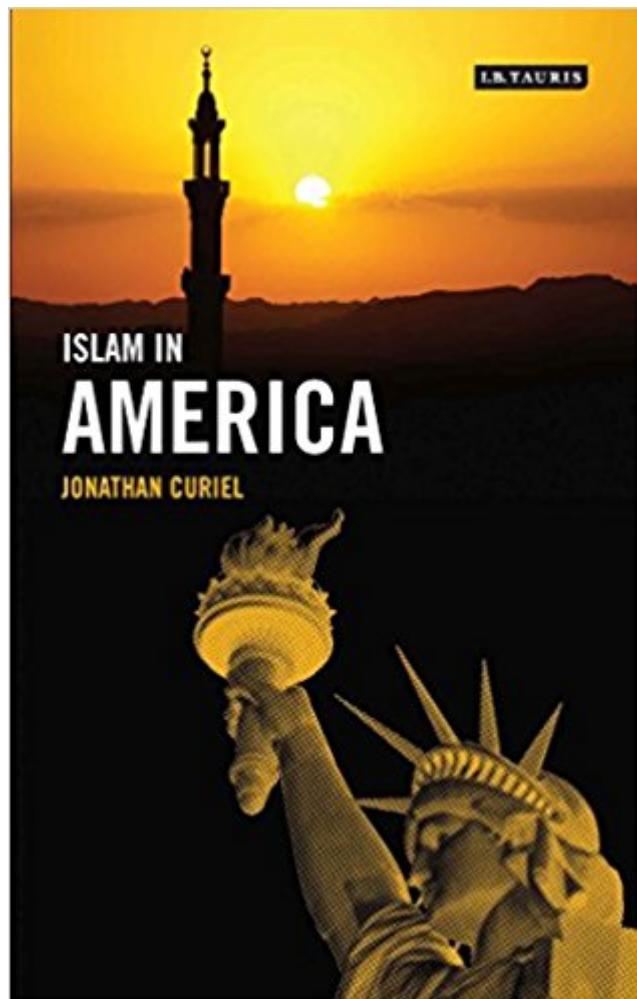


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# Islam In America



## Synopsis

Islam is the hidden ingredient in the melting pot of America. Though there are between 2 and 8 million Muslims in the U.S., Islam has traditionally had little political clout compared to other minority faiths. However, it has been a part of the fabric of the United States from its conception. African people, brought over in the slave trade, formed the roots of American Islam, their faith challenged and suppressed by slaveowners. Nonetheless, great American thinkers were proponents of the faith, including Thomas Jefferson, who studied Islam, and Ralph Waldo Emerson who spoke of its importance and influence. Since then, Islam has taken on many guises—from slavery, as a part of the Civil Rights movement, as a metonym for extremism, to Middle America; there is now at least one Mosque in all fifty States. Islam is believed to be the country's fastest-growing religion with a vibrant culture of theological debate, particularly regarding the role of women preachers. In *Islam in America*, Curiel traces the history of America's Muslims. Drawing on interviews in communities from industrial Michigan to rural California, Curiel portrays the diversity of practices, cultures and observances that make up Muslim America.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'Islam in America offers a remarkably original and readable narrative of the history of Islam & Muslims in America. Jonathan Curiel here reveals a side of American Muslim culture that is as old as America itself.' Jamal Dajani, independent journalist-host, Arab Talk Radio; 'So many years after 9/11, the gulf between Muslims and non-Muslims in the United States remains depressingly wide. We still need a much better and more nuanced understanding of Islam, especially after the tragic

events in Paris. Jonathan Curiel is therefore to be commended for giving us this closely-argued and highly readable book which - as both labor of love and much needed antidote to prejudice and misunderstanding - is intended to close the gap.' Akbar Ahmed, Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies and Professor of International Relations, American University, Washington, DC, and formerly High Commissioner of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in the United Kingdom and Ireland; 'Finally, an ethically disinterested observer's clear, concise, and comprehensive survey of the American Muslim community. Islam in America is a fascinating and long overdue book about the faith and its followers that have been part of the tapestry of America from its inception.' Hamza Yusuf, President & Co-Founder, Zaytuna College, Berkeley, CA

Jonathan Curiel is a former staff writer for the San Francisco Chronicle. His work has also appeared in the Columbia Journalism Review, Salon.com and the Los Angeles Times.

Not a book I "love" but a very good, informative account of Islam in America, worth the five stars. I'm puzzled at the lack of reviews, perhaps the publisher is not well known. The topic is important, and with the recent rise (at the time this is being written) in concern about radical Islamic jihad, this rather objective account is a good one to read for information. One important aspect is that many American Muslims are not Arab and many American Arabs are not Muslims (for example, many Lebanese Arab Christians migrated to the US early in the 1900s). American Muslims come from more than 60 countries, but particularly Iran, India, Pakistan, Egypt and Lebanon. Curiel estimates 30,000 Americans each year convert to Islam, and many of those are African American (prisons are a major site of conversions, which the book discusses in fascinating detail). We do not know how many Muslims live in the US. Estimates range from 1 to 9 million. What is clear is that the American Islamic community in total is very diverse, and Curiel says it is the most diverse in the world. The book discusses the Americanization of Islam, an important topic--recall that American Judaism has been thoroughly Americanized, with intermarriage frequent and the religion reduced to a cultural heritage for a sizable portion of American Jews. Curiel interviewed a number of American Muslims and found a wide range of views, from very traditional to quite relaxed. He also found concern about the rising tide of Islamophobia. He cites surveys that found that 18% of American Muslims never attend mosque services and 16% rarely attend. He also found a fairly strong current of Islamic feminism. One point usually forgotten about is that a substantial fraction of slaves were in origin Muslims. It is not clear how many remained Muslim, because they would have been under heavy pressure to become Christian, but it is clear that aspects of Islamic culture persisted in such things

as foodways and folk tales. Curiel notes a moderate interest in Islam in the 1800s by people such as Emerson, and an interest by African Americans in Islam that goes back almost a century--one of the best discussions in the book concerns groups such as the Nation of Islam and people like Mohammed X.

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