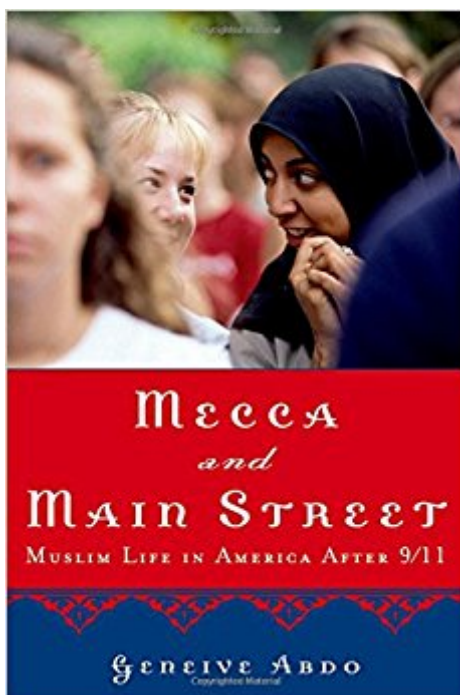


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# Mecca And Main Street: Muslim Life In America After 9/11



## Synopsis

Islam is America's fastest growing religion, with more than six million Muslims in the United States, all living in the shadow of 9/11. Who are our Muslim neighbors? What are their beliefs and desires? How are they coping with life under the War on Terror? In *Mecca and Main Street*, noted author and journalist Geneive Abdo offers illuminating answers to these questions. Gaining unprecedented access to Muslim communities in America, she traveled across the country, visiting schools, mosques, Islamic centers, radio stations, and homes. She reveals a community tired of being judged by American perceptions of Muslims overseas and eager to tell their own stories. Abdo brings these stories vividly to life, allowing us to hear their own voices and inviting us to understand their hopes and their fears. Inspiring, insightful, tough-minded, and even-handed, this book will appeal to those curious (or fearful) about the Muslim presence in America. It will also be warmly welcomed by the Muslim community.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"*Mecca and Mainstreet*" is must reading for Americans casually curious about Muslims (those who follow the religion of Islam) in America, researchers formally studying the topic, and especially Muslim Americans - a burgeoning community of six million - seeking to discover and learn about their own complex but understudied history in the United States. Geneive Abdo has undertaken an impressive amount of primary source research: the book is the culmination of three years of extensive mixing and interviews with members of the Muslim community primarily in Chicago and to a lesser extent in other major cities such as New York, San Francisco, and LA. Moreover, her

writing style is smooth and highly accessible - a key quality that is desperately lacking in most serious academic scholarship. Indeed, the presentation of "Mecca and Mainstreet" is as solid as the content. Abdo has separate chapters on the Muslim Students' Associations within various universities, new and rising imams (religious guides) - including interviews with some of the most well known spiritual figures within the Muslim American community such as Imam Hamza Yusuf and Imam Zaid Shakir - and Muslims taking Islam to the streets by providing social services. This latter section zooms in on the creative activities of Rami Nashashibi of IMAN (the Inner-City Muslim Action Network) in inner-city Chicago. There are also chapters on the experiences of Muslim Latino converts, culturally conservative Muslims in certain parts of Michigan, the changing and contested role of women in the mosque, and a concise and informative history that carefully traces the evolution of Islam in America. The work also has problems. It is ISNA-centric.

This book does a very good job of showing how more religious Muslims practice their faith in America, the issues they face, what activities they are involved in, and just their life experiences in general. The people she interviews and discusses in this book are good examples of the views held widely by many Muslims in the United States, especially those involved in mosques, MSA's, and ISNA. However, I do have some reservations of the portrayal of so called "progressive Muslims" (a term with different meaning depending on who you ask) such as Amina Wadud. Whether or not one agrees with Ms. Wadud's decision to break with certain past traditions upheld by traditional Muslim scholars and theologians, it would be disingenuous to assume that a good portion of Muslims (theologians and scholars among them) who disagree with some ideas of past act out of media-consciousness and conceit. Abdo herself does a great job of showing the diversity in Islamic interpretation and how it faces Muslim Americans when mentioning how music is seen as OK by some people but forbidden by others, regardless of certain scholars' opinions. But then she casts "progressive Muslims" as being in the same line as wolves in sheepskin like Irshad Manji even though they follow a similar manner of addressing how Islam should manifest itself in a positive manner in our lives. In any event, progressive and traditional are very relative things. Some people would probably lump 'Music is OK in Islam' under the same progressive banner Abdo deems sensationalist. Nevertheless, I would still highly recommend this book because it documents the voice of the often unheard Muslim activists, community members, and scholars whose views are reflective of Muslims who are more active in their mosques and communities.

This inspiring, edge of your seat book is both refreshing and welcoming to both Muslim and

non-Muslim. This is a review of an American convert who has been spending his Muslim life going from place to place trying to learn traditional Islam from some of the most authoritative figures and opinions that are accessible from the English medium. Also this opinion comes from a patriotic American who cares for the security and concerns of America like any other American has proudly served in the beginnings of the War against Terrorism. That being said I would like to say that this book surprised me at every level. She uses the opinions of some of the best well trained scholars in the US today whose influence to Muslims in America and abroad are increasing day by day. Scholars like Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, Shaykh Zaid Shakir, Shaykh Umar Faruq Abdullah, Shaykh Muhammad Yaqoobi, and Sulyman Nyang (many whom I have had the honor to hear them speak and shake their hands). Their message of peace and tolerance is taking the minds of Muslims and bringing them back to what Islam was for 1400 years. It is totally uprooting the intolerant views that men from Saudi Arabia have been trying to instill into unsuspecting new Muslim immigrants. Geneive does not mention what this means bluntly because her objectivity is trying to be welcoming to all Muslims but basically what this means to Americans is that there is a civil mind war in Islam and the good guys are winning. All the groups that seem anti-American and intolerant are getting kicked out and being replaced with an Islam that tolerates American culture and seeks to live and thrive in harmony with them. I think that this is something American journalists like Geneive Abdo tries to show.

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