

Brief History of Islam in North America

(Compiled from various sources by Sadik H. Kassim, Ph.D.)

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- 1421** Ships from the Chinese treasure fleet commanded by the Chinese Muslim Zheng He (Cheng Ho) arrive in the Americas and establish small colonies.
- 1492** A few Muslims accompany Christopher Columbus and reach American shores, including Pedro Alonso Nino, one of Columbus' captains.
- 1527** A Muslim from Morocco named Estevanico of Azamour, lands in Florida with the expedition of Panfilo Narveaz and becomes the first of 4 Americans to cross the continent in 1539.
- 1530** Beginning of the African slave trade. More than 20% of the approximately 10-20 million slaves that reached America were Muslims from areas of West Africa (Fulas).
- 1807** An African Muslim named Yarrow Mamout is set free in Washington, D.C. Mamout was an investor in the Bank of Georgetown, which is known today as Riggs National Bank.
- 1839** Sayyid Sa'id, ruler of Oman, orders his ship "The Sultana" to sail to America on a trade mission. The trip reaches New York on April 30, 1840 marking the beginning of Muslim trade relations with North America.
- 1856** United States Cavalry hire a Muslim named Hajj Ali ("Hi Jolly") to raise camels in Arizona.
- 1865** During the American Civil War, as part of its "scorched earth policy", the Union army destroyed significant amounts of property throughout the confederate regions. On the morning of April 4, Union troops reach the campus of the University of Alabama with orders to destroy the grounds. Andre Deloffre, a modern language professor and custodian of the university's Rotunda library, appeals to the commanding officer to spare one of the finest libraries in the south. The commanding officer sends a courier to General Croxton at his headquarters in Tuscaloosa asking permission to save the library. Croxton denies the request, but allows Deloffre to "save one volume as a memento of this occasion." Deloffre goes on to select ***The Koran: commonly called Al Koran of Mohammed.***
- 1866** Cherokees claim that a number of Muslims join their ranks leading to the eventual conversion of a major tribal chief named Stand Watie, who later changes his name to Ramadhan Ibn Wati. These types of conversion events occur frequently. In fact, anthropologists have found that various Native American languages, particularly the Algonquin language, contain words with Arabic roots.
- 1893** Alexander Russell Webb, an early white American convert, founds the American Islamic Propaganda Movement and the American Moslem Brotherhood in New York
- Early 1900s** Muslim communities begin to form in the Midwest, including Ross, North Dakota
- 1913** The Moorish Science Temple of America is founded in Newark, New Jersey by Noble Drew Ali, "The Prophet"
- 1930-1933** W.D. Fard preaches in Detroit, marking the birth of the Nation of Islam movement in North America.

- 1934** Lebanese community of Cedar Rapids, Iowa opens a masjid, known today as the “Mother Mosques of America”, the oldest continually functioning masjid in North America
- 1963** MSA (Muslim Student Association) is formed at the University of Illinois.
- 1964** World Champion boxer Cassius Clay converts to Islam and changes his name to Muhammed Ali.
- 1965** Al- Hajj Malik Al- Shabazz (Malcolm X) is assassinated in New York.
- 1980** Wallace Muhammad becomes Warith Deen Muhammad.
- 1983** American Islamic College is established in Chicago
- Mid 1980s** PIEDAD Latino Community and Alianza Islamica founded in NYC.
- 1990** Warith Deen becomes the first Muslim to open the U.S. Senate with prayer.
- 1991** Siraj Wahaj becomes the first Muslim to open the U.S. House of Representatives with prayer.
- 1994** CAIR is established in Washington, D.C.
- 1998** Pentagon hosts Muslims for Ramadhan meal.
- 2007** Keith Ellison, the first Muslim to be elected to Congress, is sworn into office on a copy of the Qur’an that once belonged to Thomas Jefferson.

- **Approximately 7,000,000 Muslims live in the United States, more Muslims than the populations of Kuwait, Qatar, or Libya.**
- **Islam is the second largest religion in France and the United States, and the third largest religion in Britain and Germany.**
- **There are approximately 1,209 masjids in the United States, more than twenty percent of which contain a full-time school.**
- **Estimated per capita income of Muslims in the United States is between \$35,000 and \$45,000.**
- **Average per capita income in the United States is between \$24,000 and \$27,000.**

Ethnic Breakdown of American Muslims

South Asian (Pakistan, India, etc...)	32%
African- American	29%
Arab	24%
Iranian	3.6%
African	3.4%
European(Bosnia, Kosovo, etc...)	2.1%
White American	1.6%
Southeast Asian(Malaysian, Filipino, Indonesian, etc...)	1.3%
Caribbean	1.2%
Turkish	1.1%
Hispanic/Latino	.7%

Geographical Distribution

State	Total Muslim Population	Total State Population
California	20%	3.4%
New York	16%	4.7%
Illinois	8.4%	3.6%
New Jersey	4%	2.5%
Indiana	3.6%	3.2%
Michigan	3.4%	1.8%
Virginia	3%	2.4%
Texas	2.8%	.7%
Ohio	2.6%	1.2%
Maryland	1.4%	1.4%

- 7 million in the U.S., 1 million in Canada. Larger than the population of Norway, Finland, or Denmark.
- Annual growth rate of 6% versus 0.9% for total U.S..
- Same size community as Hispanics 25 years ago.

American Muslims are Younger

Age Group	American Muslims ¹	Total Americans ²
18-29	26.1%	14.1%
30-49	52.4%	31.1%
50-64	16.7%	27.7%
65+	4.8%	27.2%

¹Zogby International, August 2000 ² U.S. Census Data 2000

American Muslims are Well- Educated

67% of American Muslims have a Bachelor's degree or higher.
44% of Americans have a Bachelor's degree or higher.

Maximum Education	American Muslims ²	Total Americans ³
Advanced Degree	32.1%	8.6%
Bachelor's Degree	30.0%	35.1%
Some College	19.4%	32.3%
High School Diploma	14.1%	18.9%
No High School Diploma	4.7%	4.7%

²Zogby International, August 2001 ³ Statistical Abstract of the U.S. 2001

Top 10 Occupations of American Muslims

Rank	Occupation	Percent
1	Student	20.2%
2	Engineer	12.4%
3	Physician/Dentist	10.8%
4	Homemaker	10.0%
5	Programmer	7.0%
6	Corporate Manager	6.4%
7	Teacher	6.4%
8	Small Business Owner	4.4%
9	Researcher	4.1%
10	Administrative Assistant	2.8%
	Total	84.5%

Source: Cornell University, April 2002