

Annual Muslim Studies Program Conference – Introduction, panel schedule and presenter biographical statements

Migrations of Islam:

Muslim American Cultural Expression in the 21st Century

A day-long symposium with presentations by prominent national scholars and writers working on Muslim American culture.

Friday, February 24, 2012 9:00 am to 5:30 pm
303 International Center

Introduction

“Migrations of Islam: Muslim American Cultural Expression in the 21st Century” begins with the premise that one of the defining events in the history of Islam came in the year 622, when Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina. That event, known as the hijra or migration, continues to serve as the starting point for the historic establishment of Muslim communities, and also as a metaphor for the movement across time and space of the many cultures of Islam. Migration evokes the multiple dislocations of Muslims and the numerous adaptations and accommodations of Islam as it found a home in new locations. While the works of many of the artists included in our program question the most hostile stereotypes of Muslims, they often are also producing challenges to mainstream Muslim communities, which may have difficulty embracing the popularization of Islam in music, performance, literature and film.

Muslim American popular culture is an especially critical point of entry into the debate on the character and role of Islam in the contemporary US. The program events, which included the Hijabi Monologues, a screening of Eyad Zahra’s *The Taqwacores*, a staged reading of Wajahat Ali’s *The Domestic Crusaders* and Dean Obeidallah’s stand-up comedy routine, give expression to the emergence of Muslim cultural expression and also open a space for thinking about the range of creative responses to Islamophobia.

This gather of scholars and writers is aimed at furthering the discussion of Muslim American artistic expression by critically engaging the various social, political, cultural and technological forces that condition the ways that Muslim represent themselves and how they are represented.

Salah D. Hassan
Coordinator of Migrations of Islam

Symposium Schedule

9:15-10:30

Panel 1

Saeed Khan, "'All American Muslims' and Anti-Muslim Reactions: Mapping the Evil of Banality"

Fatemeh Fakhraie, "Muslim Women and the Media: Issues of Representation and Participation"

10:45-12:00

Panel 2

Aminah McCloud, "African American Islamic Leadership"

Shabana Mir, "Muslim American Youth Identity in the Spaces of Campus Peer Culture: Essentialism and Resistance"

12:00-12:45 Lunch

1:00-2:15

Panel 3

Sylvia Chan-Malik, "Of Bikinis and Burqas: Afterimaging Islam's Foundational Blackness in Post-9/11 America"

Sohail Daulatzai, "An Empire State of Mind: Muslim America, Imperial Multiculturalism and the Specter of Malcolm"

2:30-3:45

Panel 4

Zaeena Grewal, "Moral Geographies of the American Umma"

Hishaam Aidi "Diplomacy, Hip Hop and "Indigenous Islam: " Or, 'Why Are American Ambassadors Increasingly Rockin' the Mic?'"

4:00-5:30

Panel 5

Michael Muhammad Knight, "Meccan Openings: the Poetry of Amir Sulaiman"

Maryam Kashani, "Muhammadaic Breezes from Tarim to Oakland"

Junaid Rana "Sci-Fi Islamica"

5:30-6:30 Reception

Symposium Participants

Hishaam Aidi received his PhD in political science from Columbia University, and has taught at Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, and at the Driskell Center for the Study of the African Diaspora at the University of Maryland, College Park. He is the author of *Redeploying the State* (Palgrave 2008) a comparative study of privatization and labor movements in Latin America and the Arab world. He is also the editor with Manning Marable of an edited volume titled *Black Routes to Islam* (Palgrave 2009). As a journalist, he has written for various outlets including Al Jazeera, *The New African*, *ColorLines*, *Souls* and *Middle East Report*. Dr Aidi was named a Carnegie Scholar in 2009. He is currently a Lecturer at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, as well a Global Fellow at the Open Society Foundation.

Sylvia Chan-Malik is a Guest Lecturer and UC President's Postdoctoral Fellow in the American Studies Department at UC Santa Cruz. She received her Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley in 2009 and has published numerous articles on the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and Islam in America. She is currently completing a manuscript entitled *A Part of Islam: Race, Gender, and the Making of Muslim America, 1959-Present*.

Sohail Daulatzai has published on Muslim diasporas, race, art and U.S. imperial culture in anthologies and journals such as *Basketball Jones*, *Black Routes To Islam*, *The Vinyl Ain't Final*, *Souls*, *Amer-Asia*, and *SAMAR*, as well as having written the liner notes to the award-winning documentary *Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme*, and the centerpiece for the exhibit catalog *Movement: Hip-Hop in L.A., 1980-Now*. He is the co-editor (with Michael Eric Dyson) of *Born To Use Mics: Readings Nas's Illmatic*, and is the author of the forthcoming *Black Star, Crescent Moon*, which explores the cultural and political histories between radical Black internationalism and the Muslim Third World through social movements, cinema, literature and hip-hop culture. He is currently working on a transmedia project on the film *The Battle of Algiers* and is directing a documentary film entitled *Return of the Mecca: Islam and Hip-Hop From Rumi to Rakim*. He teaches in the Department of Film and Media Studies and the Program in African American Studies at the University of California, Irvine.

Fatemeh Fakhraie is an editor, author, and blogger. In 2007, she founded muslimahmediawatch.org, a site dedicated to critical analysis of Muslim women's media images. In 2011, she contributed to the anthology *I Speak for Myself: American Women on Being Muslim*. She is an alumni of the American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute program and speaks on Islamic feminism and race from her perspective as Iranian-American Muslim woman.

Zaena Grewal is the Director of the Center for the Study of American Muslims at ISPU. She is also an Assistant Professor in the departments of American Studies and Religious Studies and the Program in Ethnicity, Race and Migration at Yale University. Dr. Grewal is the author of numerous articles and chapters on the intersections of race and religion in American Muslim communities and her book *Destination Tradition: American Islam and the Crisis of Authority* explores the global religious networks that connect U.S. mosques to the intellectual centers of the Middle East. She was awarded the Fulbright Fellowship in Egypt (2002-3) and received the Fulbright's prestigious Islamic Civilization Grant. She is also a documentary filmmaker and a regular contributor to the Huffington Post. Dr. Grewal received her doctorate from the interdisciplinary Program in Anthropology and History at the University of Michigan.

Maryam Kashani is a PhD candidate in anthropology at the University of Texas in Austin. She received an MFA in Film/Video from the California Institute of the Arts, and her film and video works have been exhibited internationally.

Saeed Khan is currently in the Department of History and Lecturer in the Department of Near East & Asian Studies at Wayne State University- Detroit, Michigan. He is also Adjunct Professor in Islamic Studies at the University of Detroit-Mercy and at Rochester College, and Islam and World Politics at James Madison College, Michigan State University. He is a founding member and a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Social Policy & Understanding: a think tank promoting the study and analysis of US social and domestic policy. Most recently, Mr. Khan has founded the Center for the Study of Trans-Atlantic Diasporas. Recent publications include "Islamophobia, Sharia and the U.S. Constitution: Trends and Trajectories," in the *Maryland Journal of International Law*, and chapters in *Defining and Re-Defining Diaspora: From Theory to Reality* (Interdisciplinary Press) and the upcoming *Muslim Youth: Challenges, Opportunities and Expectations* (Continuum).

Michael Muhammad Knight is a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His academic focus is the study of Islam as an American religion, with special interest in constructions of religious authenticity. He previously received a Master of Theological Studies (MTS) degree from Harvard Divinity School and is the author of eight books of fiction and nonfiction.

Dr. Amina McCloud is the Director of the Islamic World Studies Program and professor of Islamic Studies in the Department of Religious Studies at DePaul University. Since 2006 she has directed the nation's only undergraduate baccalaureate program in Islamic World Studies. During her tenure at DePaul University she founded the Islam in America Conference and established the Islam in America Archives and the Journal of Islamic Law and Culture, of which she is the current Editor in Chief. In addition to her work at the university, she is author of African American Islam, Questions of Faith, and Transnational American Muslims. She is working on the manuscript Silks: The Textures of American Muslim Women's Lives and co-authoring An Introduction to Islam in the 21st century and A Handbook on African American Islam. Dr. McCloud has also worked on a number of television projects on Muslims and on task forces for the East West Institute and Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs relating to Islam and Muslims.

Shabana Mir is Assistant Professor at Oklahoma State University. She holds a PhD in Education Policy Studies and Anthropology from Indiana University, Bloomington, and her award-winning doctoral dissertation, Constructing Third Spaces: American Muslim Undergraduate Women's Hybrid Identity Construction, was based on ethnographic research that examined American Muslim undergraduate women's religious, ethnic, gender and civic identities in the context of youth and leisure culture on university campuses. She has contributed chapters to Educating the Muslims of America, Comparative Education: the Dialectic of the Global and the Local, Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality and Muslim Voices in School, and has published articles in Discourse, Anthropology & Education Quarterly, Journal of Religion, The Washington Post Newsweek, and Islamic Studies, to name only a few. She is a columnist for Religion Dispatches, and is an international public speaker on issues of religion, gender, and education.

Junaid Rana is an associate professor of Asian American Studies with appointments in the Department of Anthropology, the Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, and the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His publications have appeared in *Cultural Dynamics*, *Souls*, and the edited anthologies *Pakistani Diasporas* (OUP, 2009) *State of White Supremacy* (Stanford, 2011), and *Dispatches from Pakistan* (Leftword, 2012). He is the author of the book *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora* (Duke, 2011).

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Brian J. Bowe, Donald Matlock and Erin O'Connor, who worked on the project in different capacities. Eswaran Pillai and his crew of film studies students documented the events on video. Julia Grimm, in the Muslim Studies Program office, organized the travel, venue bookings, and publication of PR materials.

Migrations of Islam is a project of the Muslim Studies Program and Asian Studies Center at MSU and is made possible through a grant from the Social Science Research Council. Co-Sponsors include MSU College of Arts and Letters, Grand Valley State University, the Arab American National Museum (Dearborn), and University of Michigan-Dearborn. For more information visit: www.imaje.msu.edu or connect via @IslamMigrations on Twitter or [facebook.com/IslamMigrations](https://www.facebook.com/IslamMigrations) on Facebook, or contact the Muslim Studies Program at MSU.