



# “EXPLORING MUSLIM AMERICAN HERITAGE” CURRICULUM



## **OVERVIEW:**

This curriculum offers students an introduction to the rich and diverse Muslim experience in the United States, enabling them to explore the centuries-old presence of Muslims in North America as well as the ways Muslims have contributed to American society. The material is designed to engage students with no background in the subject matter via compelling human stories. While not a formal world religions lesson plan, the curriculum does provide a basic overview of Islamic terms in the process of teaching about Muslim American heritage and achievement.

**AUDIENCE:** Grades 5-9

## **SCHOLASTIC FIELDS:**

- History & Social Studies; U.S. History
- Religion
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Know that Muslims have been in North America for over four centuries and been part of the American story from the beginning.
- Appreciate the broad diversity (ethnic, racial, sectarian, etc.) of Muslim communities and individuals in the United States
- Recognize specific contributions made by Muslims to American society – and specific ways in which American society has recognized Islamic contributions to civilization.
- Acquire background in basic Islamic religious concepts (e.g., mosque, Qur'an, pilgrimage to Mecca, etc.).

### **BACKGROUND:**

This lesson does not require extensive knowledge of Islam or Muslims. Rather it explores the rich history of Muslims in North America, emphasizing remarkable personal stories connecting Muslim culture with broader American culture. A glossary of key Islamic terms is provided as a resource to help students learn the essentials of the Muslim religion.

The curriculum is built around educational materials on the [Muslim American Heritage Celebration website](#). These materials cover a range of topics, beginning with the early Muslim arrival in North America centuries ago up through examples of noteworthy people of Muslim heritage making major contributions to American society in the sciences and the arts. While the educational content covers a broad range of topics, the connecting thread is the rich diversity of the Muslim American experience – one that defies stereotypes and simplistic categories.

Educators are encouraged to prepare for the lesson by carefully reading over the Muslim American Heritage Celebration website. The main homework assignment worksheet, as well as the in-class session, are based around students exploring this very material. The broad content on the website also allows educators to adapt the core content to meet the particular needs of their classroom. For example, educators can emphasize the experience of enslaved African Muslims as part of a larger unit on colonial America.

The goal of the curriculum is to provide an engaging entry point for students to explore a topic they likely know little about. The content emphasizes human stories and fun facts, providing both vignettes and data points that students can retain long after the brief unit is completed. Educators are encouraged to highlight these dynamic elements and bring excitement to this unit, including reinforcing the multi-sensory aspects of the content (music, photographs, videos, and even cuisine tastes and smells). Muslim American heritage is full of vitality, and students should enjoy exploring that vitality through the unit's content.

### **PREPARATION:**

Read over the Muslim American Heritage Celebration website to help familiarize yourself with the core content. Also review the Glossary handout of essential Islamic terminology, as well as the supplemental handouts designed to accompany the classroom PowerPoint presentation.

The overall lesson plan is based around an opening discussion where students reveal their raw assumptions with no background information. These should be captured to review at the end of

the lesson. The next step is homework reading, quickly covering the broad range of Muslim American experiences, with a brief worksheet where students demonstrate general familiarity with the content.

The main in-class experience builds on that homework by weaving connections between 5 themes. The in-class experience can be based entirely around the PowerPoint presentation led by the teacher, featuring pictures and brief videos (embedded in the PowerPoint file). Alternatively, the teacher can break the class into five small groups, giving each group one of the supplemental handouts to explore. After 5 minutes of reviewing the handout, the teacher can present the PowerPoint file while pausing at the appropriate moment to invite each group up to present their supplemental material to the entire class.

The lesson ends with reflections on what has been learned, inviting students to share insights they gained from the material. Finally, there is a closing slide analysis where educators can share three key take-away themes. There is also a Glossary handout to help students retain knowledge of terminology introduced during the unit.

Note: The curriculum speaks about “people of Muslim heritage” – emphasizing that not all Muslim Americans define themselves religiously, similar to Jewish Americans, Catholic Americans, and many other groups. “Muslim heritage” refers to people who have parents or other recent ancestors who were Muslim, as well as people who converted to Islam and people who are actively engaged in Muslim religious/ethnic communities.

Be prepared to help students appreciate the wide range of Muslim American experiences and identities.

## **LESSON ACTIVITIES:**

**Introduction Preview:** Ask students a series of questions and write their answers down on the board, capturing their answers. This is a judgment-free exercise, designed to tease out levels of existing knowledge.

- What comes to your mind when you hear the word “Muslims”?
- Do you know anyone of Muslim heritage personally?
- When do you think Muslims first came to North America?
- What ethnic and racial background do Muslims come from?
- Where do you think the oldest Muslim cemetery in America is?
- Can you name any famous Americans who are of Muslim heritage?
- Can you think of anything that people of Muslim heritage have contributed to American society?

**Homework:** Send students to [MAHC website](#) or pass out the PDF packet

- Assignment: Students read over materials and then fill out worksheet
- Worksheet contains fill-in the blanks, a mapping exercise, and a brief reflective question

**Next Day In-Class Instruction:** Open the PowerPoint to the opening slide with five photos:

- Black & white photo of African Muslim (Ibn Sayyid) enslaved in the United States
- Ahmet Ertegun in his office at Atlantic Records
- President Dwight Eisenhower speaking at 1957 DC Mosque Inauguration
- Farouk El Baz with the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum moon rock exhibit
- Anousheh Ansari in her formal astronaut portrait

Note: The background photograph is the exterior of the DC Mosque, which anchors the PPT.

Ask students what they think might connect the diverse photos. Have a brief (2-3 minute) discussion. Then the teacher either runs through the PowerPoint or first (time permitting) breaks the students into 5 groups, one for each of thematic photos. These break-out groups are given a one-page handout that provides detailed information to help them prepare quick presentations when the class reconvenes as a group. The handouts are:

- “The Muslim Roots of the Blues” – An article excerpt providing information that can be used by students to present to the class about how religious chants of enslaved African Muslims helped shape blues music.
- “The Greatest Record Man of All Time” – A short biography of Atlantic Records founder Ahmet Ertegun, including quotes from Ertegun about how he felt connected to African-American music. Students can prepare a quick presentation about Ertegun’s life.
- President Eisenhower’s Speech at the 1957 Inauguration of the DC Mosque – Students can recite the speech in front of their classmates and analyze some of its key themes, including recognition the historic scientific inventions of Muslim scholars.
- “Farouk El-Baz: Bringing the Moon Down to Earth” – A biography of El-Baz plus excerpts from a 1976 article about how El-Baz conceived a Smithsonian Air & Space Museum special exhibit. Students can prepare a quick presentation about El-Baz’s life.
- “Anousheh Ansari: Space Pioneer & Ansari X-Prize Founder” – A brief biography of Ansari plus excerpts from her memoir and interviews relating to her life journey. Students can prepare a quick presentation about Ansari’s life.

Bring the five groups back and continue with the PowerPoint, asking each group to come up at the appropriate time to share a 2-3 minutes presentation on their break-out topic. Also make sure to pass out the Glossary handout with terms related to Muslim practice

**Wrap-Up Session:**

- Show the class the answers students gave in the initial discussion of the unit.
- Ask the class to reflect on what they have learned since then
- Ask the class to share examples of what information surprised them
- Ask class to analyze what they learned: what are take-aways?

### **Suggested Wrap-Up Analysis from Teacher:**

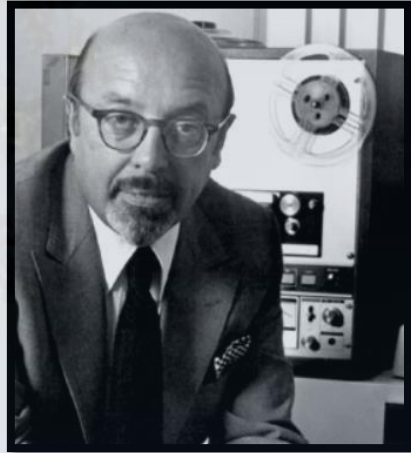
- Muslims have been part of the American story from the beginning – and American institutions have long recognized Muslim contributions to civilization.
- Muslims’ pursuit of the American Dream has enriched American society: Despite sometimes daunting challenges, Muslim Americans have seized on the opportunities of American to build better lives for themselves and make unique contributes to American society.
- Muslim Americans are incredibly diverse (in terms of when they came, where they came from, where they settled in America, and how they construct their Muslim identities) and transcend stereotypes and simplistic generalizations.

### **ACTIVITY SUPPORT MATERIALS:**

- Muslim American Heritage Celebration website content
- Homework worksheet
- PowerPoint for classroom activity
- Supplemental handouts for classroom activity

### **OPTIONAL LESSON EXTENSIONS TO GO DEEPER:**

- Have students reach *The New Yorker* story [“Citizen Kahn”](#) that profiles an Afghan immigrant to Wyoming in the heyday of the tamale trade.
- Watch the documentary [“Prince Among Slaves”](#) about the remarkable journey West African prince sold into slavery in the United States
- Watch the PBS American Masters series documentary [“Atlantic Records: The House that Ahmet Built”](#) about Ahmet Ertegun’s career.
- Explore a PowerPoint presentation on [The Muslim Gullahs of Coastal Georgia](#), which provides information on the cultural legacy of enslaved Africans.
- Explore the [“Islam at Mount Vernon” educational site](#), which examines the life enslaved African Muslim at the home of President Washington.
- Explore [1,001 Inventions](#), an educational portal featuring scientific and other innovations developed by Muslim scholars during “The Golden Age”
- Review the [“Muslim American Journeys”](#) project by MALA archived at the Library of Congress, featuring contemporary oral testimonies by Americans of Muslim heritage.



# Exploring Muslim American Heritage



# The Influence of Early Muslim Arrivals in America



Sources: [PBS NewsHour, Apr 23, 2019](#) and ["Islam in America"](#) documentary excerpt

**One of the great  
popularizers of jazz &  
blues music was a  
Muslim immigrant to  
America from Turkey...**





# Ahmet Ertegun: Atlantic Records & Rock Hall of Fame



Source: [TRT World](#)

# Ahmet Ertegun's Father & the D.C. National Mosque

Ahmet  
Ertegun

In 1944 Ahmet's father died suddenly while serving as Ambassador in Washington. At the time there was no local mosque to host his funeral. So the Turkish government spearheaded a plan among several embassies to build a national mosque in the US capital.

Ahmet's Father, the  
Turkish Ambassador to  
the USA, Munir Ertegun



# President Eisenhower Inaugurates DC Mosque in 1957

## Minaret in Washington

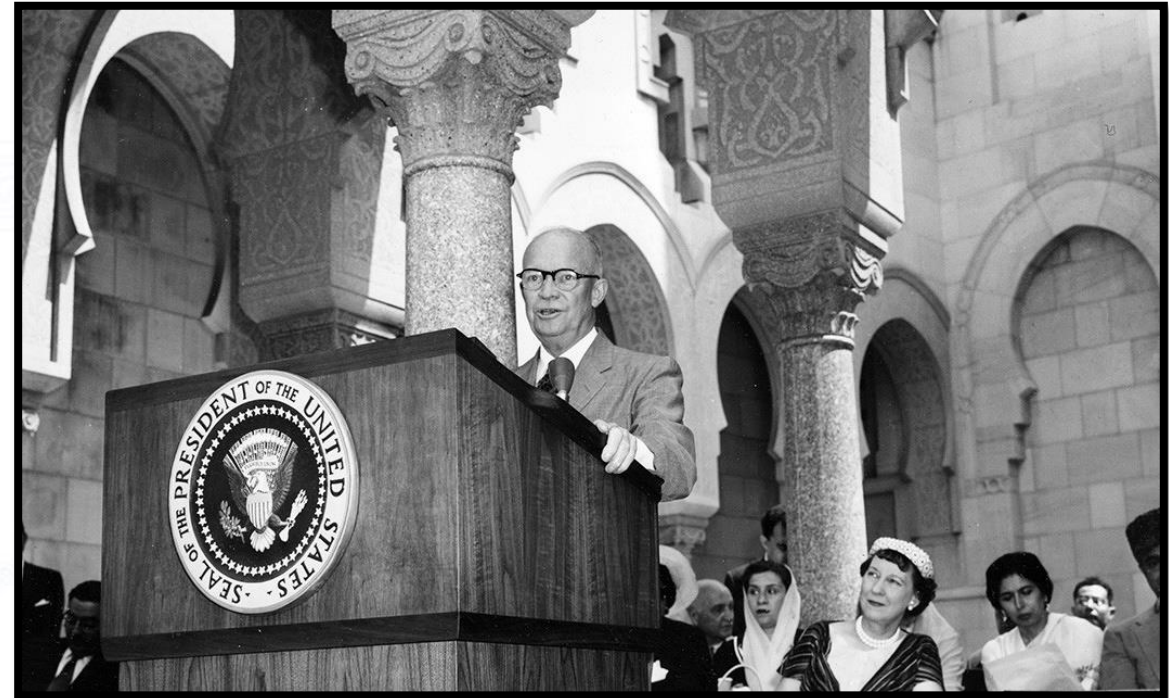
The newest mosque in the Western Hemisphere and one of the most magnificent in the world was dedicated last week in Washington, D.C., and the President of the U.S. took his shoes off for the occasion. There had been considerable nervousness over how President Eisenhower would observe the Moslem custom of removing shoes on entering a mosque. Grey cotton slippers had been prepared to slip over his shoes, but Ike decided to go all the way, shed his new black oxfords

before he put on the slippers; Mamie took off her white pumps and stood in her nylons. Then they stepped across the threshold on to a carpet sent to the Washington mosque by the Shah of Iran.

Above the visitors was a two-ton chandelier of solid bronze inlaid with nickel; around them were porcelain and plaster tiles of blue, green and gold in geometric designs. Verses from the Koran and the 99 formal Arabic titles of Allah gleamed in gold inscriptions on the walls and ceilings. Outside, the sun sparkled on the crescent that tops the minaret 160 ft. above Washington's stately Massachusetts Avenue. The \$1,250,000 mosque (built with the contributions of 15 Moslem nations) stands canted to the street in order to face Mecca.\* The world's only air-conditioned mosque, it is part of a new Islamic Center (two wings housing offices, a library and eventually a museum), will be the principal shrine for the 32,500 Moslems in the U.S. and Canada.



WASHINGTON'S MOSQUE  
Pointed to the great-circle route.



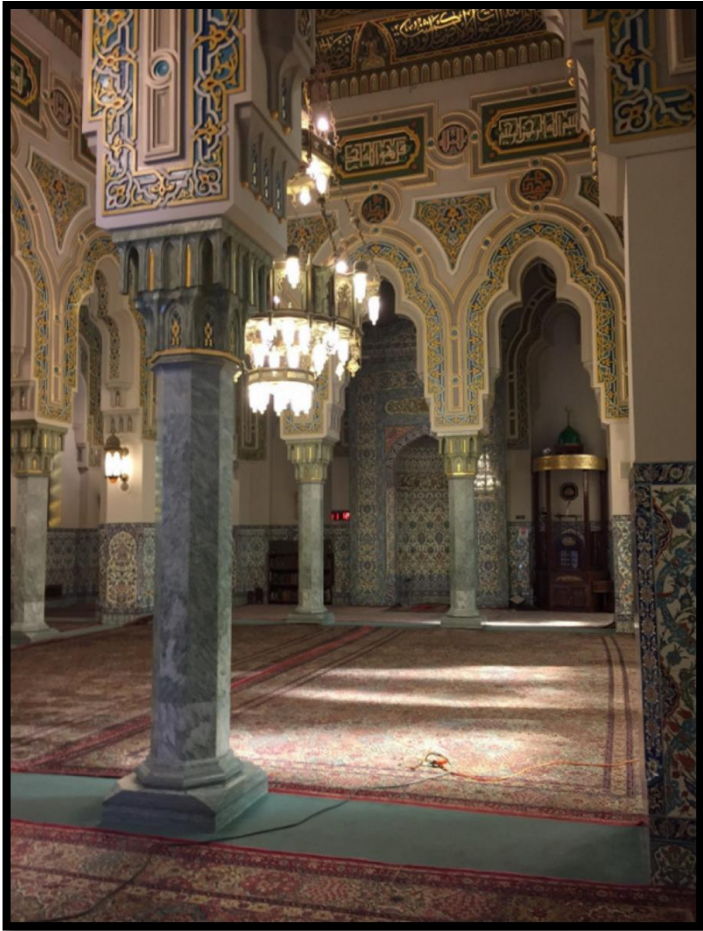
TIME Magazine's coverage of the mosque opening, July 8, 1957

# 1957 Newsreel of President Eisenhower's Visit



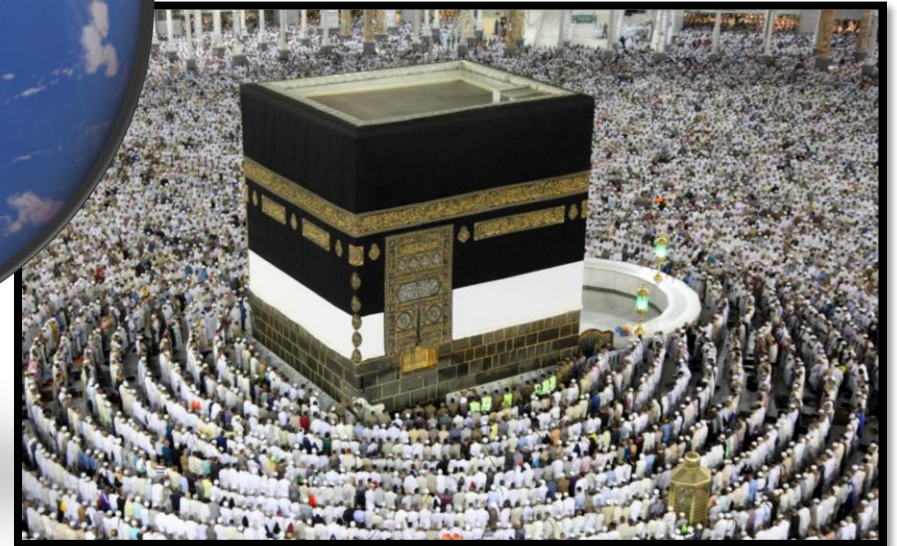
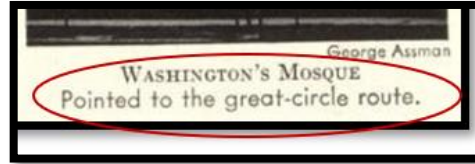
Source: [British Pathé Collection](#)

# D.C. Mosque Interior & Exterior



**DIRECTION:** Like Muslims around the world, worshippers in the DC mosque (right) pray facing towards the Ka'aba Shrine, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

The Ka'aba features a special cornerstone - the holy Black Stone (bottom) – that pilgrims touch when visiting.



# Pioneering NASA Moon Scientist Farouk El-Baz Inspired by His Pilgrimage to Mecca

## 'Please touch' at new museum

By William Hines  
Chicago Sun-Times

WASHINGTON — Up to now, the rule about the few moon rocks on public display has always been, "Look but don't touch." All the fussiness will be changed when the New National Air and Space Museum is opened at mid-year.

A feature of the museum will be a genuine moon rock from Project Apollo that visitors will be not only permitted but enjoy this out-of-this-world experience will get a little certificate attesting to the fact.

Bringing the moon down to earth this way was the idea of Farouk El-Baz, an Egyptian-born geologist who is now an American citizen. El-Baz is scientific director of the new museum, which is headed by Michael Collins, the astronaut on Apollo 11 who didn't land on the moon.

El-Baz traces the idea of a touchable moon rock back to his youth when he

made the Moslem pilgrimage to Mecca. One of the ceremonial duties of each pilgrim is to touch a black stone which tradition says was sent down from heaven by Allah.

A scientist as well as a follower of Islam, El-Baz gave the black stone as careful an examination as he could before a "fierce-looking Bedouin guard with a sword" shooed him along to keep the line moving.

The religious significant portion of the black stone in the Ka'aba, El-Baz said, are a few fragments of a basalt-like rock embedded in a different material. These fragments have withstood the touch of countless millions of hands over the last 13 centuries.

When he joined the Air and Space Museum and started thinking about exhibits, El-Baz asked himself, "Why not do this with a moon rock?" The idea was easier thought of than carried to realization.

Despite the fact that El-Baz was in on Project

Apollo from the beginning, he learned all its lunar-exploring astronauts in geology, and was close to the men at Houston who had the key to the moon-rock vaults, he had a hard time persuading NASA to turn over even a small sample.

Finally, however, El-Baz got all the necessary bureaucratic clearances, and a small chunk of lunar material — a few ounces out of the total Apollo treasure of 851 pounds — was turned over to him.

It is being embedded in lucite with one face exposed so sightseers can learn what a moon rock feels like. ("Like an earth rock," El-Baz admits.)

A hard, black, basaltic material similar to the sacred stone in the Ka'aba at Mecca, it should be unaffected by the brush of hands even after centuries have gone by, El-Baz says.

An ordinary uniformed government guard—not a Bedouin with a sword—will stand beside the moon rock when it is on public display.

The museum, a sprawl-

ing, three-block-long structure appropriately located across the street from NASA headquarters here, will bring together for the first time all the major US relics and mementos of the age of air and space. Included will be the Wright Brothers' first airplane, Charles A. Lindbergh's "Spirit of St. Louis," the Mercury capsule on which John Glenn, now a US senator, orbited the earth, and the "Columbia" spacecraft that took Collins to lunar orbit and back along with Neil Armstrong and "Euzz" Aldrin in 1969.

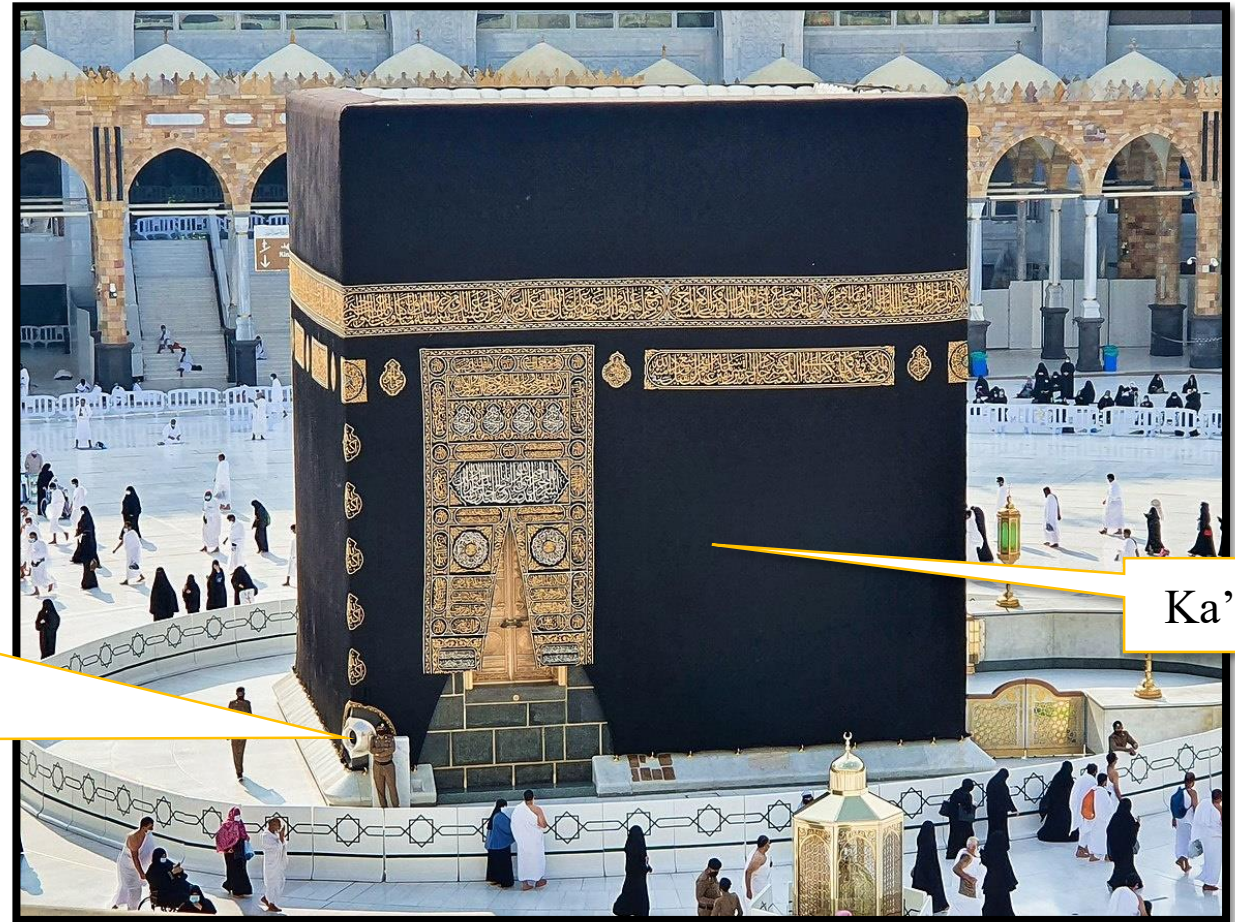
Its opening is scheduled to be triggered by a radio signal from the spacecraft Viking, now en route to Mars, from the surface of the planet on July 4. What if Viking doesn't make it?

"We won't be able to open the museum," El-Baz said with a grin. Then, admitting he was just having a little joke, the scientist said there will be backup means to open on schedule if Viking fizzles.



“El-Baz traces the idea of a touchable moon rock back to his youth when he made the Moslem pilgrimage to Mecca. One of the ceremonial duties of each pilgrim is to touch a black stone which tradition says was sent down from heaven by Allah.”

*Chicago-Sun Times, Jan 4, 1976*



Ka'aba



# El-Baz: Moon Landing & Touchable Museum Rocks



Source: [Missouri S&T](#) & [Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum](#)

# Celestial Objects like Moon Major Muslim Motifs



Crescent  
finial atop the  
DC mosque's  
minaret



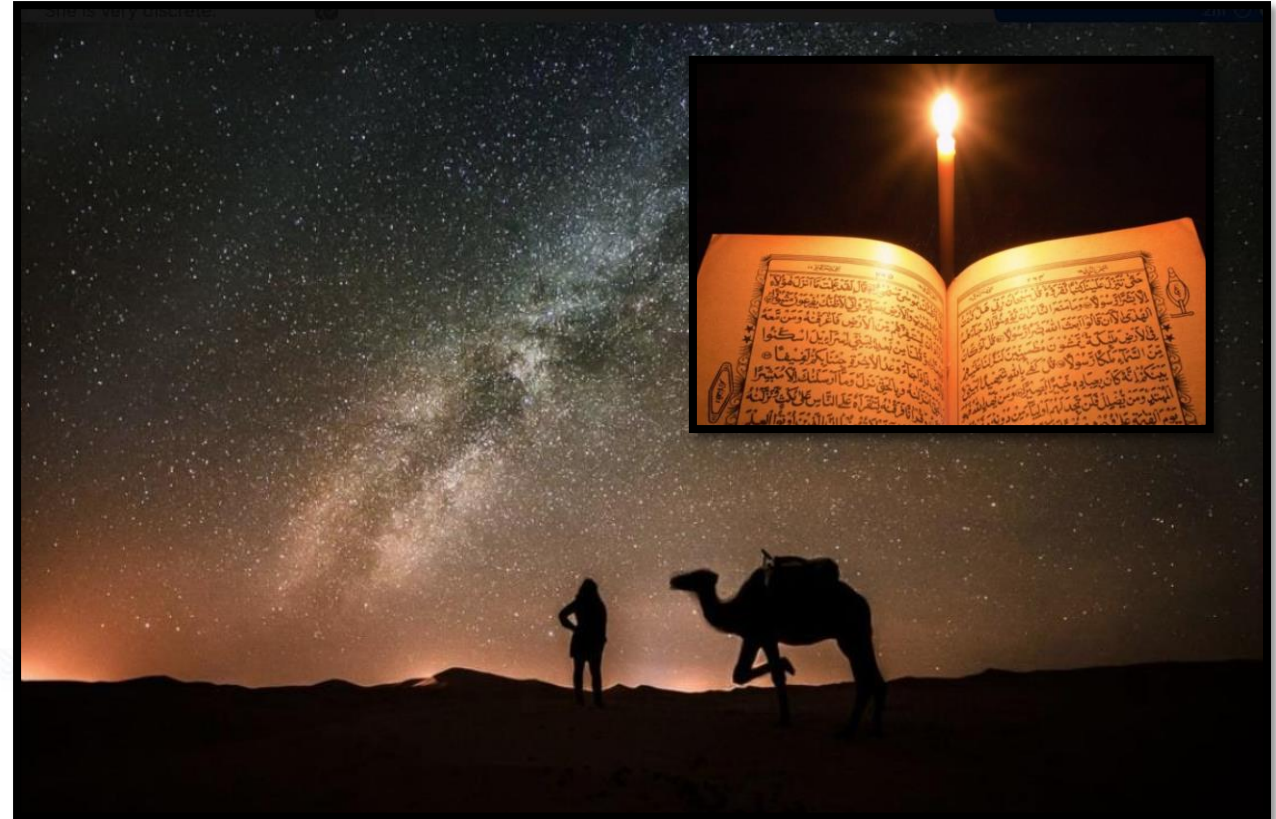
DC mosque dome  
tilework echoes  
night sky



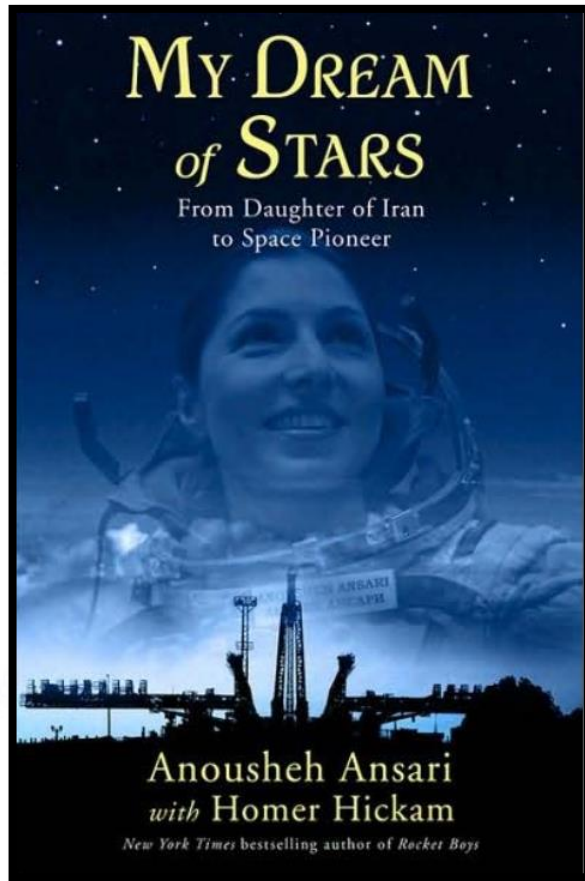
DC mosque chandelier  
evokes constellations

# The Qu'ran is Filled with Celestial Imagery

- Names of Qu'ranic chapters include: “The Moon,” “The Zodiac,” “The Pulsar,” “The Stars,” and “The Night”
- Night stars helped ancient travelers navigate through the wilderness, providing direction for a safe journey
- “[God] is the One who has set out for you the stars, that you may guide yourselves by them through the darkness of the land and of the sea. We have detailed the signs for people who know.” {*Quran 6:97*}



# The Stars Inspired a Muslim American Space Pioneer



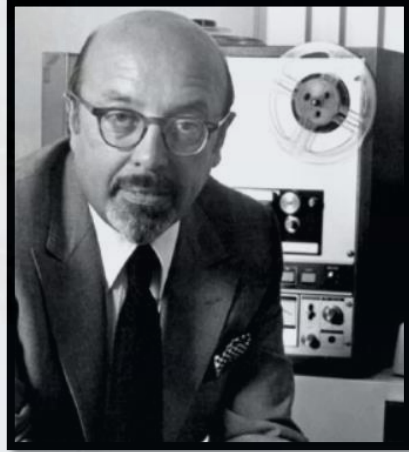
- Anousheh Ansari born in Iran, immigrated to America as teenager, always dreamed of going to space
- Started her own successful tech company and become a multi-millionaire
- In 2004, established the \$10 million Ansari X-Prize to spur private space exploration
- In 2006, became first private female astronaut – making her own personal pilgrimage to the stars



# “It Was Like Going to Mecca”

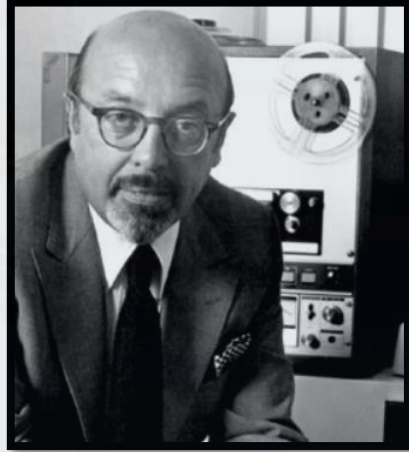


Source: [KCET-TV](#) & [NPR](#)



## Let's Recap Our Journey

- What interesting new things did you learn about Muslim Americans?
- Which examples surprised you or challenged your assumptions?
- What observations and insights do you draw from this unit?



- **Muslims have been part of the American story from the beginning.**
- **Muslims' pursuit of the American dream has enriched American society.**
- **Muslim Americans are incredibly diverse – transcending stereotypes or simplistic generalizations.**



# MUSLIM AMERICAN HERITAGE CELEBRATION

*“EXPLORING MUSLIM AMERICAN HERITAGE”*

## Glossary

**Allah:** a common Arabic name for God

**Islam:** the world’s second largest religion, founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by the prophet Muhammad

**Muhammad:** the founding prophet of Islam through whom the Qur’an was revealed (570-632)

**Qur’an:** Islam’s holy book, which in Muslim tradition was revealed by God via Muhammad

**Muslim:** a person who believes in the Islamic religion or is of Islamic cultural heritage

**Mecca:** Islam’s holiest city, located in Saudi Arabia, houses the *ka’bah* shrine

**Ka’aba:** cubic structure at the center of the Holy Mosque in Mecca towards which Muslims pray

**Hajj:** pilgrimage to Mecca, traditionally an obligation for Muslims to make at least once

**Black Stone:** a sacred stone in the *Ka’bah*, touched as a sign of respect during pilgrimage

**Mosque:** a house of prayer for Muslims

**Adhan:** the Muslim call to prayer made before each prayer service

**Muezzin:** the person who proclaims the call to prayer

**Minaret:** a mosque tower atop which the call to prayer is traditionally made



## “The Muslim Roots of the Blues”

*San Francisco Chronicle – August 15, 2004*

*Al Haj Umar Ibn Sayyid, enslaved in Senegal at age 37, was transported to South Carolina but soon fled his slave-owner to North Carolina. In 1831, he wrote a 16-page autobiography in Arabic, now archived in the Library of Congress. It is the only known existing American slave narrative written in Arabic. The Masjid Omar Ibn Sayyid on Southern Avenue in Fayetteville is named in his honor. The excerpted article below explores the impact of African Muslims like Sayyid on American music.*



...Sylviane Diouf knows her audience might be skeptical, so to demonstrate the connection between Islam and American blues music, she'll play two recordings: The Muslim call to prayer (the religious recitation that's heard from mosques around the world), and "Levee Camp Holler" an early type of blues song that first sprang up in the Mississippi Delta more than 100 years ago.

"Levee Camp Holler" is no ordinary song. It's the product of ex-slaves who worked moving earth all day in post-Civil War America. The version that Diouf uses in presentations has lyrics that, like the call to prayer, speak about a glorious God. But it's the song's melody and note changes that closely parallel one of Islam's best-known refrains. As in the call to prayer, "Levee Camp Holler" emphasizes words that seem to quiver and shake in the reciter's vocal chords. Dramatic changes in musical scales punctuate both "Levee Camp Holler" and the call to prayer. A nasal intonation is evident in both.

"I did a talk a few years ago at Harvard where I played those two things, and the room absolutely exploded in clapping, because (the connection) was obvious," says Diouf...

It's really there because of all the Muslim slaves from West Africa who were taken by force to the United States for three centuries, from the 1600s to the mid-1800s... Forced to do menial, back-breaking work on plantations, for example, they still managed, throughout their days, to voice a belief in the God of the Quran. These slaves' practices eventually evolved -- decades and decades later, parallel with different singing traditions from Africa -- into the shouts and hollers that begat blues music, historians believe...

Bailey lives on Georgia's Sapelo Island, where a small community of blacks can trace their ancestry to Bilali Mohammed, a Muslim slave who was born and raised in what is now the country of Guinea... Churches there face east. In fact, as a child, Bailey learned to say her prayers facing east -- the same direction that her great-great-great-great-grandfather faced when he prayed toward Mecca.

Although Bilali's descendents adopted Christianity, they incorporated Muslim traditions that are still evident today. The name Bailey, in fact, is a reworking of the name Bilali, which became a popular Muslim name in Africa because one of Islam's first converts -- and the religion's first muezzin -- was a former Abyssinian slave named Bilal. One historian believes that abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who changed his name from Frederick Bailey, may have had Muslim roots.

## Ahmet Ertegun: “The Greatest Record Man of All Time”<sup>1</sup>

The great-grandson of a Sufi sheikh (İbrahim Edhem Efendi) from Turkey, Ertegun channeled his innate musical instinct into a whirlwind of songwriting and recording. He transformed the careers of Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Led Zeppelin, AC/DC, and many more.



Ertegun came to the US as a teenager while his father served as Turkey’s Ambassador. While living in Washington in the 1930s and 1940s, Ertegun became fascinated by the local jazz scene. To challenge formal racial segregation in Washington at the time, he and his brother Nesuhi organized the first integrated jazz concert in D.C. – at the local Jewish Community Center – and also hosted integrated concerts at the Turkish Ambassador’s residence.

After his father died suddenly in 1944, Ertegun decided to stay in the US. With friends Herb and Mariam Abramson, he founded Atlantic Records. The rest is musical history, as he shepherded the careers of dozens of legendary musicians. He served as the founding Chairman of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, whose main exhibition hall is named after Ertegun. In 1987, he was himself inducted into rock’n’roll Hall of Fame, with a tribute led by Mick Jagger. The US Library of Congress honored Ertegun as a Living Legend in 2000. Following Ertegun’s death, Led Zeppelin made their only reunion in 30 years to headline the Ahmet Ertegun Tribute Concert.

"As I grew up, I began to discover a little bit about the situation of black people in America and experienced an immediate empathy with the victims of such senseless discrimination. Because although the Turks were never slaves, they were regarded as enemies within Europe because of their Muslim beliefs."

On Sunday afternoons, the brothers turned the Turkish Embassy into an open house where visiting jazz musicians would jam together in a huge parlor. According to Ahmet, his father soon began receiving letters from outraged Southern senators, saying, "It has been brought to my attention, sir, that a person of color was seen entering your house by the front door. I have to inform you that in our country, this is not a practice to be encouraged." Mehmet responded by writing, "In my home, friends enter by the front door - however, we can arrange for you to enter from the back..."

Speaking to Slate Magazine about how he would like his legacy to be remembered, Ertegun said, "I'd be happy if people said that I did a little bit to raise the dignity and recognition of the greatness of African American music."

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Greenfield, *The Life and Times of Ahmet Ertegun*

## President Eisenhower's at the D.C. Islamic Center Dedication

*On June 28, 1957, President Dwight Eisenhower dedicated the Islamic Center of Washington, perhaps the first time an American president spoke at a mosque. In his remarks (below), Eisenhower underscored America's tradition of religious liberty and saluted the historic contributions of Muslim innovators.*



It is a privilege to take part in this ceremony of dedication. Meeting with you now, in front of one of the newest and most beautiful buildings in Washington, it is fitting that we rededicate ourselves to the peaceful progress of all men under one God.

And I should like to assure you, my Islamic friends, that under the American Constitution, under American tradition, and in American hearts, this center, this place of worship, is just as welcome as could be a similar edifice of any other religion. Indeed, America would fight with her whole strength for your right to have here your own church and worship according to your own conscience. This concept is indeed a part of America, and without that concept we would be something else than what we are.



The countries which have sponsored and built this Islamic Center have for centuries contributed to the building of civilization. With their traditions of learning and rich culture, the countries of Islam have added much to the advancement of mankind. Inspired by a sense of brotherhood, common to our innermost beliefs, we can here together reaffirm our determination to secure the foundation of a just and lasting peace...

Civilization owes to the Islamic world some of its most important tools and achievements. From fundamental discoveries in medicine to the highest planes of astronomy, the Muslim genius has added much to the culture of all peoples. That genius has been a wellspring of science, commerce and the arts, and has provided for all of us many lessons in courage and in hospitality.

This fruitful relationship between peoples, going far back into history, becomes more important each year. Today, thousands of Americans, both private individuals and governmental officials, live and work — and grow in understanding — among the peoples of Islam.

At the same time, in our country, many from the Muslim lands — students, businessmen and representatives of states — are enjoying the benefits of experience among the people of this country. From these many personal contacts, here and abroad, I firmly believe that there will be a broader understanding and a deeper respect for the worth of all men; and a stronger resolution to work together for the good of mankind.

As I stand beneath these graceful arches, surrounded on every side by friends from far and near, I am convinced that our common goals are both right and promising. Faithful to the demands of justice and of brotherhood, each working according to the lights of his own conscience, our world must advance along the paths of peace.

## Farouk El-Baz: Bringing the Moon Down to Earth

*When NASA sent the Apollo 11 mission to land a man on the moon for the first time, the space agency turned to Farouk El-Baz to identify the right landing spot. Because of his talent for explaining advanced scientific concepts, El-Baz was also often in charge of briefing the media during lunar missions.*

*A native of Egypt, El-Baz came to the US for graduate school to study geology. El-Baz received NASA's Apollo Achievement Award; the Geological Society of America has established an annual prize Farouk El-Baz Award for Desert Research; and astronomers have named an asteroid in his honor. Perhaps most importantly, Star Trek: Next Generation named one of its shuttle craft "El-Baz" in homage to the extra-terrestrial pioneer.*



*In the excerpted article below from 1976, El-Baz explains how he developed a new kind of exhibit at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.<sup>2</sup>*

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A feature of the museum will be a genuine moon rock from Project Apollo that visitors will be not only permitted but enjoy this out-of-this-world experience will get a little certificate attesting to the fact. Bringing the moon down to earth this way was the idea of Farouk El-Baz, an Egyptian-born geologist who is now an American citizen. El-Baz is scientific director of the new museum...

El-Baz traces the idea of a touchable moon rock back to his youth when he made the Moslem pilgrimage to Mecca. One of the ceremonial duties of each pilgrim is to touch a black stone which tradition says was sent down from ' heaven by Allah. A scientist as well as a follower of Islam, El-Baz gave the black stone as careful an examination as he could before a "fierce-looking Bedouin guard with a sword" shooed him along to keep the line moving.

The religious significant portion of the black stone in the Ka'aba, El-Baz said, are a few fragments of a basalt-like rock embedded in a different material. These fragments have withstood the touch of countless millions of hands over the last 13 centuries. When he joined the Air and Space Museum and started thinking about exhibits, El-Baz asked himself, "Why not do this with a moon rock?"

...El-Baz got all the necessary bureaucratic clearances, and a small chunk of lunar material — a few ounces out of the total Apollo treasure of 851 pounds — was turned over to him. It is being embedded in lucite with one face exposed so sightseers can learn what a moon rock feels like. ("Like an earth rock," El-Baz admits.) A hard, black, basaltic material similar to the sacred stone in the Ka'Abas at Mecca, it should be unaffected by the brush of hands even after centuries have gone by, El-Baz says. An ordinary uniformed government guard—not a Bedouin with a sword—will stand beside the moon rock when it is on public display.

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<sup>2</sup>"Please Touch" *At New Museum*, Chicago Sun Times, January 4, 1976

## Anousheh Ansari: Space Pioneer & Ansari X-Prize Founder

*In 2006, Anousheh Ansari lifted off in a rocket ship to the International Space Station, becoming the first female private astronaut in history. The National Space Society awarded her its “Space Pioneer Award,” and she received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor for her philanthropic work.*

*Ansari immigrated to the US from Iran as a teenager. In 1993, she launched a successful technology company, a move that ultimately made her worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Business success enabled Ansari to fund her space mission as well as the \$10 million Ansari X-Prize award, which inspired the first non-governmental project to launch a reusable spacecraft.*



*Her memoir “My Dreams of Stars: From Daughter of Iran to Space Pioneer” recounts her unique journey from refugee to entrepreneur to astronaut. Below are brief excerpts from the book and several interviews.*



By now, Iran was ruled by an Islamic republic that produced a flurry of restrictive laws... One requirement was we had to wear the hijab, or scarf, that covered our hair. I found the hijab incredibly uncomfortable. It was hot and itchy, and was forever slipping out of place...

As graduation from high school neared, I started to become more and more concerned about my future. My love for the stars had led me to decide that I wanted to be an astrophysicist. But how would that be possible? The new Iran did not encourage higher education for women. My chance for academic freedom came unexpectedly. My father called me to his side. “We are going to go to America,” he said...

[En route to America in Germany], we realized we were unwelcome visitors in a country filled with racial tension. One time, when we were on a bus, a group of German teenagers surrounded a young Turkish mother with her child in a stroller and began badgering her. At the next stop they picked up the stroller with the baby inside and took it off the bus, then pushed the mother out behind it. The bus driver never said a word, and when the bus began moving again, the teens laughed and looked around for someone else to harass. [My sister] and I sank into our seats. Just as in Iran, I tried to avoid eye contact with these young bullies...

I always start my story by telling everyone that I was born in Iran and show the map of Iran with my place of birth, Mashhad. My Iranian root is a big part of who I am the same way that my life in America has shaped my life.

I have always been a spiritual person and my spiritual beliefs were strengthened during my trip to Space. When you see the earth from space and understand how small and fragile it is compared to the dark universe that surrounds it, it gives you a new perspective on life and how small and insignificant we are and how silly it is to fight over things that are but a speck of dust in the grand scheme of things. I also brought a copy of Holy Quran with myself to the space station... I also carried prayers given to me by my parents and friends.



# MUSLIM AMERICAN HERITAGE CELEBRATION

*“EXPLORING MUSLIM AMERICAN HERITAGE”*

## Glossary

**Allah:** a common Arabic name for God

**Islam:** the world’s second largest religion, founded in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by the prophet Muhammad

**Muhammad:** the founding prophet of Islam through whom the Qur’an was revealed (570-632)

**Qur’an:** Islam’s holy book, which in Muslim tradition was revealed by God via Muhammad

**Muslim:** a person who believes in the Islamic religion or is of Islamic cultural heritage

**Mecca:** Islam’s holiest city, located in Saudi Arabia, houses the *ka’bah* shrine

**Ka’aba:** cubic structure at the center of the Holy Mosque in Mecca towards which Muslims pray

**Hajj:** pilgrimage to Mecca, traditionally an obligation for Muslims to make at least once

**Black Stone:** a sacred stone in the *Ka’bah*, touched as a sign of respect during pilgrimage

**Mosque:** a house of prayer for Muslims

**Adhan:** the Muslim call to prayer made before each prayer service

**Muezzin:** the person who proclaims the call to prayer

**Minaret:** a mosque tower atop which the call to prayer is traditionally made



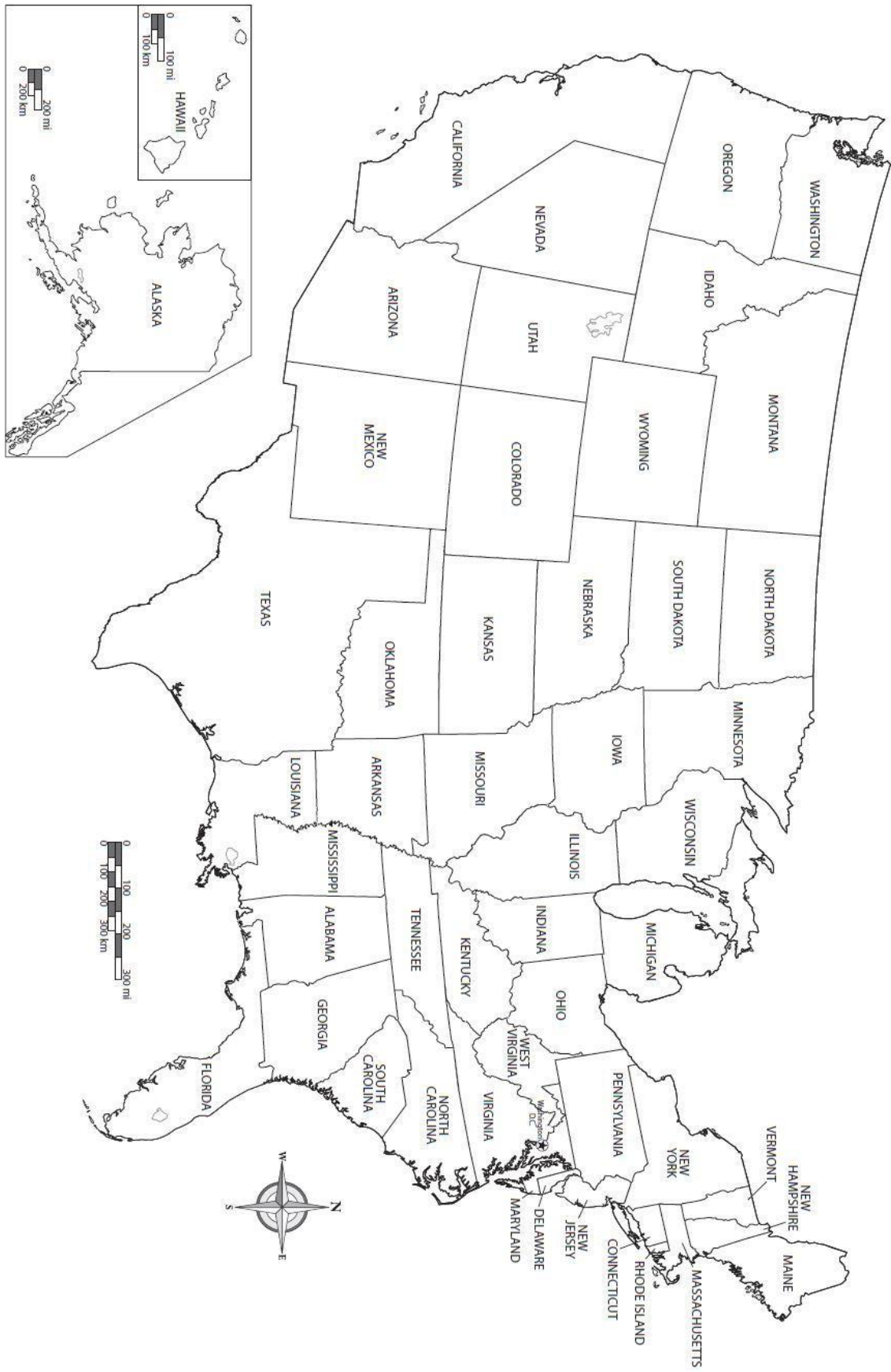
## **Homework Sheet for “Exploring Muslim American Heritage”**

**STUDENT NAME:**

**DATE:**

**Mark the corresponding sites in the following map**

1. Ballet legend Robert Joffrey was born in this state in 1930
2. Named after an Algerian leader, the city of Elkader is located in this state.
3. Albanian immigrants recruited by Pepperell Mills established a mosque in this state in 1915.
4. Ibn Ibrahima Sori, who met President John Quincy Adams, was enslaved in this state.
5. Ahmet Ertegun founded the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in this state in 1983.
6. The Lithuanian Tatars established a mosque in this state in 1907.
7. Hoda Kotb was born in this state to Egyptian parents in 1964.
8. Kareem Abdul Jabbar’s statue was unveiled outside the Staples Center in this city in 2012.
9. Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in this state in 1925.
10. The Bosnian Muslim immigrants established the Benevolent Society in this state in 1906.
11. Legendary boxer Muhammad Ali was born in this state in 1942.
12. In 1929 Lebanese immigrants built a mosque on a prairie in this state.
13. Yarrow Mamout has his portrait featured in a museum in this state.





**Fill in the blank:**

1. A depiction of \_\_\_\_\_ holding the Quran appears in “the great lawgivers of history” marble frieze in the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ founded the Atlantic Records with the help of his friend Herb Abramson in 1947.
3. \_\_\_\_\_, known as “the father of tubular designs”, invented the groundbreaking engineering technique for building skyscrapers.
4. “Some Memoirs of the life of Job” gives an account of the life of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. After converting to Islam, Malcolm X, made a pilgrimage to \_\_\_\_\_ in 1964.
6. Living in Bladen County, North Carolina, \_\_\_\_\_ wrote the only known American slave autobiography in Arabic.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is likely the first work of Islamic jurisprudence written in the U.S.
8. Farouk el-Baz, Apollo mission team member, came to the US to study \_\_\_\_\_.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ was the first foreign country to recognize the US in 1777.
10. Yarrow Mamout, after becoming free, prayed in the direction of Mecca from the garden of his home in \_\_\_\_\_.

**Briefly describe a Muslim American Heritage fact or story you found interesting, and why:**

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