for a top college team, the University of Cincinnati.

Professional football player **Az-Zahir Hakim**, leaping to catch a pass, had a 10-year career in the National Football League.

Boxer **Bernard Hopkins** learned his craft in prison as a young man and was later the middleweight champion for more than 10 years. He still competes.

Being Muslim in America

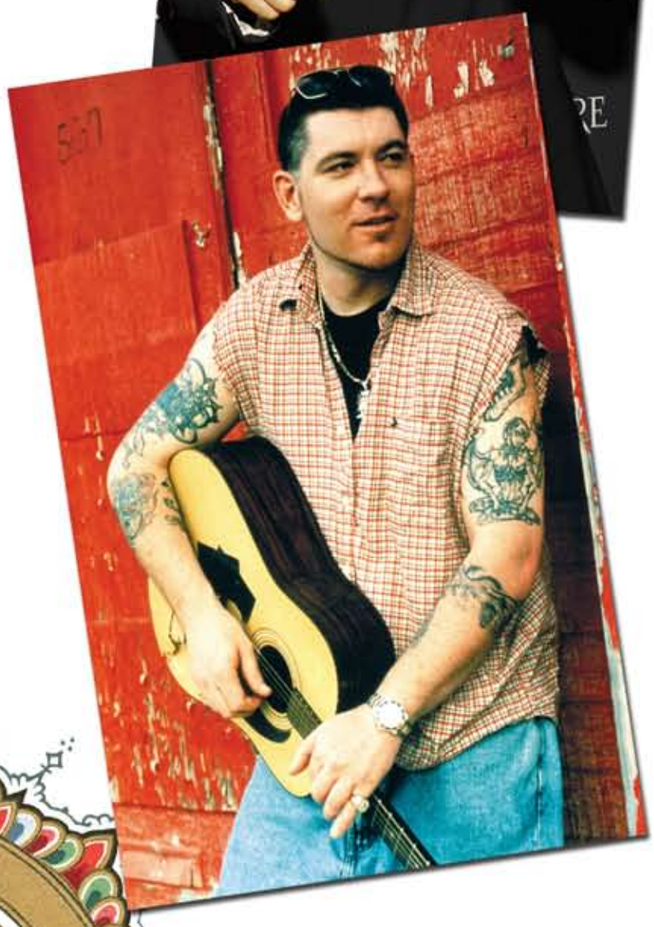


Q-Tip
Rapper, producer

Maysoon Zayid
Comedienne, actress

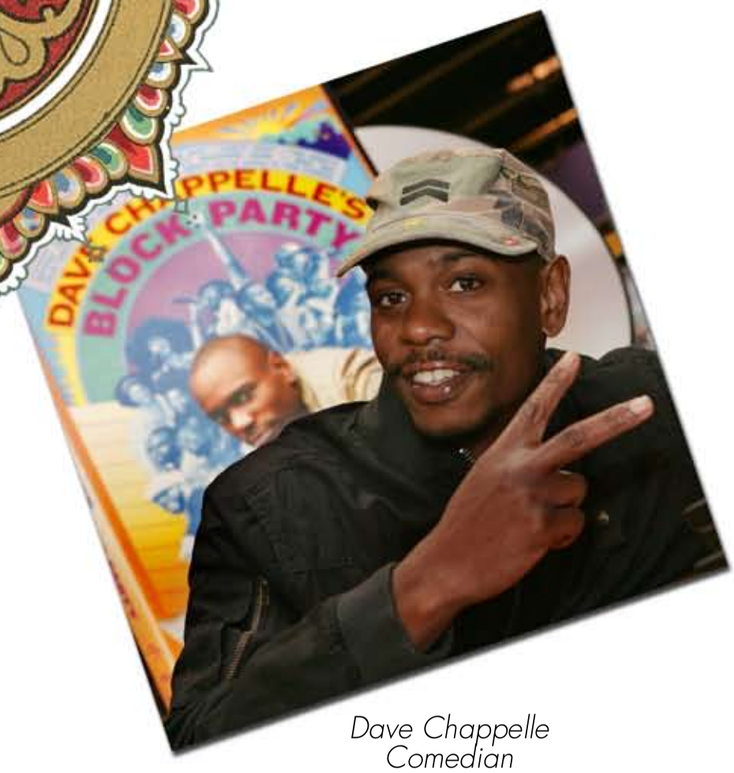
The RZA
Hip-hop music artist

Mos Def
Rapper, actor



Everlast
Singer-songwriter

Shohreh Aghdashloo
Actress



Dave Chappelle
Comedian

Aasif Mandvi
Actor, comedian

Ahmad Jamal
Jazz pianist

Ronald Bell
Singer, Kool & the Gang

Performers Mini~Poster