

## 2017 Demographics of Muslims in the United States

Source: Pew Research Center

Available at: [http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/demographic-portrait-of-muslim-americans/pf\\_2017-06-26\\_muslimamericans-01new-09/](http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/demographic-portrait-of-muslim-americans/pf_2017-06-26_muslimamericans-01new-09/)

**Explanation:** This table illustrates the country of origin of Muslims in the United States. The table is divided between “all US Muslims,” which includes both Muslims born in the United States and Muslims who immigrated to the United States, and “foreign-born US Muslims,” which includes *only* Muslims who immigrated to the United States. The table demonstrates that Muslim communities in the United States are extremely diverse.

### No single country is origin for more than 15% of foreign-born U.S. Muslims

*% of U.S. Muslim adults born in ...*

	All U.S. Muslims %	Foreign-born U.S. Muslims %
<b>United States</b>	<b>42</b>	—
<b>South Asia</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>35</b>
Pakistan	9	15
India	4	7
Afghanistan	4	6
Bangladesh	3	6
<b>Middle East/North Africa</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>25</b>
Iraq	3	5
Kuwait	2	3
Syria	2	3
Egypt	2	3
<b>Other Asia/Pacific</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>
Iran	6	11
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Europe</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Americas (excluding U.S.)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Other/undetermined</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Note: Results repercentaged to exclude those who did not answer the question about where they were born. Figures may not add to 100% or subtotals indicated due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 23-May 2, 2017.

“U.S. Muslims Concerned About Their Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_

## SIFT Literary Analysis Strategy

**Directions:** Use the table below to record examples of each of the poetic devices from the literary work

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Author:** \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Symbols</b></p> <p>Examine the title and text for symbolism</p>	
<p><b>Images</b></p> <p>Identify images and sensory details (sight, sound, taste, odor, texture)</p>	
<p><b>Figurative Language</b></p> <p>Identify and analyze non-standard use of language, including metaphor, simile, repetition, omission, unusual word order, slang, etc.</p>	
<p><b>Tone and Theme</b></p> <p>1) Discuss the tone taken by the author.</p> <p>2) Message or moral: Why did the author create this work?</p>	

## SOAPStone Graphic Organizer for Rhetorical Analysis

### Citing Evidence in Persuasive Text

CLOSE READING			How do you know? Cite specific evidence in the text.
S	Who is the Speaker?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the speaker?</li> <li>• Identify the speaker's age, gender, class, and education.</li> <li>• The <b>voice</b> tells the story. <b>Whose voice is being heard</b> within the text?</li> <li>• What can you tell or what do you know about the speaker that helps you understand the <b>point of view</b> expressed?</li> </ul>	
O	What is the Occasion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the <b>time and place</b> of the piece? What is the current <b>situation</b> (that prompted the writing)?</li> <li>• Is this a political event, a celebration, an observation, a critique, or ...?</li> <li>• Identify the <b>context</b> of the text.</li> </ul>	
A	Who is the Audience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the readers to whom this piece is directed? It may be one person or a specific group.</li> <li>• Does the speaker specify an <b>audience</b>?</li> <li>• What assumptions exist in the text about the intended audience?</li> </ul>	
P	What is the Purpose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the <b>purpose</b> behind the text? Why did the author write it? What is his goal? (To find the purpose, ask, "What did the author want his audience to think or do as a result of reading this text?")</li> <li>• What is the <b>message</b>?</li> <li>• <b>How does the speaker convey this message?</b></li> </ul>	
S	What is the Subject?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What <b>topic, content, and ideas</b> are included in the text?</li> <li>• State the subject in a few words or a short phrase.</li> <li>• <b>Is there more than one subject?</b></li> <li>• How does the author <b>present</b> the subject? Does he introduce it immediately or do you, the reader, have to make an <b>inference</b>?</li> </ul>	
TONE	TONE What is the Tone?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the <b>attitude of the author</b>?</li> <li>• Is the <b>author emotional, objective, neutral, or biased</b> about this topic?</li> <li>• What types of details <b>"tell"</b> the author's feelings about the topic?</li> <li>• What types of <b>diction</b> (choice of words), <b>syntax</b> (sentence structure), and <b>imagery</b> (metaphors, similes, and other types of figurative language) help reflect the <b>tone</b>?</li> <li>• How would you <b>read</b> the passage <b>aloud</b> if you were the author?</li> </ul>	

## TP-CASTT Poetry Analysis

<b>T</b>	<b>Title</b>	Before you even think about reading the poetry or trying to analyze it, speculate on what you think the poem might be about based upon the title. Often time, authors conceal meaning and give clues in the title. Jot down what you think this poem will be about
<b>P</b>	<b>Paraphrase</b>	Before you begin thinking about meaning or trying to analyze the poem, don't overlook the literal meaning of the poem. One of the biggest problems that students often make in poetry analysis is jumping to conclusions before understanding what is taking place in the poem. When you paraphrase a poem, write in your own words exactly what happens in each line of the poem. Look at the number of sentences in the poem—your paraphrase should have exactly the same number. This technique is especially helpful for poems written in the 17th and 19th centuries that use language that is harder to understand.
<b>C</b>	<b>Connotation</b>	Although this term usually refers solely to the emotional overtones of word choice, for this chart the term refers to any and all poetic devices, focusing on how such devices contribute to the meaning, the effect, or both of a poem. You may consider imagery, figures of speech (simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, etc), diction, point of view, and sound devices (alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, and rhyme). It is not necessary that you identify all the poetic devices within the poem. The ones you do identify should be seen as a way of supporting the conclusions you are going to draw about the poem.
<b>A</b>	<b>Attitude</b>	Having examined the poem's devices and clues closely, you are now ready to explore the multiple attitudes that may be present in the poem. Examination of diction, images, and details suggests the speaker's attitude and contributes to understanding. Think about the tone of the poem and how the author has created it. Remember that usually the tone or attitude cannot be named with a single word - think complexity.
<b>S</b>	<b>Shifts</b>	Rarely does a poem begin and end the poetic experience in the same place. As is true of most us, the poet's understanding of an experience is a gradual realization, and the poem is a reflection of that understanding or insight. Watch for the following keys to shifts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• key words, (but, yet, however, although)</li> <li>• punctuation (dashes, periods, colons, ellipsis)</li> <li>• stanza divisions</li> <li>• changes in line or stanza length or both</li> <li>• irony</li> <li>• changes in sound that may indicate changes in meaning</li> <li>• changes in diction</li> </ul>
<b>T</b>	<b>Title</b>	Now look at the title again, but this time on an interpretive level. What new insight does the title provide in understanding the poem.
<b>T</b>	<b>Theme</b>	What is the poem saying about the human experience, motivation, or condition? What subject or subjects does the poem address? What do you learn about those subjects? What idea does the poet want you take away with you concerning these subjects? Remember that the theme of any work of literature is stated in a complete sentence and make sure to avoid cliché.

<b>T</b>	<b>Title</b>	
<b>P</b>	<b>Paraphrase</b>	
<b>C</b>	<b>Connotation</b>	
<b>A</b>	<b>Attitude</b>	
<b>S</b>	<b>Shifts</b>	
<b>T</b>	<b>Title</b>	
<b>T</b>	<b>Theme</b>	

# Strategies for Analyzing Poetry

Poetry provides opportunities for students to develop an appreciation for poetry and its various techniques. Students will develop the skills necessary to properly understand poems. Reading poetry can certainly be helpful in introducing new vocabulary words and literary elements. This leads to an increase in reading comprehension and fluency that can be put into practice. Students will be able to critically analyze text and explain the intended meaning and effect in their responses.

In this section you may access strategies and resources to enhance your teaching of poetry.

1. Poetry Dictionaries
2. Poetry Scrapbooks
3. Poetry and Song
4. Walk Around a Poem
5. Responding to a Poem
6. Partner Poems
7. Thematic poetry
8. Poetry suggestions/links for resources
9. Poetry graphic organizers

## When should students start analyzing poetry?

Poetry can be taken apart as soon as poetry is taught. The earliest question, "what do you think this poem is about?" can be asked in kindergarten. By the end of grade 6 (SLO 2.2.3) for example, students should be responding to poems on an emotional level and understanding the figurative language that is a part of poetry. They should be identifying figurative language discussing how it enhances understanding people, places and action. By the end of grade 12, in a similar outcome, students should be analyzing how language and stylistic choices in oral, print, and other media texts communicate intended meaning and create effect.

The following strategies and resources can be used to enhance your teaching of poetry.

### 1. Poetry Dictionaries

Students create their own dictionaries in Grade 8 or 9 and use them through to Grade 12. Students can use “The Frayer Model” as a poetic vocabulary development tool. The model helps to develop a better understanding of complex concepts, by having students identify what something is but what something is not. An example of this model is located in the appendix.

Poetry – the area of writing that lends itself to the expression of feelings and ideas using style and rhythm. Beautiful, imaginative, reflective; poetry taps into inner emotion and musical pulse. It allows students to access and share feelings and emotions as no other genre does.

### 2. Poetry Scrapbooks

Poetry scrapbooks are both visual and textual representations of student selected poetry.

Students select poems that they like or can relate to. Teachers and students can generate a rubric which outlines the criteria. Students will share and explain why they chose the poems and how the poems relate to them.

Poetry is rhythm, sound, and beat. Children don't have to understand it to appreciate it, and they become curious about making their own. Poetry is kinesthetic literature at its finest!  
Poetry moves us.

### 3. Poetry and Song

Songs are an engaging example of poetry. Teachers can play different parts of a song from a variety of genres. The students respond to the parts by writing the mood that each part evokes in them. Students can identify poetic devices found in the lyrics. Students can use a favourite song and search for a visual that reflects the idea or message of a particular song.

Poetry slams are meant for audiences and even reluctant writers are happy to try their voices.

#### 4. “Walk around a Poem” strategy

The teacher will photocopy a poem in the middle of a page to allow students to record all their responses in the margins. Suggest that students highlight phrases in the poem that they consider important. (For more information about this strategy see the Grade 12 ELA Foundation for Implementation document, section 4 -116)

Poems defy rules. This means that poetry is accessible to English language learners. Even with limited vocabulary, students can find ways to express their voices.

#### 5. Responding to a Poem

There are a wide variety of strategies available for teachers to model responding to a poem. One effective strategy is the Responding to a Poem sheet (adapted from the Prentice Hall Multisource Activity sheet) located in the Appendix. Another resource is the Poem Analysis sheet also located in the Appendix.

Poetry provides students with the opportunity to learn figurative language and specific literary techniques as no other form does. Poetry allows kids to share their lives through metaphor and simile, through language that breaks the rules of grammar and conventions.

#### 6. Partner Poems

Partner Poems is a strategy where two or more voices read aloud a poem to one another. There are many benefits in using this strategy to:

- Build self-confidence as students build fluency and comprehension
- Develop public speaking skills and confidence – easier to speak with a peer than alone – security blanket

- Reinforce comprehension and fluency since you give students time to practice before reading to class
- Motivate students since this is fun and not intimidating
- Promote group/partner work

Students find their voices in poems.

### 7. Thematic poetry

There are many poems accessible to teachers based on themes. Theme is defined as a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work that may be stated directly or indirectly. Some common themes used in the classroom are nature, growing up, friendship, conflict etc.

Students will analyze different types of poems based on a selected theme. They will use a mind map to organize the differences and similarities of the poem. They can determine the type and form of poetry used in the selected theme. There is a list of common themes located in the appendix and presented as a word splash.

Poetry is meant to be spoken and shared.

### 8. Poetry suggestions/links for resources

Text sources:

- *Poetry in Focus* by Bob Cameron, Margaret Hogan, and Patrick Lashmar
- *Poetry Alive (Perspectives)/ (Transitions)* by Don Salianni
- *Joyful Noise – Poems for Two Voices, I am Phoenix (to be used for Partner Poems)*
- *Partner Poems for Building Fluency: 25 Original Poems with Research-Based Lessons ....* By Bobbi Katz (Jan. 1, 2007)
- *Inside Poetry* by Glenn Kirkland and Richard Davies
- *Adolescent Literacy – Turning Promise into Practice* by Kyleene Beers – Robert Probst - Linda Rief (Dialogue with a Poem p 350 – 364, Icebreaker – p 48-49, Dealing with Trauma – p 40-41)

Online sources:

- Partner Poems for Building Fluency: Grades 4-6: 40 Engaging Poems for Two-Voices With Motivating Activities - [http://www.amazon.ca/Partner-Poems-Building-Fluency-Comprehension/dp/0545108764/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1431109811&sr=8-2&keywords=partner+poems](http://www.amazon.ca/Partner-Poems-Building-Fluency-Comprehension/dp/0545108764/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1431109811&sr=8-2&keywords=partner+poems)
- Poetry Picnic - <http://readingyear.blogspot.ca/2011/04/poetry-picnic.html>

## 9. Poetry graphic organizers

There are numerous poetry graphic organizers available for teachers to use in the classroom to support students to better understand poetry and poetic devices. Two suggested graphic organizers are:

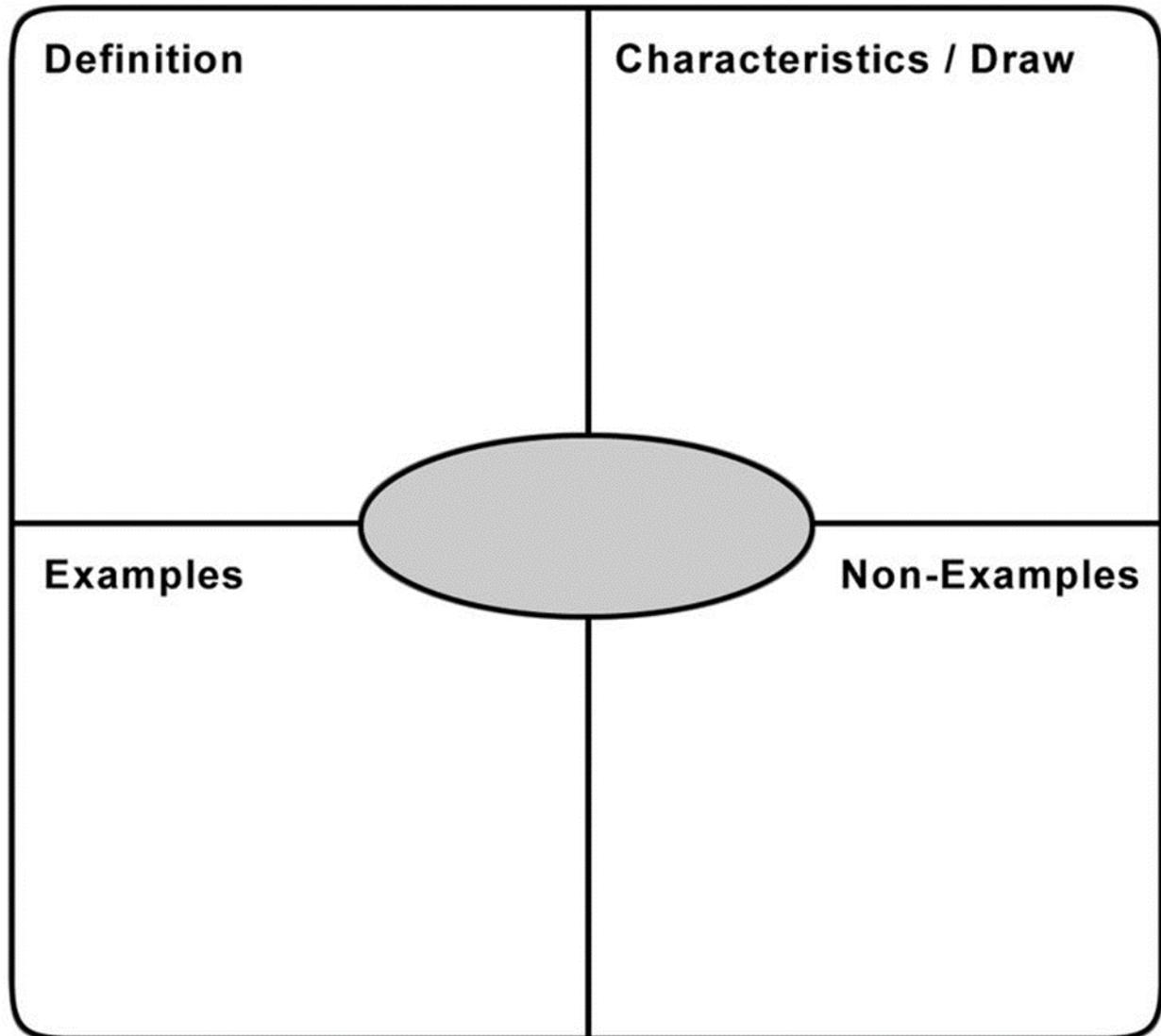
- Pyramid Organizer

Students will record information on the graphic organizer to provide students with the structure that facilitates analysis. (For more information see Grade 9 ELA Foundation document section 1-188, Grade 10 ELA Foundation document section 2-234, Grade 11 ELA Foundation document, and section 4- 254-255).

- S.O.A.P.S.Tone Organizer

The S.O.A.P.S.Tone Organizer teaches students a strategy to use when analyzing literary texts, including poetry. It uses common literary elements to critically examine texts and better organize their responses to text. There are numerous other online resources for teachers to successfully implement in any classroom. An example of this organizer is located in the appendix.

# Fray Model



# Responding to a Poem

How you respond to a poem on an emotional and intellectual level is based on your past; on all your experiences, thoughts, and beliefs. The meaning of a poem comes from who you are as much as from the written text.

The following questions will help you probe deeper into a poem.

1. What feelings arise in you as you read this poem?
2. What memories or past experiences come to you?
3. Imagery is so powerful; what images are most striking? Which of your senses are awakened?
4. Are you wondering about something? What parts puzzle you? What questions can you ask?
5. Titles offer clues to meaning, what does your title tell you?
6. Can you tell who or what the speaker is in the poem? How can you tell? Why do you think the poet chose this voice?
7. Why do you think the writer decided to use poetry rather than prose?
8. How many examples of figurative language can you find in your poem? Can you find similes, metaphors, personification, apostrophe, etc?
9. Can you find sound devices such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance, etc.? Can you figure out the rhyme scheme? Can you find other literary devices?
10. What's the opinion of the poet about people or life? Do you agree or disagree with the viewpoint? Explain.
11. Did you like the poem? Hate it? What did you like most? Least?
12. Is there a piece of music you would use to accompany the reading of this poem? What would you choose? Why?

Go ahead, take apart a poem.

**Poem Analysis sheet**

Name of Poem: \_\_\_\_\_

Written by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date written: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional information found on Poet: \_\_\_\_\_

Words/line that "caught" your eye: \_\_\_\_\_

Theme of poem: \_\_\_\_\_

Poetic Devices found in poem:

Metaphor – \_\_\_\_\_

Simile – \_\_\_\_\_

Imagery – \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please identify) \_\_\_\_\_

How it connects to you/your life: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## SOAPSTone Graphic Organizer

<b>Title of Piece:</b> <b>Author:</b>		
<b>Subject</b>	The general topic, content, and ideas contained in the text. What is this piece about?	
<b>Occasion</b>	The time and place of the piece; the current situation or context which gave rise to the writing or speech.	
<b>Audience</b>	The group of readers to whom this piece is directed. The audience may be one person, a small group, or a large group. What qualities, beliefs, or values do the audience members have in common?	
<b>Purpose</b>	The reason behind the text. What does the speaker, writer, or filmmaker want the audience to do, feel, say or choose? In literature, we call this the theme of the piece.	
<b>Speaker</b>	The voice that tells the story, or in nonfiction, the author. What do we know about the writer's life and views that shape this text?	
<b>Tone</b>	What choice of words and use of rhetorical devices let you know the speaker's tone? Is the tone light-hearted or deadly serious? Mischievous or ironic?	

# Slam Poem Transcripts

## **“My name is Zainab and I am not a terrorist”**

Hi, nice to meet you,

I'm a... girl.

Let me try that again.

Hi there, nice to meet you, I'm a ... Muslim

Wait- no- that's not right.

Hi, nice to meet you- I'm a terrorist

I'm sorry for Boston and Brussels

For Paris and 9/11

For making you uncomfortable in an airplane.

Sorry for offending your culture by covering

Sorry that my dietary restrictions are a threat to your health

Since apparently eating halal might cause you to catch a disease.

Sorry for the KKK

Oh wait, that wasn't me

Sorry that ninety percent of the terror attacks are from non-Muslims.

Sorry for inventing the toothbrush because who wants good breath?

For the cloths and coffee beans

The camera in which you take your selfies

Founding the first university

The invention of Chemistry and Algebra-

Ok I'm really sorry for that one.

Damn you, Muslims

I'm sorry to all of you.

So I, a terrorist am handing over the palette to you

Do what you please

Paint me over with the brush called discrimination

Color me in with the colors called generalization

And wash me out with the unbelievable concept of Islamophobia

I find it hilarious how people will tell me and assume that because I am a Muslim I can't speak

English

That the fact that my mother wears traditional Islamic clothing

Because that is what liberates her

She is automatically assumed as not knowing the Western tongue.

See I find it funny that I'm told I'm uneducated and probably had a hard time learning English

But y'all will mistake the s and the z when it comes down to labeling me.

I am a Mus-lim not a Muz-lem

My religion is Is-lam, not Iz-lam

Sorry for slamming about my Is-lam

Why is it that I am treated like a guest in my own home?

But heck what do I know?

I'm just a terrorist.

I'm sick of the back-handed compliments and shocked expressions

The ignorant questions like "But don't you get hot in the summer?"

Honey no, I'm hot all the time.

To the girl in my Economics class who told me that I have nice headgear

Girl, do I look like a football player?

Or to my business teacher who taught us a lesson on Islamic culture

And then proceeded to show us a video called the "Islamic State"

Showing us the beheadings and brainwashing

Whilst he himself brainwashed a room full of thirty

My classmates and peers

Sir, let me teach you a lesson of my own

The terrorist group that justifies their indescribable actions with my religion

Even though they've never read a Quran

Is not religion

Religion is not culture

And sir that over there is not my religion.

So dear Donald Trump,

Dear people of the world,

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry for the sufferings and the massacres

The bombings and the bloodshed

The attacks and the hurt

But don't you know I'm hurting too?

Don't you know it hurts too to stand up here and say sorry for something I did not do

I am not a terrorist.

Radical Islam is not a thing

Because by saying that you're still associating the terror with me

The only gun I've ever fired are the ones of the bullets called poetry

The only mind field I've ever created are the ones that explode with kindness and compassion

Instead of dropping bombs I drop mics.

I don't want to come across hateful and full of vengeance

I'm just tired of having to take the blame

Tired of apologizing and having to defend myself when I, too, am a victim

So let's try it again:

Assalamualaikum

Peace be upon you

I am a girl.

I am a Muslim.

My name is Zainab.

And I am not a terrorist.

## **“Muslim Ban” Amir Safi**

To be Muslim,  
Is to watch your mosque set on fire,  
And not say a word.

Because you do not know yet  
If it was the supremacist or the fundamentalist.  
Which is to say,  
You do not know yet,  
Whether you are expected to be outraged or apologized.

Tell me, if a Muslim's body hits the ground,  
And no one's there to make a hashtag,  
Did it ever even exist?

By that, I mean 200 children were executed by Isis in Syria,  
But nobody heard about it-  
Because it didn't happen at an Ariana Grande concert.  
Besides, Twitter can't fit 200 bodies behind a hashtag.  
And the world can't fit its feet into 400 tiny shoes.

Everyone has a proposed solution- including Ted Cruz,  
Who says that we should start patrolling Muslim neighborhoods.  
The premise of patrolling Muslim neighborhoods is kinda funny to me,  
I mean, what are you gonna do?  
Patrol *all* areas with good school districts?

Donald Trump says the Muslim ban will only be in effect until we figure things out,  
But isn't blaming Muslims for Isis  
The *definition* of victim blaming?

We all say the rhetoric is racist, but what race is a Muslim?  
And the pundits say that this sort of hate speech should stop,  
Because it's bad foreign policy.

And that's where I see it.  
How not human you view us.  
As if the only way to stop bigotry or xenophobia towards Muslims,  
Is to make people afraid of more Muslims becoming terrorists.  
As if this is our natural evolution.  
Like if you say something mean to us,  
We will go hibernate in some cocoon woven from hurt feelings,

And emerge as butterl-isis.  
Except for Malala.  
Everyone loves Malala.

As if the only way a Muslim can prove they're in fact, *not* a terrorist,  
Is by getting shot in the head by one.  
Or at least that's what they'd have us believe here in America.

Where the mosque was shot up in my hometown,  
Where they want to patrol my neighborhood,  
And separate me from my family.  
Greatest military in the world,  
Terrified of my grandmothers.  
And I still don't know if I'm expected to be outraged or apologized.

## **“Islamophobia”- Rudy Fransisco**

On June 17, 2015 Dylann Roof walked into a midweek Bible study  
He sat and prayed with the church members before pulling out his gun  
Killing most, and allowing one to live.

After the incident he was found and arrested- peacefully.  
When Dylann Roof killed nine innocent Black people  
We did not question his God.  
He wore flags of apartheid Africa,  
We did not question his allegiance.  
He committed the crime alone,  
We did not question his people.

When Adam Lanza shot a classroom full of first graders at Sandy Hook  
Elementary  
We did not ask him to leave the country.  
When Timothy McVeigh killed 168 people in Oklahoma,  
We did not call this a crime against every American.  
When the KKK killed thousands of Black people,  
While swank to hold Christian morality,  
We did not ask them to remove their robes,  
We do not call all Christians bigots.

Do you see it?  
How we don't label all white men based on the sins of the few?  
Do you see it?  
How we don't have to condemn a whole class of people based on the actions of some.  
Do you see it?  
How all the names are different, how all the faces are different, how all the people are different?  
Therefore we should not condemn all the Muslims for the radicalism of the group.  
If you want to persecute ISIS go ahead, but to persecute ISIS is to persecute those that gave  
them power, to persecute those that gave them power is to prosecute the US Government.  
Do your research.

Islam is not synonymous with terror  
It is literally submission  
It is devotion  
It is peace  
And terrorism actually is forbidden  
and Jihad does not mean Holy war,  
it means struggle,

it means survival,  
it means standing face-to-face with everything that wants to put you on the ground and choosing  
to be alive.  
Do your research.

Stop listening to CNN,  
stop sharing humanity for hypocrisy,  
stop staring at Muslims at the airport,  
stop letting your fear drive you into ignorance,  
stop supporting Billionaire Republicans who want to scare you into murdering the innocent  
And start supporting leaders who speak peace in their native tongue.

Instead of burning down the mosque,  
Burn down the walls around the pulsating muscles in your chest,  
And realize that we all have one.  
And lastly,

As the customary greeting goes.  
As'salaamualaikum –  
Peace be upon you  
Waliakum As'salaam-  
and upon you be peace

Do you see it?

## **“America: A Brief History of Parking Disputes”- A Tribe Called West**

Our fire’s burnin’  
They’re trying to put us out  
Will we see justice in this lifetime?

Last month, three students at UNC Chapel Hill  
Deah Barakat, 23 years old  
Yuser Abu Salah, 21  
Razan Abu Salah, 19  
Were executed by their neighbor  
Craig Hicks, a 46-year-old white male

CNN tells us that they were killed over a parking dispute.  
Police found fourteen guns in his apartment,  
But his wife told all the reporters “he’s a good man,”  
He saved puppies!  
The press reported nothing of his Facebook page filled with anti-religion posts  
He supports same-sex marriage, man.  
All three of his victims were Muslim.  
He won an award from the grocery store!  
This is a hate crime.  
And he is being humanized in the media  
If Craig Hicks and his family were gunned down by a Muslim,  
How many mosques would be vandalized?  
How many headscarves would be pulled?  
How many hashtags “je suis Charlie” than we’ve ever had hashtag “Chapel Hill Shooting”

Since the media wants to call this hate crime a parking dispute  
What else is a parking dispute?

Can’t breathe?  
Parking dispute.  
Hands up don’t shoot,  
Parking dispute.  
Playing with a toy gun,  
Parking dispute.  
Being Mexican in Arizona,  
Parking dispute.  
Wearing a hoodie or hijab,  
Parking dispute.  
Will the American flag ever fly at half-mast for these parking disputes?  
If I were gunned down by Craig Hicks

How would my death be spun by the media?

I am Pakistani,  
But they'll only ever see me as a terrorist.  
They'll ignore all my volunteer work,  
And look for a Homeland Security record instead.  
They'll find the Quran on my iPod  
And that will be all they need to link me to ISIS.

My family came here to avoid persecution for being Jewish  
They will search my academic history,  
List my accomplishments,  
Call me a gymnastics star,  
But my whiteness will never be mentioned.

15 years ago my parents came here to escape the Muslim genocide of the Bosnian war  
But all they'll ever see is my headscarf and someone to be afraid of

My grandparents are refugees from Castro's Cuba  
When I tell people I'm also Costa Rican,  
They ask me how's Puerto Rico?  
The media only sees me as a brown-skinned wetback.

Until people stop asking me where I'm *really* from,  
Until the color of my skin does not determine the length of my life,  
Until we're all seen as Americans-  
America's history of parking disputes will continue.

The Trail of Tears is a parking dispute-  
Shutting down fifty Chicago Public Schools in neighborhoods was a parking dispute  
The internment of Japanese-Americans was a parking dispute.  
The US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan was a parking dispute.  
The US-Mexico border was a parking dispute.  
Jim Crow was a parking dispute.  
And it still is.

We refuse to stay within the yellow lines  
We refuse to sink to our designated roles in the margins of this country

Deah Barakat, 23 years old  
Yuser Abu Salah, 21  
Razan Abu Salah, 19  
Are six feet under

But no amount of dirt can bury this injustice

Our fire's burnin'  
They're trying to put us out  
Will we see justice in this lifetime?

Our fire's burnin'  
They're trying to put us out  
We will seek justice in this lifetime.

## Muslims

**Source:** Encyclopedia of Chicago

**Available at:** <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/865.html>

The Muslim community of metropolitan Chicago reflects the ethnic and theological diversity of global Islam.

Bosnians, Arabs, and African Americans established Muslim organizations in the city prior to 1960. A Bosnian mutual aid and benevolent society, Muslimansko Potpomagajuce Drustvo Dzemijetul Hajrije of Illinois, established in the Near North Side in 1906, appears to be the oldest Muslim organization in the United States. A subsequent Bosnian mosque on N. Halsted Street relocated in the 1970s to north suburban Northbrook. This new mosque, called the Islamic Cultural Center of Greater Chicago, has served a multiethnic constituency, though not without some institutional struggle over its identity in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Arab Muslims from Palestine began settling in Chicago in the early 1900s. Mostly entrepreneurs, they occupied a sociogeographic niche along the edge of the South Side's African American community by the late 1940s. Political turmoil in the decades following the creation of Israel in 1948 brought more Palestinian Muslims to Chicago, while many non-Palestinian Arab Muslims began arriving in the mid-1950s. The first local Arab mosque, now known as the Mosque Foundation (est. 1954), opened a new facility in southwest suburban Bridgeview in 1982, later adding two state-accredited schools for Muslim children. By the end of the twentieth century, Arab Muslims were attending various mosques throughout the metropolitan region, particularly on the city's North Side and in some suburbs.

Chicago has figured prominently in Islam's appeal to African Americans since 1920, the year Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, the first missionary to the United States from the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, relocated to Chicago. Sadiq established the first Ahmadi mosque in the nation, at 4448 S. Wabash Avenue, and Chicago served as the movement's national headquarters until 1950. Four Ahmadi mosques can be found in the region today, two predominantly African American, two predominantly Indo-Pakistani. The Moorish Science movement of Noble Drew Ali held its first National Convention in Chicago in 1928, and today at least three Moorish-derived mosques can be found in the city. Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam originated in Detroit in 1930 but soon shifted its locus to Chicago's Temple No. 2 on the South Side. The movement split a few years after Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, with Minister Louis Farrakhan continuing the ideology of the original Nation of Islam, and Imam Warith Deen Mohammed (Elijah's son) leading his group, the American Society of Muslims, into Islamic orthodoxy. At the end of the twentieth century over 20 African American mosques could be found locally, all but two within the city limits. The most impressive opened in 1987 at 47th and Woodlawn in Kenwood, an independent mosque named Masjid Al-Faatir, built by another of Elijah Muhammad's sons with significant financial support from boxer Muhammad Ali.



*Awami Bazaar window, 2004*

During the four decades following 1960, Muslim Chicago grew from 5 mosques, all within the city limits, to nearly 70 mosques dotting the six-county region, about two-thirds of them within the city and one-third in the suburbs. Several prayer places have also been established in occupational settings. Diversity within the local Muslim community has increased dramatically since the 1965 changes in U.S. immigration policies. Indo-Pakistanis have made a particularly notable institutional impact in recent years: over half of the region's mosques serve predominantly Indo-Pakistani constituencies, and several of these mosques are located in suburbs with income levels above the regional median. Theological diversity has also increased: Sunni, Shi'ite, and Sufi groups can all be found, representing a range of orthodox and heterodox perspectives. Special-purpose organizations have proliferated as well, including two Islamic colleges, a council of local Islamic groups, several publishing and advocacy organizations, and an Islamic think tank.

Regular prayer constitutes one of Islam's foundational pillars. Five times daily, and during communal gatherings weekly on Fridays and at the two annual Eid festivals, devout Muslims face northeast from Chicago toward the sacred city of Mecca. The ritual gives concise expression to the ideal of Muslim unity in “submission” (the literal meaning of “Islam”) to Allah (“God”).

By: Paul D. Numrich

### ***Bibliography***

Husain, Asad, and Harold Vogelaar. “Activities of the Immigrant Muslim Communities in Chicago.” In *Muslim Communities in North America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith, 1994.

Numrich, Paul D. “Facing Northeast in a Midwestern Metropolis: The Growth of Islam and the Challenge of the Ummatic Ideal in Chicago.” In *History of Religion and Urban America: A Chicago Case Study*, ed. Virginia Lieson Brereton and Mark N. Wilhelm. Forthcoming.

Turner, Richard Brent. *Islam in the African-American Experience*. 1997.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Section: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Guidelines for Developing Juicy Discussion Questions**

Discussions in my previous classes have improved their ability to have deep, sustained discussions by first improving their questioning skills. Please use these steps as guidelines for constructing discussion questions worthy of an excellent discussion.

### **Step One: Use the text – open the book!**

Strong discussion questions are anchored to a specific event, scene and/or quote from a text. You should start your discussion questions by pointing your group members of a specific piece of evidence.

Possible sentence starters:

- “On page \_\_\_\_\_, I was interested in the scene where \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “On page \_\_\_\_\_, I noticed the quote \_\_\_\_\_”

### **Step Two: Go beyond comprehension—go deep!**

While it may make sense to include some questions that help clarify the plot or vocabulary, these questions are not good at helping your group maintain sustained discussion. Instead, keep notes on your clarification questions separately and use discussion questions as an opportunity to delve deeper into the text. You can do this by making sure your question is open ended.

Strong discussion questions are never “yes/no” questions. Instead, they encourage depth of thought from the members of your group. Here are some examples:

- What patterns are you noticing from this scene/quote?
- What can we notice about the character(s) internal struggle(s)?
- How is the character/s changing?
- How is a relationship changing?
- How is the conflict changing?
- What inferences can we make about this scene/quote?
- Who or what is influencing the character(s) in this scene/quote?

## **Step Three: Include the Habits of Mind!**

Strong discussion questions incorporate at least one habit of mind in a thoughtful manner. Please underline the H.O.M. in your question or write the HOM you used in parentheses after your question, so that it's easily apparent when grading. Here are some examples:

---

### **Evidence:**

- Is there any other evidence (quotes/scenes) that can back up your opinion?
- This quote/scene proves what?
- 
- 

### **Significance:**

- What is the long-term effect of this problem?
- How does this scene/quote affect the character(s)?
- Is there something more important that we should be considering? If we take a step back, what new theories can we make about the story/character/conflict?
- 
- 

### **Alternatives:**

- What new strategies could the character(s) try?
- What would you do in that scene?
- What other options do the characters have?
- What are the consequences?
- Can anyone help the character(s) make a wiser decision?
- 
- 

### **Connections:**

- Does this remind you of anything we have studied or seen before?
- Have you experienced a similar problem before?
- Has someone you know dealt with this problem before?
- Does this seem to be part of a pattern?
- 
- 

### **Points of View:**

- Whose point of view are we hearing?
- Whose point of view is left out?
- 
-

## Try open-ended discussion questions!

1. "On page \_\_\_\_, in cell/s\_\_\_\_\_, I noticed the scene/quote/image where

\_\_\_\_\_.

(Ask a follow up question that asks your peers to examine this part of the text deeply, looking at character's motivations, hidden meaning, larger issues etc.)-

2.

3.

4.

## Try a Text-Self-Text question!

Start with something interesting in the text. Connect it to your personal experience. Then look back at that part of the text.

1. "On page \_\_\_\_, in cell/s\_\_\_\_\_, I noticed the scene/quote/image where \_\_\_\_\_.

How has your experience with \_\_\_\_\_ affected how you see this situation? (Then add a follow up question **about the text**)

2.

# Socratic Seminar

**Source:** Facing History

**Available at:** <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/socratic-seminar>

## Rationale

In a Socratic Seminar activity, students help one another understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in a text through a group discussion format. Students are responsible for facilitating their group discussion around the ideas in the text; they shouldn't use the discussion to assert their opinions or prove an argument. Through this type of discussion, students practice how to listen to one another, make meaning, and find common ground while participating in a conversation.

## Procedure

### 1. Select an Appropriate Text

The Socratic Seminar strategy is based on close textual analysis, so it is important to select a text that provides ample avenues for interpretation and discussion. If you choose a simple text where the meaning is fairly straightforward, there won't be much for students to discuss. Also, the text should not be too long to read closely in the allotted amount of time. Often, teachers select a text ranging from one paragraph to one page. An example of texts often used as the basis of Socratic Seminar activities include the preamble to the US Constitution, Dr. Martin Luther King's [Letter from Birmingham Jail](#), or the reading [No Time to Think](#) from our resource *Holocaust and Human Behavior*.

### 2. Give Students Time to Prepare

Before beginning the seminar, it is essential that students have time to prepare ideas. Students should annotate the text before the start of the class discussion. Teachers often assign a discussion leader who generates a few open-ended questions that can be used to begin the seminar.

### 3. Develop a Classroom Contract

These seminars have rules that may not apply to other forms of discussion, so before beginning the seminar, it is important that everyone is aware of the norms. Below are typical rules used to structure a Socratic Seminar activity. Of course, you can adapt these to fit the needs of your students.

- Talk to each other, not just to the discussion leader or teacher.
- Refer to evidence from the text to support your ideas.
- Ask questions if you do not understand what someone has said, or you can paraphrase what another student has said for clarification ("I think you said this; is that right?").
- You do not need to raise your hand to speak, but please pay attention to your "airtime"—how much you have spoken in relation to other students.
- Don't interrupt.

- Don't "put down" the ideas of another student. Without judging the student you disagree with, state your alternate interpretation or ask a follow-up question to help probe or clarify an idea.
- Common statements or questions used during a Socratic Seminar activity include:
  - Where does that idea come from in the text?
  - What does this word or phrase mean?
  - Can you say that in another way?
  - Is this what you mean to say...?
  - What do you think the author is trying to say?
  - What else could that mean?
  - Who was the audience for this text? How does that shape our interpretation of these words?
  - Who was the author of this text? What do we know about him/her? How does that shape our understanding of these words?

Before beginning the seminar, it is also important to remind students that the purpose of the seminar is not to debate or prove a point but to more deeply understand what the author was trying to express in the text.

If you have never done a Socratic Seminar activity with your students before, you might spend a few moments brainstorming the qualities that would make for a great seminar. These qualities or criteria can be explained on a rubric and used to evaluate the seminar at the end of the class period. Criteria you might use to evaluate a Socratic Seminar activity include engagement (everyone listening and sharing), respect (no interruptions or put-downs), meaning-making (students understand the text more deeply at the end of the seminar), and use of evidence (comments always refer back to the text).

#### **4. The Socratic Seminar**

A Socratic Seminar activity often begins with the discussion leader, a student or the teacher, asking an open-ended question. A typical opening prompt is: What do you think this text means? Silence is fine. It may take a few minutes for students to warm up. Sometimes teachers organize a Socratic Seminar activity like a Fishbowl activity, with some students participating in the discussion and the rest of the class having specific jobs as observers. At least 15 minutes should be allotted to the activity, and it can often last 30 minutes or more. As students become more familiar with the Socratic Seminar format, they will be able to discuss a text for longer periods of time without teacher intervention.

#### **5. Reflect and Evaluate**

After the Socratic Seminar activity, give students the opportunity to evaluate the process in general and their own performance specifically. Reflecting on the seminar process helps students improve their ability to participate in future discussions. Here are some questions you might discuss or have students write about when reflecting on the seminar:

- At any point, did the seminar revert to something other than a dialogue? If so, how did the group handle this?
- What evidence did you see of people actively listening and building on others' ideas?
- How has your understanding of this text been affected by the ideas explored in this seminar?
- What parts of the discussion did you find most interesting? In what parts were you least engaged?
- What would you like to do differently as a participant the next time you are in a seminar?

## **Our Own Great Witnessing: An American Muslim's Reflection on 9/11** by Taymullah Abdur-Rahman

September 2016

**Source:** Facing History and Ourselves

**Available at:** <http://facingtoday.facinghistory.org/our-own-great-witnessing-an-american-muslims-reflection-on-9/11>

*Fifteen years after the attacks on September 11, Facing History's New England Program Associate, Taymullah Abdur-Rahman, reflects on how he came to terms with the attacks and their aftermath as an American Muslim.*

I was dropping my six-year-old son off at school when I heard on the radio that an airplane had crashed into the Twin Towers. Later when it was revealed to be a plot from Al Qaeda, my wife and I sat on the bed; she was in tears. We knew that our narrative as Muslims living in America had shifted forever.

As the years passed, patriotism increased, suspicions flared, and I became defensive. In the early days after the attack, when I listened to the president speak and I saw American flags being hung in my neighborhood it resonated with me. After all, I was an American. I began to think that perhaps 9/11 taught us how to stick together until as a Muslim, I began to feel ostracized by the media. My presumptions began to shift and despair set in.

Perhaps it wasn't about patriotism. Maybe it was about learning how fear makes people suspicious and bigoted. I read about innocent Muslims being attacked across the country and how a Sikh man -- mistaken as Muslim -- had been killed. I wanted to believe that people just hated all Muslims. It justified the smirks and rolling eyes my family and I received while at the mall and grocery store. At the time, I thought having any answer, even if it was half-baked made me feel better, so I stuck with that for a year or two. However, I had experienced too many humane encounters with everyday people to allow that thought to permeate long. As a person who loves to come to definitive conclusions, I found myself confused. There seemed to be two competing narratives in my life, if it wasn't about patriotism or how fear breeds prejudice, what was the lesson of 9/11?

It wasn't until 14 years after 9/11, when I began my work as a Program Associate at Facing History and Ourselves that I started to understand what one might take from the tragedy. In preparing for my work, I had been wrestling with my understanding of the Holocaust. I spent several months watching hours of documentary footage and reading primary source materials, struggling to come to grips with what I was supposed to do with the enormity of all of this death. What was there to learn from it?

I requested a meeting with Jan Darsa in the Jewish Education Department to gain some insight into how Jewish people felt about the Holocaust. I was eager to ask her some tough questions and I wanted answers. I came into her office with my pen and pad ready to take notes. I sat in the chair facing her, leaned in and with months of built up angst I asked, "Jan, how do we justify the Holocaust?"

*That was the wrong question.*

Jan smiled and said, "No Tay, we don't justify the Holocaust. Do you mean how do we reconcile what happened?" I didn't ask another question the entire hour I sat in her office. Her response had given me several answers to questions about other tragedies including 9/11. You can never justify senseless death and destruction. That's what I had been trying to do with 9/11 and now with the Holocaust. And while the two were entirely different, with separate circumstances, I had realized what I could take away from 9/11 through Jan's response to my unintentionally crude question.

*I was to be a witness.*

I am so grateful to be present at Facing History going into classrooms, facilitating workshops and being a witness. We certainly can never undo what was done to us on that beautiful September morning, nor can we restore what was taken away. But as an American Muslim, it's important for me to be in the room, engaged in the conversation, and not leaning on angry assumptions or misplaced resentment.

Living through 9/11, understanding the innocence it snatched from all of us and being able to use the social/emotional teaching tools that Facing History provides has empowered me and allowed me not to fall victim to false narratives but to shape my own. By using my voice to help others remember and reflect on tragedies long passed but whose effects linger even today, I believe there is hope in preventing future disasters.

In the end, we are all witnesses in one way or another. What we do with our testimony will determine what the future looks like for our children. 9/11 didn't teach me much, but because of it I have learned that each of us must take our experience, our own great witnessing, and use it as a mechanism to edify those around us in a manner that speaks to a responsible future.

## **Typecast as a Terrorist**

As my acting career developed, I was no longer cast as a radical Muslim –  
except at the airport

by Riz Ahmed

September 2016

**Source:** The Guardian

**Available at:** <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/15/riz-ahmed-typecast-as-a-terrorist>

To begin with, auditions taught me to get through airports. In the end, it was the other way around. I'm an actor. Since I was a teenager I have had to play different characters, negotiating the cultural expectations of a Pakistani family, Brit-Asian rudeboy culture, and a scholarship to private school. The fluidity of my own personal identity on any given day was further compounded by the changing labels assigned to Asians in general.

As children in the 1980s, when my brother and I were stopped near our home by a skinhead who decided to put a knife to my brother's throat, we were black. A decade later, the knife to my throat was held by another "Paki", a label we wore with swagger in the Brit-Asian youth and gang culture of the 1990s. The next time I found myself as helplessly cornered, it was in a windowless room at Luton airport. My arm was in a painful wrist-lock and my collar pinned to the wall by British intelligence officers. It was "post 9/11", and I was now labelled a Muslim.

As a minority, no sooner do you learn to polish and cherish one chip on your shoulder than it's taken off you and swapped for another. The jewellery of your struggles is forever on loan, like the Koh-i-Noor diamond in the crown jewels. You are intermittently handed a necklace of labels to hang around your neck, neither of your choosing nor making, both constricting and decorative.

Part of the reason I became an actor was the promise that I might be able to help stretch these necklaces, and that the teenage version of myself might breathe a little easier as a result.

If the films I re-enacted as a kid could humanise mutants and aliens, maybe there was hope for us. But portrayals of ethnic minorities worked in stages, I realised, so I'd have to strap in for a long ride.

Stage one is the two-dimensional stereotype – the minicab driver/terrorist/cornershop owner. It tightens the necklace.

Stage two is the subversive portrayal, taking place on "ethnic" terrain but aiming to challenge existing stereotypes. It loosens the necklace.

And stage three is the Promised Land, where you play a character whose story is not intrinsically linked to his race. There, I am not a terror suspect, nor a victim of forced marriage. There, my name might even be Dave. In this place, there is no necklace. I started acting professionally during the post-9/11 boom for stage-one stereotypes, but I avoided them at the behest of my 18-year-old self. Luckily, there was also a tiny speck of stage two stuff taking shape, subverting those same stereotypes, and I managed to get in on the act.

My first film was in this mode, Michael Winterbottom's [The Road to Guantánamo](#). It told the story of a group of friends from Birmingham who were illegally imprisoned and tortured in the US detention camp. When it won a prestigious award at the Berlin film festival, we were euphoric. For those who saw it, the inmates went from orange jumpsuits to human beings.

But airport security did not get the memo. Returning to the glamour of Luton Airport after our festival win, ironically named British intelligence officers frogmarched me to an unmarked room where they insulted, threatened, and then attacked me.

“What kinda film you making? Did you become an actor to further the Muslim struggle?” an officer screamed, twisting my arm to the point of snapping.

The question is disturbing not only because it endangers artistic expression, but because it suggests our security services don't quite grasp the nature of the terror threat we all face. A training presentation outlining Al-Qaida's penchant for “theatrical” attacks may have been taken a little literally.

It turned out that what those special branch officers did was illegal. I was asked by activist lawyers if I wanted to sue, but instead I wrote an account of the incident and sent it to a few journalists. A story about the illegal detention of the actors from a film about illegal detention turned out to be too good to ignore. I was glad to shed some light on this depressing state of affairs.



*Ahmed (left) in The Road to Guantánamo. Photograph: Allstar/FilmFour/Sportsphoto Ltd*

I went on to write a song inspired by the incident, titled Post 9/11 Blues. It was full of sage advice, such as: “We’re all suspects so watch your back / I farted and got arrested for a chemical attack.” The song got the attention of Chris Morris, who cast me in Four Lions.

In the end, having my arm nearly torn off by people whose salary I pay led to me exploring loads of stage two work – loosening the necklace. It felt good, but what about stage three, the Promised Land?

It turned out that there was no clear pathway for an actor of colour in the UK to go to stage three – to play “just a bloke”. Producers all said they wanted to work with me, but they had nothing I could feasibly act in. The stories that needed to be told in the multicultural mid-2000s were about the all-white mid-1700s, it seemed. I heard rumours that the Promised Land was not in Britain at all, but in Hollywood.

The reason for this is simple. America uses its stories to export a myth of itself, just like the UK. The reality of Britain is vibrant multiculturalism, but the myth we export is an all-white world of lords and ladies. Conversely, American society is pretty segregated, but the myth it exports is of a racial melting-pot, everyone solving crimes and fighting aliens side by side.

So America was where I headed. But it would not be an easy journey.

You see, the pitfalls of the audition room and the airport interrogation room are the same. They are places where the threat of rejection is real. They are also places where you are reduced to your marketability or threat-level, where the length of your facial hair can be a deal-breaker, where you are seen, and hence see yourself, in reductive labels – never as “just a bloke called Dave”. The post 9/11 Necklace tightens around your neck.

I had so far managed to avoid this in the audition room, but now I faced the same threat at US airports. It didn’t help that The Road to Guantánamo had left my passport stamped with an Axis of Evil world tour – shooting in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran within six months. I spent the flight sweating in defiance of air-conditioning, wondering what would await me.

When I landed, the officer assessing me shared my skin colour. I wondered whether this was a good sign or if he was one of the legendarily patriotic Cuban border officers I had heard about, determined to assess how star-spangled I was with a thumb up the anus. He looked at my passport, then at me, frowned and drew a big ‘P’ over my immigration card. I immediately thought it stood for Paki.

“Protocol!”

I was led down a long corridor, without explanation, before turning into a side room that felt instantly familiar.



*Ahmed (centre) in the film Four Lions, a satire about British homegrown jihadis. Photograph: Everett Collection/REX*

Apart from a Chinese family and a South American pilot battling the indignity with his spotless uniform, the holding pen was filled with 20 slight variations of my own face, all staring at me – kind of like a Bollywood remake of *Being John Malkovich*. It was a reminder: you are a type, whose face says things before your mouth opens; you are a signifier before you are a person; you are back at stage one.

The holding pen also had that familiar audition room fear. Everyone is nervous, but the prospect of solidarity is undercut by competition. In this situation, you're all fighting to graduate out of a reductive purgatory and into some recognition of your unique personhood. In one way or another you are all saying: "I'm not like the rest of them."

The fresh-faced desk officer was no older than 23. By the time I was called up to audition for him, my spiel to explain the passport stamps was ready. I'd show a letter from the film's producer, I'd say "award-winning film", and I'd flash a shiny new DVD. But the kid questioning me seemed more nervous than I was. He had clearly been to the same "Beware Bloodthirsty Actors" seminar as the intelligence officers at Luton.

"Step back from the counter!"

I was bounced up the chain for a proper interrogation by a dangerously fat man and his moustache. I sat and waited, rehearsing my lines. When the interrogation came, it was more of a car crash than my *Slumdog Millionaire* audition.

"Oh yeah? Afghanistan? What kinda movie were you making there?"

The question shot through me with a shudder. It reminded me of the questions I faced at Luton airport, but also of the question I ask myself all the time. Was I adding to the catalogue of stage one, two, or three? Was it a film my 18-year-old self wanted? Would it make the necklace looser or tighter?

I thought about the right way to answer him. *The Road to Guantánamo* was a documentary-drama, but maybe saying I was in a documentary about Guantánamo Bay wouldn't be wise. Drama should do. I said: "Erm, it's an award-winning drama called *The Road to Guantánamo*."

There was a long silence. He raised an eyebrow. I offered up the DVD. It had a photo of me handcuffed in an orange jumpsuit on its cover. I immediately regretted it. Longer silence. Second eyebrow goes up. He leaned in.

“Do you know anyone who wants to do harm to the United States?”

I shook my head and made Hugh Grant noises, venturing a “gosh!” in there somewhere. He absorbed my performance before holding up a book from my luggage. It was Mohsin Hamid’s novel [The Reluctant Fundamentalist](#).

“What’s this book?”

I explained, but he wasn’t really listening. He deployed a state-of-the-art intelligence protocol by Googling me, which returned a news clipping about the Luton airport incident. Fuck. My heart sank. This was it. No Hollywood for me. I was never gonna be Brad Pitt. I wasn’t even gonna be Apu from the fucking Simpsons. What was I thinking?

When, after an agonising three hours, I was waved through, I couldn’t believe it. I felt relieved, grateful, lucky – and then suddenly incensed. On the way out past my lookalikes, I gave a loud, “*As-salaam alieikum.*” No one leapt to return the greeting. Perhaps they lacked the safety net of a convincing “gosh!”



*Ahmed plays the main character Changez in The Reluctant Fundamentalist. Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo*

I joined a friend in Manhattan for dinner, apologising for being three hours late, and zoned out while they discussed astrology. Someone at the dinner turned to me.

“You’re such a terrorist,” she said.

I blinked. What the fuck? My face screwed itself into the expression I wish I’d pulled instead of mewling apologetically at the border officers.

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

My friend put her arm on mine and squeezed.

“Riz, she asked if you’re a Sagittarius.”

I swallowed. Baffled faces pinned me with concern.

“Right. Sorry. Yeah. Yes I am,” I said.

A similar version of the same thing happened again soon after. And again. And again. And again. I grew belligerent.

One officer asked if I had had any military training. My school had a cadet-force programme that I was swiftly ejected from, but I just answered “yes” without expanding. I was asked if I had travelled to Iran, Iraq, or Afghanistan recently.

“All except Iraq, but if it helps I’ve also been to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia,” I smiled.

Childish perhaps, but the situation itself is infantilising. Feigning obliviousness to an officer’s suspicion and refusing to pander to it was my only defence.

But the farce rolled on.

Twice when applying for a US work visa I was subjected to a Section 221G – a lengthy background check against a global database of terrorists – which almost lost me the jobs.

I saw the email correspondence between the state department and my attorney: “Hey Bill, looking at your client Mr Ahmed – pretty British-sounding name, huh? Saw his Post 9/11 Blues song, what’s with the ‘I heart Osama’ routine?”

Fair enough, you might think. Search him. Look at his racial profile and his passport stamps and his dangerously hilarious rap lyrics. But since I had been let into the US and deemed safe just the previous month, another rigmarole this month was obviously fruitless.

In the end, I was always let in, so these airport auditions were technically a success. But they involved the experience of being typecast, and when that happens enough, you internalise the role written for you by others. Now, like an over-eager method actor, I was struggling to break character.

I tried not to ingest all the signs telling me I was a suspect. I tried not to buy into the story world of this “protocol” or its stage-one stereotype of who I was. But when you have always moulded your identity to your environment and had your necklace picked out by others, it’s not easy. I couldn’t see myself as “just a bloke”. I failed at every single audition I went up for.

Rehearsing a scene beds a role into you. But sometimes if you over-rehearse it without unearthing any new meaning in it, you can suddenly forget your lines. You realise that

you are on a stage, not in the real world. The scene's emotional power and your immersion in it disappears.

And so it dawned on me that these searches were a fictional role-play taking place in a bubble, rather than an assessment of my worth. This was the way to see it. And it turns out this is also the way to see auditions. The protocol lost its chokehold on me, and I started getting roles again. One big job secured me a proper US visa, and soon I was getting waved through without the protocol. I began inching towards the Promised Land.



*Riz Ahmed in The Night Of. Photograph: HBO*

Now, both at auditions and airports, I find myself on the right side of the same velvet rope by which I was once clothes-lined. But this isn't a success story. I see most of my fellow Malkoviches still arched back, spines bent to snapping as they try to limbo under that rope. These days it's likely that no one resembles me in the waiting room for an acting audition, and the same is true of everyone being waved through with me at US immigration. In both spaces, my exception proves the rule.

Don't get me wrong: although my US airport experience is smoother, I still get stopped before boarding a plane at Heathrow every time I fly to the US. But now I find it hilarious rather than bruising. Easy for me to laugh with my work visa and strategically deployed "gosh!", perhaps. But it's also easy for me to laugh, because the more I travel, the more ridiculous the procedures become.

Heathrow airport draws its staff from the nearby Asian suburbs of Hounslow and Southall. My "random selection" flying to LA was so reliable that as I started travelling more, I went through a six-month stretch of being searched by the same middle-aged Sikh guy. I instinctively started calling him Uncle, as is the custom for Asian elders. He started calling me "beta", or son, as he went through my luggage apologetically. It was heart-warming, but veered dangerously close to incest every time he had to frisk my crotch.

"How are you, son?"

"I'm er, ooh, er, good. Uncle."

As I've travelled more, I've also done more film work, increasing the chances of being recognised by the young Asian staff at Heathrow. I have had my films quoted back at me by someone rifling through my underpants, and been asked for selfies by someone swabbing me for explosives.

The last kid who searched me, a young Muslim boy with an immaculate line-beard and goatee, was particularly apologetic.

“Sorry bro. If it makes you feel any better, they search me before I fly too.”

We laughed, not because he was joking, but because he was deadly serious. It was the perfect encapsulation of the minority's shifting and divided self, forced to internalise the limitations imposed on us just to get by, on the wrong side of the velvet rope even when (maybe especially when) you're on the right side of it. We cracked jokes and bumped fists.

As I left, he called after me with a question. “Bro, what kinda film you doing next?” I looked at the ID badge hanging from a string around his neck. I told him that I hoped it would be one he liked. •

This essay is extracted from [The Good Immigrant](#), a book of essays about race and immigration in the UK by 21 British black, Asian and minority ethnic writers, edited by Nikesh Shukla and featuring contributions from Bim Adewunmi, Salena Godden, Musa Okwonga, Coco Khan, Himesh Patel and more.

To order a copy for £12.29, go to [bookshop.theguardian.com](http://bookshop.theguardian.com) or call 0330 333 6846

**LIN-  
MANUEL  
MIRANDA**

**LINDA  
SARSOOR**

**LAURIE  
HERNANDEZ**

**ANJELAH  
JOHNSON-  
REYES**

**PADMA  
LAKSHMI**

**ISSA RAE**

**WILMER  
VALDERRAMA**

**KUMAIL  
NANJIANI**

**RAVI  
PATEL**

**UZO  
ADUBA**

**DIANE  
GUERRERO**

**AMERICAN  
LIKE  
ME**

REFLECTIONS ON LIFE  
BETWEEN CULTURES

**AMERICA FERRERA**

**MICHELLE  
KWAN**

**LIZA  
KOSHY**

**JENNY  
ZHANG**

**GEENA  
ROCERO**

**FRANK  
WALN**

**ANNA  
AKANA**

**ANN  
PARK**

**ROXANE  
GAY**

**MARTIN  
SENSMEIER**

**BAMBADJAN  
BAMBA**

**RANDALL  
PARK**

**ANN  
PARK**

**KAL  
PENN**

**CARMEN  
PEREZ**

**AL  
MADRIGAL**

**TANAYA  
WINDER**

**CARMEN  
CARRERA**

**JOY CHO**

**JOAQUIN  
CASTRO**

**AULI'I  
CRAVALHO**

**RESHMA  
SAUJANI**

**JEREMY  
LIN**



**Linda Sarsour** is an award-winning racial justice and civil rights activist, seasoned community organizer, and mother of three. She is most known for her intersectional coalition work and for building bridges across issues and racial, ethnic, and faith communities.

# Linda Sarsour

I WAS BORN INTO a community of radical love. It echoed through my home and down the streets of my neighborhood. Sunset Park was a noisy, happy place, filled with Palestinian, Dominican, Mexican, Ecuadoran, and Honduran families. A place where families and neighbors were one in the same. You did for your neighbor just as you would for an immediate family member. You knew their names, what they liked to eat, what music they listened to, and who they prayed to. Your block was your home. Your hood was your village. I didn't know at the time that this kind of love could be considered radical. Unusual. Powerful.

I am a Palestinian-American Muslim woman who wears a hijab. So I've been made painfully aware that some people ruffle when I use the word *radical*. But when I describe the loving place I grew up in, it is a word that truly applies. Brooklyn is a place I love like a human being. It is the place where I learned the meaning of radical love.

I was my mother's first child, born in a hospital in Brooklyn, delivered by a Muslim Palestinian immigrant, Dr. Ahmad Jaber, who whispered in my ear the call to prayer just moments after I was born. Like all Muslim babies, the first sounds I heard upon entering the world were words of love. I was welcomed into life, into my neighborhood, into my family with great enthusiasm. Even though my parents should have been disappointed to have a baby girl instead of a boy, they were overjoyed at my arrival. In Arab culture, everyone wants a son first and foremost, because boys can carry on the family name. It is customary to hope aloud that your first child will be a boy. People in my culture do not shrug and say, "Oh, we don't care about the gender—as long as the baby's healthy!" No. They pray openly and unabashedly for a son. But my parents had a girl, and my name was to be Linda. Inspired by a pop song that was very popular all over the Middle East at the time about a man who loved a girl named Linda.

My dad was also a man who loved a girl named Linda. As his oldest child, I was his pride and joy. His love was so vocal that for several years into my childhood, people in the neighborhood used to call him Abu Linda (*the father of Linda*). This nickname made his eyes twinkle, his spirit shine. He loved nothing more than his children. In a span of ten years, my mother gave birth to five daughters and two sons. The five daughters came first—one after the other, five of us in a row. Every time my mother would have another daughter, people would say, “Poor lady, inshallah [God willing] next time it will be a boy.” Not my dad. He would be so elated every time my mother had a daughter that when he would come home from the hospital acting so giddy, our neighbors and family would rise up from their seats thinking surely Dad’s glee meant that this time it was a boy. Then my dad would tell them my mother had given birth to another girl, and it always left them puzzled.

The moment my mother delivered her fifth child into the world—the last of her five girls—she closed her eyes.

“Is it a boy? Is it a boy?” my mother asked the doctor, wincing with hope and expectation.

“You have another beautiful princess!” Dr. Jaber announced joyfully.

“It’s a girl?!” she could not believe the odds that she had brought a *fifth* girl into the world, and she made no secret of her longing for a boy.

“I don’t even have a girl’s name prepared!” she said in complete desperation. “I thought for sure it would be a boy this time! What am I supposed to name her?!”

“*Hela*. You should name her Hela,” he said, using the Arabic word for *welcome*. “We must let her know she is welcome in this wonderful family, and this marvelous world.”

“Yes, you are right. She is Hela,” my mother cried.

Hela was welcomed into this world just like the rest of us were—with nothing but sheer exuberance from my father. While my mother recovered from labor, resting in bed with her baby, he would make his excitement known to anyone who would listen in the hospital, in the mosque, in the streets. My father did not have an easy life, but you would not have known this from his constant, visible joy. The way he saw it, he was so blessed to have so many healthy children—girls and boys—in a country so full of opportunity. He and my mother had left their village in

Al Bireh, Palestine, where they lived under military occupation. My father came here with just a fifth-grade education and a few hundred dollars. But he and my mother wanted to start their family in a safe place, with better opportunities. They arrived in Brooklyn to find that several other people from their village back in Palestine had come here too. My father hit the ground running very quickly, opening a corner store in Crown Heights where he often worked sixteen-hour days. His love for his family was unquestionable and extreme. He would have worked even more without complaint if it meant he could provide better for his family.

We were not an unusual family in our neighborhood. There were dozens of other Arab families, along with the Dominican, Mexican, Ecuadoran, and Honduran families. They all worked hard, raised their children, supported their neighbors, and gave back to the community. During the daytime, the kids would all gather to play tag, Wiffle ball, and dodgeball in the street. We'd sit for hours on end on the front stoops. When it got really dark, all the moms and grandmothers would come outside and call us home for dinner or bed. We had block parties all throughout the summer filled with music from our different cultures. We used to teach one another dances like salsa and debka.

The Palestinian-Americans were very close-knit. The community was always there for one another when someone was in need or when someone had something to celebrate. We would have concerts with Palestinian folklore, dancing to raise money for Palestinian orphans and refugees; festivals in the park that showcased our heritage and brought our community together for celebration and networking.

My father's love for celebrating Palestinian culture with his children and community was—like everything else he did—inexhaustible. And his support of all his children—boys and girls alike—was also very clear. It is true that in Muslim families, women are often the backbone, the foundation, and not so much at the forefront. But my father never kept his daughters at home. He always integrated us into social activities and encouraged us to participate in anything that could help us learn or have fun. He routinely brought us to classes in the community where we could learn more about Palestinian folklore and history and practice speaking our Arabic. My dad rooted for us to learn Palestinian folk dance, and cheered me on when I played the lead role in the plays or walked in the Arab fashion shows.

My uncle, my mother's brother, was our Palestinian folklore instructor, and I was the youngest member of the dance troupe. Because my uncle lived with us at the time, I got a lot more practice and became one of the best performers. I loved it so much that I even became an instructor when I was older and taught Arab-American girls debka, performing all over New York City. Many of the Muslim parents didn't want their daughters dancing in public, but my parents were happy to see me doing what I loved. And my father was always the guy in the front row, blocking everyone else's view with his giant 1990s video camera on his shoulder, taping every moment and angle of the performance. He used to stay up all night making copies of the videotape to distribute among the other parents in our community who didn't have cameras of their own.

People sometimes ask me now how a Muslim woman like me can be a feminist, because they are under the impression that those two things are incompatible. But I was brought up to believe I was loved, important, and integral to our community.

My Muslim immigrant father set the standard for me that girls and women are just as important to the village as anyone else. People imagine that Muslim communities turn their backs on women or subjugate them to lesser roles, but this was not my experience. As a child, I never felt less than my brothers or male cousins. I was Linda, the daughter of Abu Linda. My name meant something to the most important man in my life. It never even occurred to me that women couldn't speak in public or that women were any less important in our community—or any part of the world, for that matter. I was always surrounded by my sisters, female cousins, and other mothers in my neighborhood, and we weren't a passive bunch. We all looked out for one another.

In my family, I was the little mama. By the age of ten, I was already the oldest of seven children. My parents were never ashamed that my English was better than theirs. They leveraged this for the good of our entire family. With my father working sixteen-hour days, my mom needed my support. She had an eleventh-grade education and is a very smart woman, but still needed help filling out forms in English, assisting my siblings with homework, and speaking to bill collectors, doctors, and teachers. I did all of these things for my parents. I was always helping my six younger siblings. This gave me a sense of responsibility and empowerment

at a very early age. There were definitely times I wasn't sure I wanted this role, but it built up my confidence, which I would need later in life.

And no matter how critical my English-language skills were for our family, my parents never allowed me to forget Arabic. I used English at home only when absolutely necessary. My parents wanted us to be fluent in their mother tongue, and so they made a house rule to speak only Arabic to them. I remember running home from school to tell my dad a story about something exciting that had happened that day. I would let the words rush quickly from my mouth, forgetting the rule, only to be stopped by my father:

“Linda, tell me the whole story again. But this time in Arabic,” he would say with a smile.

I resented this at the time, but now as an adult I am grateful to be bilingual and to pass on the mother tongue of my ancestors and parents to my children. Our language is one thing that connects the past with our future—our grandparents with our children. I always knew I would have children. I wanted to become a mother. I was surrounded by them, in awe of them. And every mother in our community was a mother to all. The woman who lived next door was just as concerned about my well-being as my own parents were. My friends' mom could correct me if I was misbehaving. Other aunts—which is what you called almost any of your mother's female friends—were welcomed and even expected to comment on me, my grades, my attitude, my accomplishments, and my shortcomings. In my community, we didn't see ourselves as just singular individuals or singular families. We were connected to something bigger. There was and still is a collective that we all feel like we are a part of. It was not just logistics—it was a way of thinking.

This was the village mentality that I thought all Americans shared. But as I grew older, I found that I was fortunate to have been born into my neighborhood, and maybe I had even taken it for granted. Not everyone has this village experience. It is a thing of the past in many cities. People have said goodbye to the village life in exchange for the global life. More and more people have embraced being alone in their homes—a stranger to their neighbors—but digitally connected to people across the world.

I am grateful and proud of the way I grew up. As a child, I never questioned that I was loved, safe, and connected to a village within a larger city in a country I

loved. The first time I realized life wasn't as good for everyone else was when I was in high school. Some of the kids at my school came from different neighborhoods in Brooklyn. Their streets had been shattered by crime, drugs, police corruption, and gang violence. They would show up at school with stories of their friends being shot or jumped. Every morning when we arrived at school, we were greeted by security officers who waved their wands across our bodies and asked us to run our book bags through the scanners. These were the only metal detectors I'd ever encountered besides at the airport. But some of the other kids of color would comment about being stopped and frisked within their communities by NYPD all the time.

When I finished high school, I wanted to dedicate my life to helping kids who didn't have the same kind of support and love I had experienced growing up. I had seen the movie *Dangerous Minds* in high school and wanted to be just like Michelle Pfeiffer—the bighearted badass teacher showing kids how to love poetry, one another, and themselves. It made sense to me to work outside my own village—where I had it so good—to help kids in other neighborhoods. I enrolled in community college in Brooklyn to get my English degree. I was going to become the adult who told all the disenfranchised kids of Brooklyn that they mattered.

And then 9/11 happened. I was twenty years old. A new wife, young mother, and college student. I loved my country, and I loved my people. But suddenly the two seemed at odds. After that horrific attack on our city and our fellow Americans, my Muslim community began to be regarded as a group of suspects—just by virtue of our language, our ethnicity, and our faith. Muslims were now very unwelcome in many places. They became subject to racial profiling and police surveillance. I watched with my very own eyes in Sunset Park as law enforcement agencies raided coffee shops and businesses. I watched women cry and say, *Somebody picked up my husband and I haven't seen him in five days and he never called me.* I knew so many Muslims who had fled their home countries to escape the very situations they were now encountering in America.

So this was the catalyst in starting my life's work as an activist leader—my love for my people. I wasn't going to let this happen to Muslims, to America. I knew my love would fuel me through the fight. I started working with women in the community whose husbands had been detained, connecting them to legal services, translating for them. I began to volunteer with the Arab American Association of

New York, an organization my cousin had helped found with Dr. Jaber, the man who had delivered me and my siblings. He was also a very well-respected leader in the community and imam in the mosque. I followed my cousin's lead, seeing her as a role model and mentor, and as yet another person confirming that I was allowed and expected to use my voice to help. It was just like Dr. Jaber used to always say: "Women are going to lead us one day. We must give young women the space to practice leading."

A few months after 9/11, I attended a citywide meeting at a mosque where various Arab-American leaders were coordinating efforts to defend Muslim-Americans across the city. When I entered the large room, I bent down to take off my shoes. As I stood up, I looked up to see thirty men in the room, all staring at me. I paused, realizing I had almost never been in a room of men only. Demographically this had never even been a possibility. There were always so many people around, so many of them girls or women. I kept my head high and crossed the room to where I saw the one familiar face, Dr. Jaber, who had resumed conversing passionately with another man. I could see by their frequent gestures and facial expressions that Dr. Jaber must have been defending my presence to this man.

I approached quietly, not wanting to interrupt or show disrespect.

"Is everything okay?" I asked.

Both men stopped talking to look to me.

Dr. Jaber broke the silence: "No, there's no problem here. You're a part of this meeting, Sister Linda, and we are going to sit down now and start."

This was not a moment when I thought of Dr. Jaber or even myself as radical. We had made these other Muslim men—all very good and principled men—take a pause and question themselves. But they accepted me and moved on. We had work to do.

And we believed what Dr. Jaber said, my cousin and I, my sisters and I. There are millions of Muslim women who are powerful and independent. Women who are going to lead us one day. We did not consider this idea to be radical, just as we did not consider my dad's love and pride for his daughters to be radical.

But what was—and still is—radical is the strength of our commitment to take care of one another. Our community had such strong ties that it was going to take

a lot to break us. We are, in fact, stronger than I knew. As my activist work continued into my twenties, I began to see that the community I belonged to transcended my gender, my religion, and my village. I was part of a much *larger* village. Muslims could not fight this fight alone. We were aligned with so many others who shared our struggles. There were many young black and brown people who faced injustices every day—long before 9/11 when I felt it most in my community. These fellow Americans had been dealing with being stopped, frisked, interrogated, arrested, and even killed just because of the color of their skin. There were undocumented people living every day afraid of being separated from their families. If I hadn't grown up believing that my neighbors are my family, I may not have cared, but it was in my nature to care about all of these groups of people.

I do not believe that it is every man for himself, every woman for her child. Because my parents did not believe this. My neighbors did not believe this. And my community will not stand for this.

This is the radical love that has powered me through my decades of work. I used to think it was hope that fueled me—my hope for social justice and civil rights. But I have realized what truly fuels me is love. I love my people so much. I will lay my life on the line for my people. I would do that for my own children or for other people's children. I am a mother, and mothers know this radical love.

As our country has become more and more divided, I have had to weather personal attacks on my sincerity, my feminism, my faith. And my patriotism. My life has been threatened, my children and family have been intimidated by mainstream journalists, internet trolls, counterprotestors, and random passersby on the street. My children have been taunted for being Muslim, accused of being terrorists, belittled for who their mother is. They have seen Muslims attacked in their city, they have heard stories of Muslims killed for their beliefs. Right here in America. They have seen their president ban Muslims from entering this country. Sometimes at my low points, because I am only human, I can feel very “done” with this mess. I can feel hopeless and *done*.

But I am *never* done with my love for my people. The love that was given to me the moment I was born isn't going away until the day that I'm no longer on this earth.

This is radical love. It was passed down to me by my mother, by my father, and by so many fellow citizens of Brooklyn and America. This is the kind of love that will wake you up from hope. Hope can feel empty because you can't move toward something that is imagined. You can't work for something you are dreaming of and waiting for. But you *can* work for something that you see and feel every day. *Love is something you can see and feel every day.* When I go to my neighborhood, I know it is there. I am so lucky to be a member of this community, this family, and this movement that was born of radical love.

# The New York Times

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

## I Want 'Allahu Akbar' Back



By Wajahat Ali

Nov. 1, 2017

Allahu akbar. It's Arabic for "God is greatest." Muslims, an eccentric tribe with over a billion members, say it several times in our five daily prayers. The phrase is also a convenient way to express just the right kind of gratitude in any situation.

I say "Allahu akbar" out loud more than 100 times a day. Yesterday, I uttered it several times during my late-evening Isha prayer. Earlier, during dinner, I said it with my mouth full after biting into my succulent halal chicken kebab. In the afternoon, I dropped it in a conference room at the State Department, where I'd been invited to address a packed room of government employees about the power of storytelling. Specifically, I expressed my continuing gratitude for the election of Barack Obama, whom, in a joking nod to the Islamophobic paranoia that surrounded him, I called "our first Muslim American president," adding "Allahu akbar!"

People in the crowd laughed and applauded, the world continued to spin, no one had an aneurysm, and only a few people seemed to wonder with arched, Sarah Sanders-like eyebrows, "Wait, is he ...?" I even confess to saying "Allahu akbar" two days ago in a restroom after losing the battle, but ultimately winning the war, against a nasty stomach virus.

I'm 37 years old. In all those years, I, like an overwhelming majority of Muslims, have never uttered "Allahu akbar" before or after committing a violent act. Unfortunately, terrorists like ISIS and Al Qaeda and their sympathizers, who represent a tiny fraction of Muslims, have. In the public imagination, this has given the phrase meaning that's impossible to square with what it represents in my daily life.

"Allahu akbar" is in the headlines again because the 29-year-old man who plowed a rental truck along a bicycle path killing eight people and injuring a dozen in Manhattan on Tuesday is reported to have said it after the attack. My heart sank as I heard the live news coverage, dotted with pieces of information meant to help us make sense of a tragedy: the suspect's physical description, the kind of vehicle he drove, the stunned eyewitness accounts emphatically saying that it didn't look at all accidental. And the two words the police say he shouted when the unthinkable act was over: Allahu akbar.

The attack had similarities to the one that took place in Charlottesville, Va., in August, when a neo-Nazi, James Alex Fields, rammed his car into a crowd of people who were protesting against a rally staged by white nationalists, killing 32-year-old Heather Heyer and injuring 19 people. President Trump defended his initial response blaming violence on “many sides,” saying, “It takes a little while to get the facts.” That caution doesn’t seem to be applied when the suspects have been described by witnesses as “Middle Eastern” — and definitely not when they’ve said, “Allahu akbar.”

Not long after the killing in Charlottesville, Muslim extremists in Barcelona plowed a vehicle through a crowd, killing 16 people. Within hours, Mr. Trump repeated a long-debunked myth, urging those who sought to combat terrorism to “study what General Pershing did to terrorists when caught” — shoot them with a bullet smeared in pig’s blood. “There was no more Radical Islamic Terror for 35 years!” he tweeted. Allow me to clarify: You don’t have to dip your bullets in pig blood to kill us. Regular bullets work just fine. Why? Because we’re human.

That’s why it hurts that on Tuesday, “Allahu” and “akbar,” those two simple words so close to our hearts, instantly shaped the entire news coverage and presidential response. A common, benign phrase used daily by Muslims, especially during prayer, is now understood as code for “It was terrorism.”

It’s easy to forget that language is often hijacked and weaponized by violent extremists. Some people yell “Allahu akbar” and others chant “heritage,” “culture” and “white pride.” The preferred slogans of a killer don’t make much difference to the people whose lives are lost or their loved ones, but they make all the difference in Americans’ collective understanding of a tragedy.

Within hours of the Manhattan attack, Mr. Trump tweeted: “I have just ordered Homeland Security to step up our already Extreme Vetting Program. Being politically correct is fine, but not for this!” He also said on Tuesday that he would end the Diversity Visa Lottery program through which officials say the attacker entered the country. It’s the sort of reaction that was conspicuously lacking with respect to gun control after the recent mass shooting in Las Vegas.

If only the hurricane that devastated Puerto Rico, leaving American citizens in desperate need of power, food or water, could have yelled, “Allahu akbar,” triggering that kind of tough response. Perhaps our president would have been able to see the storm as evil. Perhaps he would have been energized by a “them versus us” rage to insist on swift action to repair the damage.

Last night, as breathless news coverage of the phrase the suspect uttered repeated on a loop, I took my children trick-or-treating in the Virginia suburbs. We walked the streets with friendly, diverse neighbors and hordes of happy kids wearing costumes and clutching bags filled with fattening goodies. My 3-year-old was a pirate and my 1-year-old was Supergirl. We all shared smiles and candies with strangers, with open hearts, without fear. Allahu akbar. God is greatest.

Wajahat Ali is a playwright, lawyer and contributing opinion writer.

## **An Anti-Muslim Narrative Has Shaped Policy for Decades. The Travel Ban Will Make It Worse.**

by Namira Islam

June 2018

**Source:** Vox

**Available at:** <https://www.vox.com/first-person/2018/6/27/17510560/travel-ban-muslim-trump-islamophobia>

The Supreme Court of the United States yesterday upheld President Donald Trump's decision to institute a ban on immigrants, refugees, and visa holders from **five majority-Muslim countries** yesterday in a 5-4 decision.

The ruling did not come as a surprise to me.

I'm a lawyer, educator, and Muslim woman who focuses on racial justice. My work is all about interrupting the process of dehumanization that leads to crimes against humanity on marginalized groups. I'm devastated about the Supreme Court's decision, but we saw this coming.

I often hear good-hearted people say that certain incidents are "un-American" or don't represent "their America." But suggesting this ban is unique erases our nation's ugly history of anti-Muslim sentiment, one that sits within a larger picture of systematic racism against many other groups.

The "travel ban" — a term that sanitizes what is in fact a **Muslim ban** — is the latest in a series of policies that have targeted Muslims inaccurately seen as agents, or agents-in-waiting, of a dangerous foreign "ideology" that **needs to be eradicated**. These anti-Muslim narratives are sponsored by a **million-dollar industry**, pushing rhetoric like the takeover of **"sharia law" in America** through "think tanks" like the Center for Security Policy that provide fodder for conservative commentators like Newt Gingrich. Islamophobia is not simply interpersonal hatred or fear. It is a system of bigotry that identifies and targets those who are Muslim or perceived to be Muslim, no matter what their race or country of national origin.

If all Muslims are potential terrorists, then, the argument goes, we must be allowed to spy on "them" to keep "us" safe. The US government has tapped phone lines and other forms of communication and **sent informants** into Muslim student groups and mosques, and added **"suspicious" Muslim infants** (and others) to no-fly lists. They created the Countering Violent Extremism programs that ask teachers and medical professionals to **report to the government** any American Muslim teenagers they encountered who were sullen, withdrawn, and/or exploring their identity with regards to faith.

Suspicion of Muslims guides our foreign policy: Teenagers and other civilians across the Middle East have been killed or seriously injured by **US drone strikes and bombs**.

Due to the decades-long War on Terror, US drones have **killed civilians at weddings** and taught young children to fear the sky. And civilians living in at least five of the countries that are on the Muslim Ban list have been or are currently on the receiving end of **US bombs and airstrikes**. The US justifies this violence based on the narrative that all Muslims are inherently prone to “terror” and that civilian casualties are just the price we need to pay for national security.

Our nation denies the Muslim men still being **held at Guantanamo Bay** — men who were never charged with a crime — the right to a trial. When Trump was elected, progressives everywhere feared he would implement a “Muslim registry,” a policy that already happened after 9/11 when some immigrants from 24 majority-Muslim countries were **required to register and regularly check-in** with government officials. The program, called the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, or NSEERS, helped the government fine, arrest, and deport Muslims. Today, Muslims are among those that ICE rounds up for deportation. This past Ramadan, Somali Muslim immigrants were hindered from freely practicing their faith while detained in an **ICE facility in Florida**.

These government initiatives, taken together, have impacted Muslims from all different backgrounds, as well as those who are perceived to be brown and foreign enough to possibly be Muslim. They have sent a message that treating us with violence is acceptable. This narrative is clear to the American public, with hate crimes now surpassing **post-9/11 levels**.

Islamophobes have also attacked non-Muslim **Middle Easterners and Africans** and **West Indians** and **Latinos**. They have targeted **Sikhs** and **Hindus and Christians**. As the choice of countries included in the travel ban highlights, those who are not Muslim but are in close proximity to Muslims are also targeted and harmed by Islamophobic policy. The effect is a racist policy that has more to do with the color of one’s skin than the religion they practice.

The Supreme Court’s decision will make life much harder for Muslims across the world

In the last 15 months, I’ve fielded phone calls from Muslims temporarily detained at airports, connected elderly women and young organizers to rapid response legal support, and seen the pictures of my friends’ family members who are now blocked from seeing their relatives again. I’ve seen the human toll of this ban, and the picture is ugly.

Many Muslim Americans, whether from the five banned countries or elsewhere, are hesitant to leave the US for fear of not being able to return. Others wonder when or if they’ll ever be able to see their relatives from these countries again. This ban has split parents from children, wives from husbands, and extended family from each other and interrupted the lives of students, medical patients, and working professionals who cannot enter. There is fear that the ruling could create loopholes that our ruthless administration could use to re-define citizenship for all who are Muslim or perceived to be Muslim.

The narratives we use matter greatly. The national security apparatus that relies on the story that brown and foreign Muslims are the greatest threat to American ideals operates so smoothly because we as a nation choose to believe in it. Its natural culmination is the idea that a **“complete shutdown”** of Muslims entering the United States is necessary to keep us safe. With the Supreme Court’s stamp of approval, our political leadership has bought into this scam.

I am dismayed thinking about the increased impact this will have on **Muslim women**, who are already the most visible targets of Islamophobia, on Muslim children, who face bullying from even their **schoolteachers**, and on the Muslim men who are so often painted as savage and monstrous.

Islamophobia will not stop when Trump leaves office. The rhetoric that justified the enslavement of Africans, **the first Muslims on these shores**, will continue to back the bigotry entrenched in the system for decades to come. For now, what we can do is continue to work to change the narratives that dehumanize and to fight the policies that indiscriminately harm.

We have been down this road before. So while this is America, this is not the country we have to be. This is not fulfilling the promise of America.

*Namira Islam is a lawyer, graphic designer, and the co-founder and executive director of the **Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative**, a faith-based organization that educates and trains people on promoting racial justice. Her legal background includes work in poverty law, international criminal law on war crimes, and prisoners’ rights litigation. She is on Twitter **@namirari**.*

# Black Muslims in the United States: An Introductory Activity

BY ALISON KYSIA

This interactive lesson introduces participants to Black Muslims in U.S. history through a meet-and-greet activity. The lesson empowers participants to combat Islamophobia by sharing stories that challenge unidimensional caricatures of Muslims. The lesson raises up voices we rarely hear in the media when we talk about Islam and Muslims — Black Muslims. The meet-and-greet personalities in this lesson are all African American, which not only helps participants explore Islam in the United States, but also advances themes in Black history.

Racism fuels both our ignorance of Black history and our ignorance of Muslims. Islamophobia does not solely originate in a lack of knowledge about religious beliefs and rituals. Rather, Islamophobia is a consequence of white supremacy and American nativism, ideologies which also champion anti-Black racism.

It is within these intersections, like the intersection of anti-Black racism and Islamophobia, where we can build vocabularies to better understand bigotry in order to defeat it.

---

## Purpose and objectives

In this participant-centered meet-and-greet activity, participants learn about 25 Black Muslims in U.S. history spanning the 17th century (colonization) to the present. This lesson can be used in middle and high school classes, colleges, public dialogue projects, or any other convening of 12 or more people who want to learn about Muslims in U.S. history.

Each participant is given a meet-and-greet role and a half-sheet biography of one Black Muslim in U.S. history. They are given a few minutes to quietly familiarize themselves with their characters. Participants then meet-and-greet one another just like they would at a party, except instead of introducing themselves, they become the Muslim characters. Afterwards, participants break into small groups to discuss questions that will prompt the articulation of key themes:

- Muslims have been present in the United States since the 17th century.
- The first Muslims in the United States were enslaved.

- Black Muslims have addressed injustice and oppression through a variety of creative responses.
- Black Muslims challenge stereotypes of Muslims by representing diverse histories firmly rooted in the United States.
- Black Muslim women have been influential in and committed to the shaping of Islam in the United States, with increasing leadership in the last 50 years.

## Materials

- Meet-and-greet role, one for each participant.
  - » If you have fewer than 25 participants, be sure to include the following (so students can answer the worksheet and discussion questions):
    - \* Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua
    - \* Yarrow Mamout
    - \* Margaret Bilali
    - \* Clara Muhammad

- \* Warith Deen Mohammed
- \* Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf
- \* Keith Ellison
- \* Amina Wadud
- \* Aisha Al-Adawiya
- \* Yasiin Bey
- \* Carolyn Walker-Diallo
- \* Bilqis Abdul-Qaadir

- Name tags, one for each participant.
- Meet-and-greet worksheet, one for each participant.
- Discussion questions handout, one for each participant.

## Time required

50-75 minutes

## Suggested procedure

1. Explain the following: We hear a lot in the media about Muslims, but they are often represented as being from somewhere else, that Islam is from somewhere else, and that “they” are different than “us.” This lesson is going to help us learn more about the role that Muslims and Islam have played in U.S. history by sharing the stories of 25 Black Muslims who were alive between 1600 and the present.
2. Ask participants: How many Black Muslims can you name? Make a list on a board or write the list on a piece of paper. This will be helpful later to gauge participant learning.
3. Give each participant one meet-and-greet role. Ask them to read their roles quietly for a few minutes. Circulate around the room and answer any questions participants have about pronunciation or vocabulary.
4. Give each participant a meet-and-greet worksheet. Read the questions out loud together as a group. Explain the following: The worksheet is a tool you can use to gather important information as you meet each other. Later, we will talk more about how the information you collected can help us define key themes in our study of Black Muslims.
5. Explain that participants should “get into character” by walking around the room to meet each other, speaking in the first person, and asking one another questions to learn about each other: “What is your name? Where are you from? Tell me your story.” Remind participants that the roles are based on real people and they should share their character’s life story with respect.
6. Now that they understand what they are doing and what kind of information they are looking for, ask each participant to use the back of the meet-and-greet half-sheet biography to summarize, in five bullet points, the most important information they want to share about their character.
7. Give each participant a name tag and have them write the name of their character on it.
8. Have two participants model the activity for the group.
9. Ask participants to get out of their seats and meet-and-greet one another. Participants should engage in dialogue with the people they meet. They should try and get answers to as many of the questions as they can.
10. After the meet-and-greet is completed (about 25 minutes), hand out the small group discussion questions. Have participants individually reflect on the activity for 2-3 minutes. Then, break participants into groups of 3-4. Participants can use the information they gathered on the worksheet to help answer the discussion questions. Allow small groups to meet for 10-15 minutes.
11. Bring the group back together as a whole to review the discussion questions and allow some participants to share their answers within the time remaining.
12. After the activity is completed, educators should take five minutes and answer the following questions:
  - a. What worked well in this lesson?
  - b. How could this lesson be improved next time?

- c. What additional lessons could I connect to this one to sustain the conversation?
- d. What questions remain?

**Alison Kysia** has been an educator for 20 years. She is the project director of “Islamophobia: a people’s history teaching guide” at Teaching for Change. She wants to offer special thanks to Margari Aziza Hill, co-founder and co-director of the Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative, for her thoughtful feedback on the lesson.

# Meet-and-Greet Roles

## **Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua** **Ma-home-ma Gar-dough Ba-qwa-qwa**

I was born into a Muslim merchant family in Djougou, Benin, on the West coast of Africa, around 1830 (my date of birth is not known). We lived on an important trade route connecting Asante (which would later become the kingdom of Ghana) and the Sokoto Caliphate, both of which were kingdoms in West Africa controlled by Muslim rulers at that time. I attended a Quran school when I was young (known as a madrasa) where I learned to read and write Arabic. Like so many other West Africans, I was enslaved and sold several times, eventually ending up in Brazil, where I was purchased by a Catholic baker who beat me with a whip. Because of the abuse I suffered, I tried to commit suicide but failed. I tried to kill the baker, but failed and was sold to the captain of a ship. He also beat me. When the ship docked in New York, I escaped with the help of the abolitionist organization known as the New York Committee of Vigilance. I supported abolition, or the movement to end slavery, but many white abolitionists also wanted us to go “back to Africa” because they didn’t want us living in their neighborhoods. I moved to Haiti where I converted to Christianity. Why did I convert? I was living in extreme poverty and some Christians offered me a place to live. They paid for me to go to Central College in McGrawville, New York, which empowered me to write my *Biography*, one of the few remaining texts written by a formerly-enslaved Black American Muslim man. After 1857, there are no records of my whereabouts.

## **Ayuba Suleiman Diallo** **Eye-you-ba Sool-aye-man Dee-al-low** (also known as Job ben Solomon and Ayuba ibn Sulayman)

I was born in 1701 in Bundu, West Africa at the mouth of the Gambia River. In 1730, I was captured and sold into slavery, even though I was part of the upper class and was educated. Ironically, I was enslaved while trying to sell enslaved people. I was Futa (the name of my ethnic group) and I got caught by a Mandingo (another ethnic group). Lots of people think Africans are one people, but we are not and never have been. I ended up in Annapolis, Maryland, after being bought by a man named Mr. Tolsey. I worked on a tobacco plantation on Kent Island, the largest island in the Chesapeake Bay. Because of my privileged upbringing, I had no idea how to farm, which my owner figured out quickly, and I was reassigned to work with the cattle. Soon after I arrived, I escaped but was caught and thrown in jail. I met a powerful white man named Thomas Bluett who eventually wrote a biography of me. After being released from jail, I was returned to Mr. Tolsey and wrote a letter to my father. The letter never reached him, but ended up in the hands of another powerful white man named James Oglethorpe who was the Director of the Royal African Company. He paid for my freedom and sent me to London, where I was able to mingle with rich people due to my own upbringing. I eventually made it back to Gambia in West Africa where I died in my 70s.

**Lamine Kaba****La-meen Ka-ba**

(also spelled Lemen Kebe)

There are no records about the year of my birth or death, but I came from Futa Jallon, in what is today the country of Guinea in West Africa. I was born into an ethnic group called the Jakhanke which included many Muslim religious leaders. I could read and write Arabic and learned about Islam from both male and female teachers (one of my aunts was a brilliant educator). I, too, became a religious teacher. One day, while traveling to the coast to get paper for my students, I was kidnapped, sold into slavery, and transported to the United States. I secured my freedom in 1834, in part by converting to Christianity (or so I told people). One reason I may have told people I was Christian was to fool them into giving me the money I needed to emigrate out of the United States. White abolitionists like the American Colonization Society believed in ending slavery, but that didn't mean they wanted to be friends with Black people. That is why they helped me move to Liberia in 1835, after 40 years of enslavement.

**Yarrow Mamout****Yar-row Ma-moot**

(also known as Muhammad Yaro)

I was born around 1736 in what is today Guinea, West Africa. Around the age of 16, I was enslaved and sent to work for Samuel Beall in Takoma Park, Maryland. The family freed me in 1796 when I was 60 years old. I am famous because there is a painting of me in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. It was painted in 1819 by the American portrait artist Charles William Peale who founded the museum. He wanted to paint my picture because I was out of the ordinary: a formerly enslaved Black Muslim man who owned property at 3324 Dent Place NW in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C. In the Georgetown Branch of the Washington, D.C. Public Library, there is a second painting of me from 1822 by James Alexander Simpson. Granted, while I was able to achieve some impressive successes in my life, don't forget that I was always threatened by the terrorism of slavery. Even though I was "free," a Black man could be kidnapped and enslaved regardless of what his paperwork said. I was known for praying, for not eating pork, and for not drinking alcohol. I died in 1823 at the age of 87.

**Umar ibn Saïd**  
**Ou-mar ibin Sa-eed**  
 (Omar ibn Saïd)

I was born around 1770 in Futa Toro, a Muslim kingdom in what is today northern Senegal in West Africa. After 25 years of education, I was enslaved around 1807 when Bundu, Kaarta, and Khasso (three other Muslim kingdoms) joined forces to invade Futa Toro. I was transported in the torturous conditions of a slave ship to Charleston, South Carolina. I ran away — like many enslaved people — and went to Fayetteville, North Carolina. I went to a church to pray and was arrested. I wrote on the walls of my prison cell and this caught the attention of General James Owen. He bought me because I was an educated man. I converted to Christianity and became quite famous for that — there were a number of newspaper articles written about me. These articles are interesting because the white authors could not make sense of my complicated identity. I was a Black West African Muslim man and yet these authors described me as being a “specimen of white beauty” by equating whiteness with Christianity. Regardless, it did not help me gain my freedom. In 1831, I wrote a short 15-page pamphlet in which I included Arabic verses from the Quran, a description of the horrors of my enslavement, and criticism of Christian justifications for slavery. Was I Muslim or Christian or both? I died at the age of 94.

**Abdulrahman Ibrahim ibn Sori**  
**Abdool-rah-mon Ib-ra-heem ibin Sore-ee**  
 (also known as Ibrahim Abdul Rahman)

I was born around 1762 in Futa Jallon in what is today Guinea, West Africa. I was the son of Almani Ibrahim Sori, the religious and political leader of the Futa Jallon from 1751-1784. I was well-educated in the Islamic sciences, having studied in the great Islamic education center of Timbuktu, Mali, and I spoke three languages, including Arabic. I joined my father’s military. I was enslaved during a battle and sent to Natchez, Mississippi, in 1788. I was 26 years old at that time. I worked on the cotton plantation of Thomas Foster. I met my wife, Isabella, on the plantation. We had nine children together, all of whom were enslaved. Because I was educated and had military training, I had more power than other enslaved people who did not have the education I had. I was the foreman on the plantation, which had its privileges but always at the expense of other less powerful enslaved women and men. My wife and I were freed in 1828 after 40 years. For ten months, we toured the northern United States, telling our story to abolitionists to raise money to buy the freedom of our adult children. We moved to Liberia with the assistance of the American Colonization Society, an organization that was dedicated to both the end of slavery and the removal of Black people from the United States. I died in Liberia at the age of 67. There is a book and a film about me called *Prince Among Slaves*.

## Nicholas Said

**Nik-o-las Sa-eed**

(also known as Muhammad Ali ben Said and Muhammad ibn Said)

I was born in Kouka in the kingdom of Borno (what is today Chad and Nigeria) in West Africa around 1833. I was the 13th of my mother's 19 children. My father was in the Borno army. He and three of my brothers were killed by an invading army from Bagirmey. I went to live with a man named Malam Katory who taught me to write and speak Arabic. Around 1846, I was enslaved by raiders and transported by horseback across the Sahara Desert. I was shipped to Istanbul in the Ottoman Empire and purchased by a Russian. I was renamed Nicholas Said after being baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church. Despite being enslaved for much of my life, I traveled to five continents and learned to speak seven languages. By 1863, I was a schoolteacher in Detroit — I came to the U.S. as a free man — and fought in the 55th Regiment of Massachusetts Colored Volunteers in the Union Army during the U.S. Civil War. I later settled in St. Stephens, Alabama, and wrote my *Autobiography* in 1873. At 224 pages, my *Autobiography* is the longest surviving narrative by an enslaved African Muslim. I died in Brownsville, Tennessee, in 1882.

## Margaret Bilali

**Marg-ret Bill-al-ee**

I did not leave any written records about myself, but after I died, my granddaughter, Katie Brown, was interviewed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression. They wanted to interview her because her ancestors were enslaved and the WPA wanted to collect some of those stories. Katie told them about me:

My grandmother, Margaret, was one of seven daughters of Bilali or Bilali Mahomet (which is a different spelling of Muhammad). Her father was probably born around 1770 in what is today Guinea in West Africa. He was enslaved on Thomas Spalding's plantation on Sapelo Island, located off the coast of Georgia. Margaret used to watch her father and his wife, Phoebe, pray on the bead. They were very particular about the timing of their prayers. When the sun rose, when it was overhead, and when it set, those were times to pray. They did some bowing and prostrating on a little mat. They had long strings of beads they used to pray and ended with, "Ameen, Ameen," which is the Arabic pronunciation of Amen. Margaret covered her hair. She had some suspicions that her father had more than one wife. Historians don't know much about women like my grandmother, Margaret. There are very few written records of early Black Muslim women in the United States. Some enslaved Black Muslim men came with education they received in West African Muslim communities, but those opportunities were less available to girls and women.

## Noble Drew Ali

No-bul Drew A-lee

I was born on January 8, 1886, in North Carolina to a Cherokee mother and Moroccan Muslim father. At age 16, I joined the Merchant Marine, traveled to Egypt, and met a priest of an “ancient cult of high magic” who took me to the Great Pyramid of Giza and left me there blindfolded. This was an important spiritual event in my life. When I returned to the United States, I established the Canaanite Temple in Newark, New Jersey in 1913. I organized the Moorish Science Temple of America in Chicago in 1925. In 1927, I published the Circle Seven Koran. Even though it is called the Koran, it does not include the Arabic text known as the Quran that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime (570-632CE). I linked the liberation of Blacks to both national and moral renewal. I rejected the racist social order by arguing that Black Americans were really descendants of Moors. Moor was a term used to identify a Muslim from the Middle East or North Africa. I believed that Islam was the common religion of “Asiatics” (a word we use to refer to the people of Asia) and that it was a religion of liberation. I was a prophet who brought the dead (black) back to life (Moor). Our message was meaningful to many people and the community expanded in the 1920s, a time known for “race riots.” For example, there were over 30 white-led attacks on Black communities across the United States in the summer of 1919, known as Red Summer. This was also the beginning of the Great Migration (1916-1970), when over six million Black Americans moved out of the South searching for both physical and spiritual safety.

## Clara Muhammad

Klara Mu-ham-med

I was born Clara Evans on November 2, 1899, in Macon, Georgia. In 1917, I married Elijah Poole. Like millions of African Americans at the time, we fled the Jim Crow South in 1923 and landed in Detroit, where I met Wallace Fard Muhammad, a man that changed my life. We believed that Fard was God living on Earth and the founder of the Nation of Islam (NOI), a sect born in the Black American community. Fard was a door-to-door salesman who encouraged us to stop polluting our bodies with unhealthy foods and our minds with unhealthy beliefs like white supremacy. I introduced my husband, Elijah, to Fard. Elijah became Fard’s messenger and helped establish and grow the Nation of Islam. From 1935-1946, I was responsible for keeping the movement alive while my husband was opening temples in other cities. Elijah was thrown in jail from 1942-1946 for refusing to register for the draft and for instructing his followers not to register (legally known as sedition). I pioneered the NOI’s independent primary and secondary schools known as the University of Islam. The first classes met in my home and I was the teacher. It was illegal at this time to homeschool children and I had to deal with harassment from the police, but I stood my ground. When my son, Warith Deen Muhammad, took over the NOI after his father’s death, he changed the name of the University of Islam schools to Sister Clara Muhammad Schools in my honor. There are approximately 75 of them in the United States today. I died on August 12, 1972, from stomach cancer.

## Betty Shabazz

Bet-ty Sha-bazz

I was born Betty Dean Sanders on May 28, 1934, in Detroit. I attended Tuskegee University in Alabama. The racism there was unbearable and I moved to New York City to finish my education as a nurse. I joined the Nation of Islam in 1956 when I met Malcolm X, who I married in 1958. I changed my name to Betty X. We used an X at the end of our names to eliminate the names that white slave owners gave our ancestors. My husband was responsible for the growth of the Nation of Islam (NOI) and brought countless other Americans — Black, Brown, and white — to Islam. We had to leave the Nation in 1964 because of internal disagreements over power and morals. My husband was assassinated on February 21, 1965, in Manhattan's Audubon Ballroom. Three male members of the NOI were imprisoned for his murder. I was there and saw the whole thing. I went on to earn a doctorate in higher education and curriculum development from the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1975. I worked at the Medgar Evers College in New York, a majority Black working-class school. My daughter, Qubilah, was arrested for allegedly conspiring to kill Louis Farrakhan, the current leader of the Nation, because she believed he was involved in the murder of her father. My grandson, also named Malcolm, came to live with me during this difficult time. He set fire to my apartment on June 1, 1997. I was burned badly and died on June 23, 1997.

## Warith Deen Mohammed

War-rith Deen Mu-ham-med

I was born Wallace Delaney Muhammad on October 30, 1933, in Hamtramck, Michigan, near Detroit. I was one of eight children of Clara and Elijah Muhammad. My father led the Nation of Islam from 1934 until his death in 1975. Arabic language, Islamic studies, and Black studies were part of my education. In 1961, I refused the military draft to fight in Vietnam and was sentenced to three years in prison, just like my father Elijah who was imprisoned for refusing the draft during World War II. After my father's death, I became the next leader of the Nation of Islam. I implemented a number of changes in beliefs and practices and moved the community to Sunni Islam. The majority of Muslims in the world identify as Sunni. I changed my name to Warith, one of the 99 names of God, meaning Inheritor. The majority of the Nation of Islam joined the W.D. Mohammed community. In 1992, I became the first Muslim to deliver the invocation for the United States Senate. I led prayers at both of President Bill Clinton's inaugurations. I participated in countless interfaith events and met with Pope John Paul II in 1996 and 1999. I died at home in Chicago on September 9, 2008, after a heart attack.

## Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin

Ja-meel Ab-dool Al-A-meen

I was born Hubert Gerold Brown on October 4, 1943, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I became the fifth chairman of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordination Committee) in 1967, which is when I became known as H. Rap Brown. The SNCC was an important resistance organization of the 1960s. Despite the name, I questioned nonviolence. White people have been very violent towards Black people for the last 400 years. I believed this was an issue of self-defense. After giving a speech in Cambridge, Massachusetts, I was arrested for inciting a riot after I got shot by a cop. The trial for my arrest was moved to Bel Air, Maryland. On route to the court, two SNCC colleagues, Ralph Featherstone and William “Che” Payne, died when a bomb went off in their car. Of course, the police said we planted the bomb but it is important to remember that throughout U.S. history, the police and FBI have killed Black people with impunity (without being punished). I went on the run but was later caught and sent to prison from 1971-1976. In prison, I converted to Islam and changed my name. After being released from prison, I opened a grocery store in Atlanta’s West End and became an imam (religious leader) and community organizer. The police and FBI threatened and harassed me constantly, despite the fact that I preached self-discipline, faith, and spiritual development as a roadmap to liberation. There is nothing more threatening to the U.S. government than a Black man who believes it is a moral duty to fight oppression. In 2000, I began serving a life sentence at the U.S. Penitentiary, Tucson, after being convicted for the shooting of two Fulton County, Georgia, Sheriff’s deputies, one of whom, Ricky Kinchen, died.

## Yusuf Lateef

You-sif La-teef

I was born William Emanuel Huddleston on October 9, 1920, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. My family moved to Detroit in 1925 as part of the Great Migration. Detroit was a vibrant Black city where all of the jazz greats played at one time or another. I was already a skilled saxophonist by the time I graduated high school. In 1949, I toured with Dizzy Gillespie, a jazz legend. In 1950, I converted to Islam as a member of the Ahmadiyya community, which was founded in India by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) who claimed to be a divinely appointed revivalist of Islam. Some Muslims don’t like the Ahmadiyya because they do not agree with Ahmed’s religious beliefs. Muslims are not all one people, nor have we ever been. The Ahmadiyya helped spread Islam in the United States during the early half of the 20th century. They were known for speaking out against racism, which was attractive to a Black man like myself who was raised during Jim Crow. In addition to being a musician, I was also an educator. I earned a bachelor’s and master’s in music and music education from the Manhattan School of Music and taught at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. I later earned a doctorate in education from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. From 1981-85 I lived and worked in Nigeria. I produced many albums. Notably, in 1987, my album *Yusef Lateef’s Little Symphony* won a Grammy Award for Best New Age Album. I also composed *The African American Epic Suite* based on themes of slavery and anti-Black racism. In 1982, I received the highest award for a jazz musician, the National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters award. I died on December 23, 2013 at the age of 93.

## Kenneth Gamble

Ken-neth Gam-bull

I was born in Philadelphia on August 11, 1943. I started my music career in the 1960s with a band called the Romeos. Along with my songwriting and producing friend, Leon Huff, I created a unique musical style called the “Philly Sound,” a mix of soul ballads and funky dance tracks. We were one of the hottest R&B producing teams of the 1960s. We worked with Aretha Franklin, Dee Dee Warwick, The Supremes and The Temptations, Archie Bell & the Drells, and the Jackson Five. We wrote the theme music for the long-running TV dance show, Soul Train. In 1971, we opened Philadelphia International Records, which was the second largest Black-owned music company in the United States after Motown. I was a song writer and producer for nearly 30 years. Social justice and the empowerment of the Black community were central themes in my work. In the 1970s, I started buying run-down houses in order to rebuild the South Philly community, one house at a time. I founded a nonprofit organization called Universal Companies. We offer many different kinds of community empowerment such as workforce development, adult education, and job training courses. I also run a community development corporation that provides low- and moderate-income families with recently refurbished homes at affordable prices. My team and I have refurbished and populated hundreds of homes and created hundreds of jobs.

## Louis Farrakhan Sr.

Lewis Far-ra-kan Senior

I am the current leader of the Nation of Islam. I was born Louis Eugene Wolcott in 1933 in the Bronx, New York. My mother, Sarah May Manning, was born in Saint Kitts and Nevis. My father, Percival Clark, was Jamaican. I never knew my biological father, but I did have a stepfather, Louis Wolcott. We then moved to Roxbury in Boston where there was a large Caribbean community. I was raised Episcopalian and church life was part of our routine. I married Betsy Ross (who later changed her name to Khadijah Farrakhan). I went to college and started my professional music career. Another musician introduced me to the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and I was transformed. I officially converted in 1955 and changed my name to Louis X. Later, Elijah Muhammad gave me the last name of “Farrakhan,” which means “The Criterion.” I rose through the ranks quickly and became the assistant to Minister Malcolm X. I took over the Boston temple when Malcolm was reassigned to Harlem, New York. After Elijah Muhammad’s death in 1975, I followed the leadership of Imam Warith Deen Mohammad until 1979, at which time I reestablished control of the Nation of Islam. In October 1995, I helped organize the Million Man March in Washington, D.C., calling on Black men to recommit to their families and communities. I have made anti-Jewish statements, for which I’ve faced a lot of criticism, and the SPLC (Southern Poverty Law Center) describes my beliefs as anti-white. I live in Chicago.

**Keith Ellison****Keeth El-lis-son**

I was born on August 4, 1963, in Detroit. I was raised Roman Catholic. I converted to Islam at the age of 19 because I felt a strong connection between the teachings of Islam and my desire to work for social justice. I am part of an interreligious family. For example, one of my brothers became the pastor of a Baptist congregation. In 2007, I became the first Muslim to be elected to the U.S. Congress, winning the U.S. Representative seat for Minnesota's 5th congressional district (which includes Minneapolis). I am also the first African American elected to the U.S. House from Minnesota. I have a number of important accomplishments under my belt. I helped organize protests against some high-profile police brutality cases in Minneapolis in 1989, forcing the attorney general to open an investigation and leading to the creation of the Coalition for Police Accountability, which organized community meetings and published a newsletter called *Cop Watch*. In the 2015 Democratic primary, I supported Bernie Sanders. In 2017, I lost the race for chair of the DNC (Democratic National Committee), the national organization representing the Democratic Party, after a number of Islamophobic smear campaigns in the media.

**Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf****Mah-mood Ab-dool Ra-oof**

I was born Chris Jackson on March 9, 1969. I played basketball for Gulfport High School and Louisiana State University. I grew up in poverty created by systemic racism and wealth inequality. I was placed in special education classes despite the fact that I had a serious health condition called Tourette Syndrome, which reduces my ability to control my muscles. I was embarrassed by this condition because I didn't know what it was. I wasn't diagnosed until I was 17 years old because I did not have the privilege of good healthcare. I was a highly talented basketball player thanks to relentless practice. I was drafted to the NBA and played for nine years. I was considered one of the best free throwers ever. In 1991, I converted to Islam. In March 1996, I refused to stand during the Star-Spangled Banner because I believed that as a Muslim, I should only submit to God. I also believed that the flag is a symbol of oppression and tyranny. I received death threats, I was suspended, and four white men from radio station Denver KBPI broke into my mosque while we were praying and played the Star-Spangled Banner on a trumpet and bugle. My house was later burned to the ground. My life story is told in the documentary film, *By the Dawn's Early Light: Chris Jackson's Journey to Islam*. My life parallels Muhammad Ali's (1942-2016), the boxer who refused the Vietnam War draft, and also Colin Kaepernick's (1987-present), a professional football quarterback who made headlines in 2016 for refusing to stand for the national anthem.

## Aminah McCloud

A-mee-na Mc-cloud

I was born on December 1, 1948. I am one of the leading scholars on Islam in the United States, and the founder and chair of the Islamic World Studies Program at DePaul University in Chicago. My research, writing, and teaching focus on global Muslim cultures, Islam in the United States, Islamic law, African American Islam, and Muslim women in the United States. I have published many books and articles, including *African American Islam* and *An Introduction to Islam in the 21st Century*. I founded the *Journal on Islamic Law and Culture* in 1995, and I am still its editor-in-chief. I am a board member of the Feminist Sexual Ethics Project at Brandeis University, a member of the Board of Trustees for the American Islamic College, and a board member at the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN), among others. I founded and convened the Conference on Islam in America in 2011, a gathering that brought together American Muslims from various national and professional backgrounds for discussion on the state of Islam in America. I regularly advise non-profit organizations and government agencies on the realities of Muslims in the United States, and I appear in court as an expert witness on Islamic law.

## Amina Wadud

A-mee-na Wa-dood

I was born Mary Teasley on September 25, 1952, in Bethesda, Maryland. My father was a Methodist minister. Growing up Black in the Jim Crow United States, my consciousness was raised to the intersections of religion and justice. I converted to Islam in 1972 and changed my name in 1974. I earned a PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Michigan, including studies at American University in Cairo, Cairo University, and Al-Azhar University, which is one of the oldest Islamic schools in the world. I am the author of several books, including *Inside the Gender Jihad* and *Qur'an and Woman*, which is available in seven translations. Some non-Muslims get really upset when they hear the word jihad because they think it only means "war." Jihad means "struggle" and I use it to symbolize our fight to abolish patriarchy (when men have power and won't share it with women). I was a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia, from 1992-2008. In 2005, I led a mixed-gender prayer at the Episcopal Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City. This was controversial because most Muslims believe that only men should lead mixed-gender prayers. I continue to provide expertise on Islamic theology, pluralism, and gender equality.

## Aisha Al-Adawiya

A-eesh-a Al-ad-a-wee-ya

I was born in 1944 in Alabama and grew up in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, one of many Black churches established because of racism in white churches. Nevertheless, I felt spiritually unfulfilled. I was attracted to Catholicism but, as a Black woman, I did not feel welcome in their houses of worship. I moved to New York City in the early 1960s. Ironically, I was in a cult bookstore and found a copy of the Quran. I read it and knew this was the message for me. I became a Muslim. I am the founder and president of Women in Islam Inc., an organization of Muslim women which focuses on human rights and social justice. I represent Muslim women in United Nations forums. I make sure the stories of Muslims are included in Black history through my work at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library. I serve on numerous boards related to the interests of the global Muslim community, including the Interfaith Center of New York, KARMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights, New York Jobs with Justice, The Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center, and the Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York (CAIR-NY).

## Yasiin Bey

Ya-seen Bay

I was born Dante Terrell Smith on December 11, 1973, in Brooklyn, New York. My father was a member of the Nation of Islam and later followed Warith Deen Mohammad, the son of Elijah Muhammad, who moved most of the community towards Sunnism in the late 1970s. I did not take my shahada, or testament of faith, until I was 19 years old. The shahada says, “There is no God but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.” If you say this and mean it, you become Muslim. Growing up in New York during the crack epidemic, I witnessed a lot of pain and suffering that was a consequence of 400 years of systemic racism. These experiences influenced my work and commitment to Islam. Formerly known as Mos Def, I had a significant impact on the development of hip hop. There are a lot of similarities between the founding principles of hip hop and the spiritual principles of Islam, such as being committed to the lives and interests of the poor and suffering. I began my rap music career in 1994 with my brother and sister; we formed the group UTD (Urban Thermo Dynamics). I released a solo single called “Universal Magnetic,” which was a big hit and made people take notice of my talent. I later signed with Rawkus Records and formed the group Black Star, a reference to Marcus Garvey, one of the great Black nationalists from the early 20th century. I am also an actor and have made appearances in over 35 films and TV shows. In 2004, I returned to the recording studio and released four albums in five years, which resulted in a Grammy-nominated single and Grammy-nominated best rap album. I completed my final U.S. appearances in 2016 in order to focus on my arts collective, A Country Called Earth.

### **Ibtihaj Muhammad** Ib-tee-haj Mu-ham-med

I was born December 4, 1985, in Maplewood, New Jersey. I loved sports but as a practicing Muslim girl, I didn't want to expose my body in order to play. On the suggestion of my mother, I started fencing at the age of 13. Fencers are fully covered. And it turns out I am really good at it. I championed two high school teams before attending Duke University, where I became a three-time NCAA All-American (an award for the best amateur or non-professional athlete) while double majoring in International Relations and African American Studies with a minor in Arabic. In the summer of 2006, I attended the School for International Training in Rabat, Morocco, where I completed courses in Moroccan culture and Arabic. After college, I won the gold medal at the 2009 USA Fencing National Championships. I was included in *TIME* magazine's 2016 edition of the 100 most influential people. In 2014, I launched a clothing company called Louella to make modest clothing more accessible in the U.S. market. I am a sports ambassador for the U.S. Department of State's Empowering Women and Girls Through Sports Initiative. I am the first Muslim American woman to wear hijab (Muslim headscarf) while competing in the Olympics. At the 2016 summer games in Rio, I made it clear that I do not feel safe as a Muslim woman living in the United States in the age of Trump.

### **Carolyn Walker-Diallo** Kare-o-lin Wal-ker Dee-al-low

I was born in 1975 and raised in New York City. I received a Juris Doctor from New York Law School, a master's in business administration from the Zicklin School of Business at Baruch College, and a bachelor's degree, cum laude (with distinction), in business administration and political science from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. I started my legal career as a litigation associate representing Fortune 500 companies and international banks in contract disputes, arbitration, and government investigations. In 2009, I continued a tradition passed on in my family of "being the change we want to see in the world" by taking control of a small non-profit named after my father, the George Walker Jr. Community Coalition Inc., which provides youth development and community services in East New York and Cypress Hills. In 2015, I became a civil court judge of the 7th Municipal District at the Brooklyn Borough Hall in New York. I used the Quran during my swearing-in ceremony. Some Americans found this threatening and sent me hate mail. I am a proud member of Gamma Gamma Chi Sorority Inc., the first sorority for Muslim women, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc., the oldest Greek-lettered organization established by African American college-educated women. I live in Brooklyn, New York, with my husband, Thierno Malal Diallo, a teacher, and our daughter, Mariama Diallo.

**Bilqis Abdul-Qadir**  
**Bil-qees Ab-dool Qa-dr**

I was born on November 11, 1990, in Springfield, Massachusetts. I attended the New Leadership Charter School where I began playing varsity basketball in the 8th grade. In high school, I became the third freshman in Massachusetts history to score over 1,000 points. I scored 3,070 points when I was a senior, passing the previous record of 2,740 points. In 2009, I was named the Gatorade Player of the Year. I was accepted at the University of Memphis. My freshman season marked the first time in NCAA history that a player played in hijab (Muslim headscarf). For that, I got to go to the White House and meet President Obama, who encouraged me to be proud of my faith. I also worked with Michelle Obama on her “Let’s Move” campaign. I graduated magna cum laude (with great distinction) with a bachelor’s degree in health and human performance/exercise science from the University of Memphis. I wanted to play professionally in Europe but the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) prohibited head gear larger than five inches. It is such a silly rule that has nothing to do with my ability to play. In response, I started an online campaign called “Muslim Girls Hoop Too” to fight back against the stereotypes. Thanks to activists like me, FIBA lifted the ban in May 2017.

# Meet-and-Greet Worksheet

1. Find one person who was enslaved. Where were they from? Where did they end up? How did they resist?
2. Find one person who experienced discrimination based on their race or religion. Describe their experience.
3. Find two women. Describe some of their achievements.
4. Find two people who worked for justice. Explain how they do/did that.
5. Find at least one person who has been active during your lifetime. Describe some of their experiences.

# Reflection & Discussion

## Silent Reflection

Spend 2-3 minutes quietly answering the following: What did you learn in this activity?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Discussion Questions

In groups of 3-4, spend 10-15 minutes discussing the following:

Provide a few examples of the first Muslims to come to the United States. What were their names? When did they arrive in the United States? How did they get here?

In past experiences learning about slavery, did you hear the stories of enslaved Muslims? Is it important to hear these stories when we talk about slavery? Why or why not?

What are the different types of roles Muslims have played in U.S. history?

How have Muslims fought injustice?

Who would you want to meet or research more? Why?

## Meet & Greet: Muslims in the United States

This extension to Alison Kysia's lesson plan serves to highlight additional notable Muslims in today's social and cultural landscape. Today, Muslims in America come from diverse backgrounds and take on a variety of roles in news, media, and activism.

---

### **Linda Sarsour**

I was born in 1980 in Brooklyn, New York to Palestinian immigrants. I am the eldest of my seven siblings and I originally wanted to become an English teacher. After the September 11 attacks, however, I began to focus my work on advocating for the civil rights of American Muslims. I became the director of the Arab American Association of New York in 2005, and expanded the scope of the organization from an annual budget of \$50,000 to \$700,000. Thereafter my work included protesting police surveillance of American Muslims, as well as issues of immigration, mass incarceration, and the NYPD's stop-and-frisk discriminatory policies. I was honored to be recognized as a Champion of Change by President Barack Obama in 2012. During the 2016 Presidential Election, I became the "face of the resistance" and was recruited as a co-chair of the 2017 Women's March. I vehemently protested the Trump administration's "Muslim Ban" in *Sarsour v. Trump* 2017 class action lawsuit. Ever since I have been in the spotlight, there have been false reports about my beliefs and connections, even calling me "anti-Semitic" for my support of Palestinians. In 2017, however, I was named one of *Time* magazine's "100 Most Influential People." Today, I continue my work with the Women's March as well as supporting the Black Lives Matter Movement.

---

### **Hasan Minhaj**

I was born on September 23, 1985 to Indian Muslim parents who immigrated to Davis, California where I was born and raised. I attended the University of California at Davis and majored in political science. In 2009, I moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career as a comedian. I was a finalist on NBC's *Stand-up for Diversity* and then began performing on a variety of shows. In 2014, I was hired for my biggest role to date, as a correspondent on *The Daily Show*. Thereafter, I was chosen as the featured speaker at the 2017 White House Correspondents' Dinner where I criticized President Donald Trump and reminded the press to do their jobs. In May 2017, my first stand-up special, *Hasan Minhaj: Homecoming King*, premiered on Netflix and won a television Peabody Award. And in October 2018, my new show, *Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj*, premiered on Netflix and explores the modern cultural and political landscape in America.

---

---

**Lupe Fiasco**

I was born on February 16, 1982 in the West Side of Chicago, Illinois. My name is Wasalu Muhammad Jaco, but most people know me as Lupe Fiasco. Growing up in a tough neighborhood, my parents, Shirley and Gregory (a member of the Black Panther Party), exposed me to a variety of subjects and literature. Thus, I began writing poetry at an early age, which I used as the foundation for my rap when I began creating music. I was inspired by Nas, and Ice Cube, and Jay Z who later helped me get a record deal at Atlantic Records. I use my music as an opportunity to highlight issues that are important to me like civil rights, immigration, religion, and war. I've won multiple awards for my music, including a 2008 Grammy. My album *Lasers* was nominated for Best Rap Album. I am best known for my songs "Superstar" and "The Show Goes On." Islam plays an important role in my life, but I don't want people to look at me as the poster child for Islam because I'm not. I've been involved in a number of controversies regarding my lyrics, but I will continue to talk about the issues that I see in our world today.

---

**Ilhan Omar**

I was born on October 4, 1981 in Mogadishu, Somalia. When the Somali Civil War began in 1991, my family and I had to flee the country, and we spent four years in a refugee camp in Kenya. In 1995, we moved to Minneapolis, where I learned English but also was bullied for wearing a *hijab* by my classmates. I became a citizen when I was 17 years old and started my career in politics. In 2018, I became the first naturalized citizen from Africa and first Somali-American elected to the United States Congress. Along with Rashida Tlaib, I was one of the first two Muslim women elected to Congress and the first woman of color to serve as a U.S. representative from Minnesota. I was sworn in on my grandfather's copy of the Qur'an, and I co-authored the proposal to repeal the ban on head coverings in the U.S. House. Since then, I have shown my support for Medicare for All, immigration, and LGBTQ rights.

---

**Khadijah Rivera**

I was born in 1950 and converted to Islam from Roman Catholicism. My husband was Egyptian-Muslim and we were heavily involved in our community and a variety of social causes. I encouraged community members to become active at their local mosques. I, myself, taught at a local Tampa Bay school while coordinating Project Downtown Tampa to help the homeless and needy. In 1988, I founded the first organization for Latina Muslims called PIEDAD, in New York. Our organization helps encourage participation in local mosques to collaborate and better local communities and now consists of people from all backgrounds.

---

---

**Blair Imani**

I was born on October 31, 1993, and I graduated from Louisiana State University in 2015. After the police-involved shooting of Alton Sterling, I took part in a peaceful protest where I was arrested and threatened by Baton Rouge SWAT officers. Since then, I have spoken about the intersection of Black and Muslim identities and since coming out in 2017, I have advocated for safe spaces on college campuses for Muslims, LGBT people, and other minorities. Currently, I am the Press Officer for Planned Parenthood, and the founder and executive director of Equality for Her, a nonprofit organization that's dedicated to raising awareness about issues that affect the global femme community.

---

**Halima Aden**

I was born on September 19, 1997 in a refugee camp in Kenya. I moved to the United States when I was six years old. In 2016, I became the first contestant in the Miss Minnesota USA pageant to compete in a burkini and *hijab*. I received national media attention for this, after which I signed a contract with IMG Models and debuted at New York Fashion Week for Yeezy Season 5. Since then, I have become the first hijab-wearing model to be signed to a major agency and the first to be featured on the cover of major publications like Vogue Arabia, Allure, and British Vogue. I hope that I can be a role model for American Muslim youth while pushing for more diversity in the modeling industry.

---

**Noor Tagouri**

I was born on November 27, 1993 to Libyan parents and was raised in southern Maryland. Growing up, I was obsessed with storytelling and dreamed of one day being like Oprah and Barbara Walters. I graduated with a degree in broadcast journalism from the University of Maryland. I was told throughout my career that I would not be able to make it as a news anchor if I continued to wear the *hijab*, but that changed when I got an internship with CBS Radio in 2012. Since then, I have continued my passion for telling the stories that cause me pain, but often overlooked by the mainstream media. I produced a short documentary called *The Trouble They've Seen: The Forest Haven Story*, about the mistreatment of people with mental disabilities. Afterwards, I began my work on an investigative documentary about the U.S. sex trade, called *Sold in America*.

---

---

**Kumail Najiani**

I was born on February 21, 1978 in Karachi, Pakistan. I moved to the United States when I was 19 and graduated from Grinnell College in 2001 with a degree in computer science and philosophy. I began my film and television career by guest starring on shows such as *Portlandia*, *Veep*, and *Silicon Valley*. In 2017, my film, *The Big Sick* premiered and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. The film was inspired by my relationship with my wife. In 2018, I was named one of the one-hundred most influential people in the world by *Time* magazine. I have spoken extensively about the representation of Muslims in Hollywood and recognize the need for diverse roles for Muslim characters.

---

**Reza Aslan**

I was born on May 3, 1972, in Iran, but grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area after fleeing the Iranian Revolution with my family in 1979. I was born into a Shia Muslim family and converted to evangelical Christianity when I was 15 years old. I converted back to Islam and Sufism is the Islamic tradition to which I most closely adhere. I believe that all religions are just languages to express faith, and none is more right than the other. I have degrees in Theological Studies, Fine Arts, and Sociology. I use this academic background to write about Islam, fundamentalism, and various religions. I have a deep respect for other religions and in 2017, my documentary series *Believer* premiered, where I immerse myself in religious traditions from all over the world.

---