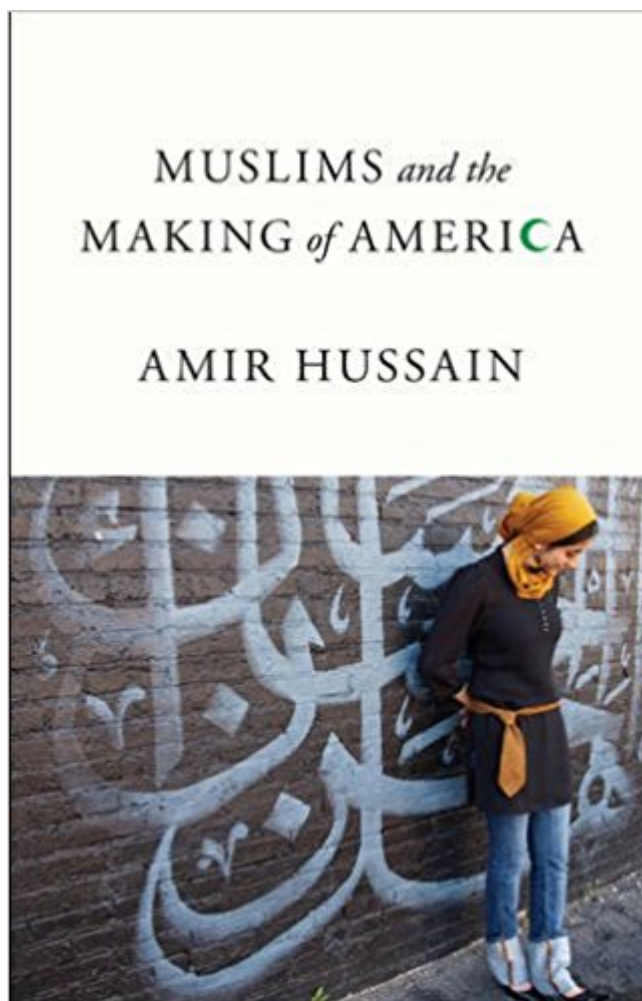


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# Muslims And The Making Of America



## Synopsis

"There has never been an America without Muslims" – so begins Amir Hussain, one of the most important scholars and teachers of Islam in America. Hussain, who is himself an American Muslim, contends that Muslims played an essential role in the creation and cultivation of the United States. Memories of 9/11 and the rise of global terrorism fuel concerns about American Muslims. The fear of American Muslims in part stems from the stereotype that all followers of Islam are violent extremists who want to overturn the American way of life. Inherent to this stereotype is the popular misconception that Islam is a new religion to America. In *Muslims and the Making of America* Hussain directly addresses both of these stereotypes. Far from undermining America, Islam and American Muslims have been, and continue to be, important threads in the fabric of American life. Hussain chronicles the history of Islam in America to underscore the valuable cultural influence of Muslims on American life. He then rivets attention on music, sports, and culture as key areas in which Muslims have shaped and transformed American identity. America, Hussain concludes, would not exist as it does today without the essential contributions made by its Muslim citizens.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Muslims and the Making of America is an accessible and engaging book that tells the story of Muslim contributions to American history and creativity. From early medieval intimations of an 'unknown land' across the Atlantic, through west African plantation slaves, to the contemporary accomplishments of athletes, musicians, and artists, Islam has been a force in the United States

and Muslims have played a vital role in making America great."~¢Jane McAuliffe, Director of National and International Outreach, United States Library of Congress

"Informing the world about Islam's place in America, this book could not come at a more opportune moment. Lucid, erudite and provocative, only Amir Hussain can make us see the multiple dimensions of the world's second largest faith in America's cultural icons, musical stars, political history, cultural values, and public life at large in his unique masterful style. A must-read for anyone wishing to observe Islam beyond sensational headlines in order to grasp the complex lives of Muslim Americans."~¢Ebrahim Moosa, Professor of Islamic Studies and Religion, University of Notre Dame

"A sparkling text. Amir Hussain arrives early to tell a story that has long needed telling."~¢Jack Miles, Distinguished Professor of English and Religious Studies, University of California at Irvine

"In recent times of rising Islamophobia, rampant misinformation about Islam, and political rhetoric against Muslims, books showcasing the positive aspects of Muslims in America are very welcome. Hussain's book *Muslims and the Making of America* may be a very short read but it is a much needed one, packed with facts that destroy myths and remove stereotypes."~¢Saadia Faruqi, *New York Journal of Books*

"A welcome antidote to anti-Muslim sentiment and 'us/them' diatribes"~¢Publishers Weekly

"*Muslims and the Making of America* is an extremely accessible book and one that should be required reading for Christian communities across the country. It's a well-researched work with a bibliography that points to sources for further reading."~¢J. Ryan Parker, *Patheos*

"The writing is conversational, blending personal narrative and historical details, and the examples given are relatable ones. This is a useful and good choice for those who want to show that Muslims (and Islam) are part-and-parcel of American life."~¢Muhammed Hassanali, *Booklist*

"An extraordinary and much needed historical study and an impressive example of impeccable scholarship"~¢The Midwest Book Review

"It makes sense that a veteran academic in Islamic studies would engage in this genial and warm conversation. Hussain's prose is personable, gentle, and melodious yet passionately dedicated to a dream of a complexly inclusive United StatesIt is a timely, contemporary exercise in bridge building."~¢Shabana Mir, *Los Angeles Review of Books*

"Hussain has set out to prove that, far from being merely compatible with American values, Muslims have been at the center of the creation of American popular culture."~¢James L. Fredericks, *Commonweal*

"Accessible, engaging, and even entertaining"~¢Choice

Amir Hussain is Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

Professor Hussain, immediate past Editor of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, has

written another important book. With *Muslims in the Making of America* he knocks the ball out of the stadium. Book clubs, American Studies courses, and readers of all ages can explore, learn from and have spirited talks about this book. If you want to learn about the (for their overall numbers) disproportionate contributions of Muslims to American history, to our professions and culture, as well as enjoy a good dose of interesting information about sports, music and American architecture, this is your read.

There's one surprise after another in this writer's strong, clear narrative. My hat's off also to Hussain and Baylor U Press for the attractive layout, the expansive and elucidating photography, and the pleasant print. Recently National Public Radio and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation have interviewed Hussain. You can Google them for an introduction to this lively, prescient and intelligent writer.

This book is extremely informative and interesting. All Americans should read this book.

Excellent!

I am interested in this topic. However the writing is rather dry and boring.

Amir Hussain's book couldn't have been published at a more important time in American History. He writes with a wonderful engaging voice and "Muslims and the Making of America" should be mandatory reading in every public school, college, and prominently displayed in every American library and bookstore. It's that important. I loved the cultural references, and American icons, and Mr. Hussain's personal connection to them. The contemporary feel he brings to the subject matter makes it an accessible read for young and old readers alike.

I heartily concur with Mr. Lansing's review of Dr. Hussain's most recent book. *MUSLIMS AND THE MAKING OF AMERICA* is an important work that explores many of the significant contributions Muslims have made to the U.S. and continue to make, to the betterment of all. Written in an engaging style, Dr. Hussain's book will open many eyes, inform many minds, and move many hearts.

"Muslims have helped us to be more American, to be better Americans," writes Loyola Marymount University theology professor Amir Hussain in

his new book *Muslims and the Making of America*. Yet his volume offers little support for this multicultural, politically correct thesis. “There has never been an America without Muslims,” Hussain states while noting Muslims among America’s African slaves both before and after the United States’ founding. Historians estimate their numbers at between ten and 20 percent of all slaves brought in bondage to America. He analyzes the subsequent “impact of Islamic practices on African American worship and music, although, as other studies have noted, slave-master repression ultimately extinguished Islamic belief among American slaves. Similarly examining the American founding, Hussain also concludes that Founding Father Thomas Jefferson “owning a copy of the Qur’an and reading it is crucial to my argument that Islam is part of the history of America.” He “began learning Arabic in the 1770s, after he purchased a translation of the Qur’an in 1765, namely the 1734 English translation of the Quranic Arabic by English Orientalist George Sale. “It was this Qur’an that Keith Ellison used when he was sworn in as the first Muslim member of Congress in 2007,” Hussain enthuses. “To be clear, Jefferson was no fan of Islam,” Hussain writes, and Sale’s Quran offers reasons why. Sale’s introductory essay describes Islam as “so manifest a forgery that has motivated calamities brought on so many nations by the conquests of the Arabians.” Hussain also notes President Jefferson’s campaigns against North Africa’s Muslim Barbary pirates; thus the “founding of the modern American Navy is connected to the Muslim world. The worlds of entertainment and sports loom large in Hussain’s assessment of Islam in America. Therefore he dedicates his book to Ahmet Ertegun “and to Muhammad Ali, perhaps the two American Muslims with the greatest global influence. While Ali dominated the boxing ring, Ertegun was “president and cofounder of Atlantic Records and the chairman of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, a man who shaped the music of the twentieth century. A strange Muslim role model, Ertegun’s biographies say almost nothing about piety, but note his elite background as a diplomat’s son who came to America when his father was Turkey’s ambassador. Using a truly broad definition of “Muslim,” Hussain concedes that Ertegun “wasn’t a good Muslim. He lived the high life, was a bon vivant, drank, partied to excess, and had numerous

affairs. Ertegun himself noted in a 2005 interview that he “used to drink a bottle of vodka a day, every day, for about 40 years. Meanwhile, Hussain unconvincingly concludes that “Muhammad Ali’s life gave the lie to the “problem” that “Islam is comprised of adherents who are violent, un-American, and a threat to our nation.” Hussain quotes Ali, who began his Muslim spiritual journey as a member of the rabidly anti-Semitic Nation of Islam (NOI) in 1964, refusing in 1967 military service during the Vietnam War. “We don’t take part in Christian wars or wars of any unbelievers,” Ali stated, subordinating moral questions of patriotic duty and just war to pure Islamic sectarianism. Although Ali moderated later in life as he moved away from the NOI towards more mainstream Islamic practice, he had a particularly conflicted relationship with Jews. His 1969 statement to television interviewer David Frost that “all Jews and gentiles are devils” foreshadowed a series of anti-Semitic/anti-Israel statements. By contrast, Ali developed friendships with Jews such as comedian Billy Crystal and sportscaster Howard Cosell, and attended the 2012 bar mitzvah of a grandson born to Ali’s daughter and her Jewish husband. Hussain also profiles American professional basketball player Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, who reflected Ali’s less than all-American behavior. Abdul-Rauf received a playing suspension in 1996 after he refused to stand before games for the national anthem. In a 2016 interview, he stated that as a “Muslim, I don’t believe in giving my allegiance to anyone or anything but God, and that the American flag represents tyranny and oppression.” The NOI and its bizarre offshoot cult, the Five Percenters, present more radicalism, yet Hussain’s analysis of their influence upon American rappers such as Ice Cube shows little concern. His past praise for the NOI exhibited an antisemitism often present in hip-hop music but ignored by Hussain. He likewise ignores Ice Cube’s lax understanding of Islam; Ice Cube stated in a 2000 interview that “going to the mosque, the ritual and the tradition, it’s just not in me to do. So I don’t do it.” More appealing is Hussain’s description of the “Muslim engineer from Bangladesh, Fazlur Rahman Khan, who “helped to redefine the American skyline with design innovations that helped build the World Trade Center. “It was foreign Muslims, nineteen hijackers, who took down those buildings. But it

was an American Muslim, Fazlur Rahman Khan, who made those magnificent buildings possible in the first place. Yet as in the case of Ertegun, little Islamic faith appears in the biography of Khan, who married an Austrian non-Muslim. According to his daughter, he enjoyed “traveling and meeting people of different cultures and different backgrounds, listening to music, reading widely, from existentialism to writings about beauty, and learning about art.” Hussain’s book ultimately reveals more about how America made various individuals from Muslim backgrounds rather than how Hussain’s Muslims, who often have Madonna’s depth of piety, made America. The radicalism displayed by various Muslims profiled by Hussain affirms his observation that “Islam often was an alternative to White or Western movements. Alienated by American racism, these movements often sought false redemption in Islam from historic sins like slavery. In contrast, the Egyptian-American Ahmed Zewail, whom Hussain praises for winning a Nobel Prize in chemistry, valued America’s merits in a 2009 interview. “What America has given me is a system of appreciation and opportunity, and that is what we are lacking in the Muslim world. If I had stayed in Egypt, I would not have been able to do what I have done.” this is a review from robert spence of ihad watch

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