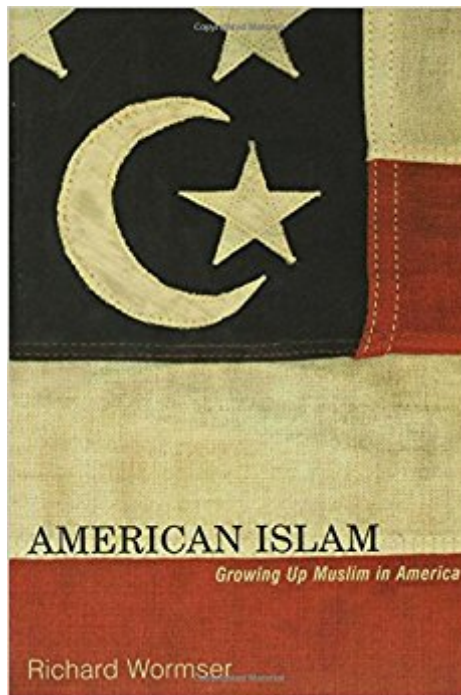


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# American Islam: Growing Up Muslim In America



## Synopsis

Today, an estimated four to six million Muslims live in the United States. Yet Islam is still one of the most misunderstood and maligned religions in this country. News coverage of recent events such as the World Trade Center bombings and the war in Iraq spread one-sided, negative images of Muslims as terrorists and religious fanatics in America and abroad. In *American Islam*, Richard Wormser draws on interviews with Muslim teenagers to go beyond the headlines and provides a timely, unbiased look at this important segment of American society. Young Muslims speak out about everyday concerns -- family, school, relationships -- revealing how they maintain their identity and adapt their religious and cultural traditions to fit into America's more permissive society. A historical overview of Islam, an interpretation of the basic tenets of the Quran, and a close look at the growth of Islam in African-American communities rounds out the first-person accounts of daily life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Punctuating his writing with short quotes drawn from interviews with young people, Wormser (Hobbes) discusses issues faced by Muslims in America. First he outlines basic tenets of the religion, then focuses on two quite different groups, immigrants from the Middle East and African Americans. He emphasizes matters relevant to teens, such as navigating the strict codes of Islamic dating, dealing with peer pressure, and adapting ancient customs to modern life. On the whole, his account tends to idealize his subjects. For example, after introducing the popularly held belief that

"Muslim men rule the household," the author quotes a Muslim (male): "It doesn't make sense to try and dominate your wife.... Islam teaches that the man has the final decision in the family, but you should always discuss things with your wife and try to reach a joint decision." Elsewhere Wormser resorts to generalizations: "Most Muslim students are comfortable with their religion." And while a chapter on the Nation of Islam perceptively suggests reasons for the increasing popularity of Islam among African Americans, the racist and anti-Semitic comments by leaders of the Nation are tacitly presented as reactions to years of oppression. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 7 Up?A portrait of Muslim American youth and their faith. Wormser describes the cultural, literary, and scientific heritage of Islamic civilization; their traditional tolerance of unbelievers; and the history of Muslim settlement in the Christian West. He also offers a concise summary of the religion's origins, its Sunni and Shia branches, and its basic beliefs. In the first part, interviews with American-born children of immigrants from North Africa and Asia reveal conflicts among the generations and the insensitivity, discrimination, and harassment the young people are subjected to in public schools. Most of the interviewees express positive feelings about the traditional family, and all reject terrorism. Most, including young women, interpret Islamic restrictions of women as protections against temptation and danger. The second half of the book is devoted to the religious and political history of Islam within the African American community. The author tries hard to see things from a Muslim perspective?a laudable and desirable intent?but his evenhanded descriptions of some of the key personalities are bound to be controversial. He examines some of the inflammatory rhetoric associated with the Nation of Islam and discusses various responses to it. There is a great need for information on our growing Muslim population, and the first half of the book serves that need well.?Libby K. White, Schenectady County Public Library, NYCcopyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This books starts out with lots of excellent information on Islam and various problems that Muslims in this country go through. An excellent easy reading for a new Mulsim convert such as myself.However the second half of the book gets into topics such as racism, black history, ideals of Malcom X and Louis Farrakhan and the idea of white people being the devil. The author doesn't present these topics as something members of the Nation of Islam would have to put up with since these ideas are all not of the Quran. Rather the author provides way too much history and various ideals of Malcom X and Louis Farrakhan and in my opinion went way too far on this topic and it

made the book an overall negative for me.

This is a very fair introduction to Islam written by a non-Muslim. I would have preferred more discussion of ideas found in the Holy Qur'an, however in general the treatment of my religion was enlightened and the author clearly attempted to be non-biased. I especially appreciated his discussion of the relationship between Islam and Christianity during the Middle Ages; his assertion that Christians were extremely brutal and destructive during the Crusades is one that Muslims have felt for a long time. Perhaps he could also have mentioned that this colors Muslims' feelings about the West to this day--a point that would be really relevant in the post-911 world! In any event, it was a far better treatment of that subject than is generally the case when this area is discussed by a Westerner. I also very much liked his explanation of how women are really treated in Islam: a far cry from the phony, patronizing sympathy for women that is often expressed by Westerners who, upon closer examination, can be found to be as prejudiced towards woman as anybody, or at least live in a society which still retains strong remnants of oppressive male domination. As far as the subject of African-Americans and their relationship to Islam, this was also a very good discussion, although when Wormser talked about names that African-American Muslims give their children, I waited in vain for the mention of "Bilal." Bilal was the first muezzin (one who gives the call to prayer) in Islam. He was a black slave freed by Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him!) and the name is popular with African-Americans for obvious reasons. Perhaps a little more attention could have been paid to Islam's traditional stance as the religion of SOCIAL JUSTICE in connection with problems of race in America, and maybe some relevant passages from the Qur'an would have been helpful, but in general Wormser does a really good job. I should mention, however, that in his translation of the adhan (call to prayer), he mistakenly translates "feLA" ("good works"), as "felicity." This is one of several small errors which could have easily been rectified if the manuscript had been vetted by a Muslim before publication. In general, though, for a short treatment of a complex subject, this book certainly deserves four and a half stars.

While I don't agree with everything in this book, I can't deny it has some really good information in it and tells the story from another's point of view. I don't agree that all Muslim values coorespond with what have been traditional American values but people have a right to their religion and to live here in harmony and peace. This book gives many Americans something to think about about and appreciate. It is mainly the story of people who feel abused in the past or are being abused in the present. Life should be better for them and more fair. Right now, it isn't.

Richard Wormser's American Islam does an excellent job in explaining just what this important world religion is all about. He does it in an easy to understand manner without boring the reader with unimportant details. Wormser explains the early history of Islam in the Arabian peninsula and the USA, how Americans Muslims have adjusted in Post-9-11 America, and presents Islam from a Muslim teenager's perspective, bringing Islam into a today's context-something that his contemporaries have failed to pull off. In the second part of American Islam, Wormser discusses issues and problems concerning African-American Muslims, who make up the largest number of converts in America, and in an unprecedented heroic step, in Chapter 5 he narrates an issue that no Imam in America will tackle-discrimination against African-American Muslim males in love & marriage by other Muslims. For that alone, Wormser and American Islam deserves a Pulitzer. Five stars Richard Wormser on a job well done!

The book is really good when it came to discussing the Muslims and their views. There are a lot of interviews with Muslims on where they stand with parts of their religion. It is really interesting and enlightening. Except for when it comes to the Nation of Islam group, a little less than half the book then focuses on this African-American-Muslim religion. But doesn't give facts as the book did when it came to your ordinary Muslims. It then becomes more of a biography of Malcolm X and a few other gentle men. Excluding that part, because it really did not answer any of my questions, it just went on to explain this Nation of Islam group, the book was informative and an easy reading with interesting facts and first hand stories!!!

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