

THE ROLE OF MUSLIMS IN SOCIAL LIFE OF AMERICA IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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Annotation:

This article offers an in-depth analysis of the contributions and impact of Muslims on the social life of America during the 20th century. It delves into the multifaceted roles undertaken by Muslim individuals and communities, spanning areas such as civil activism, religious expression, community development, and the interplay between faith and identity within the American context. Through historical analysis and cultural insights, the article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the diverse ways in which Muslims have shaped and influenced American social life.

Key words: Muslims, America, 20th century, social life, Islam, religion, community development, faith, identity, cultural Impact, diversity, organizations

The 20th century in America bore witness to profound shifts in social, cultural, and religious landscapes, fostering a mosaic of diversity that transformed the nation's fabric. Among the multifaceted tapestry of communities, the Muslim population emerged as a significant and dynamic force, contributing substantially to the nation's social tapestry. The role of Muslims during this period was pivotal, shaping and influencing various spheres of American life in ways that reflect their values, struggles, and contributions. This article aims to delve into the multifaceted involvement and impact of Muslims in the social sphere of America during the latter half of the 20th century.

From the Civil Rights Movement to the shaping of urban landscapes, from academia to the arts, Muslims in America have left an indelible imprint, often navigating challenges while carving out spaces of influence and belonging. Their journey is one marked by resilience, adaptation, and the pursuit of both individual and collective aspirations within a diverse, pluralistic society.

From the establishment of mosques and educational institutions to the endeavors of prominent Muslim leaders, intellectuals, and activists, this exploration aims to shed light on the rich tapestry of Muslim engagement in shaping the social ethos of

America. Moreover, it aims to underscore the significance of understanding the contributions and challenges faced by Muslims as integral components of the American social fabric.

Through an examination of historical milestones, cultural nuances, and societal evolution, this article aims to offer a nuanced portrayal of the multifaceted roles played by Muslims, thus fostering a deeper comprehension of their impact on the social life of America in the latter half of the 20th century.

In the early twentieth century, the most prominent Muslim figure in North America, including the United States, was Alexander Russell Webb, a prominent figure who first converted to Islam among the native Americans. He was an editor at one of the local newspapers before converting to Islam, and later served as U.S. consul in the Philippines from 1887 onwards. He later studied the religions of the peoples of the East and converted to Islam under the influence of Indian Muslims. In 1892, Alexander Russell Webb resigned from the consulate and went to India, where he gave lectures on Islam, the Way of Preference, and Islamic philosophy in four cities of the country. Then go back to America.

He founded the Eastern Publishing House, which publishes a number of books on Islamic culture in America. It had a mosque on Broadway in New York, which was demolished before his death in 1915, but according to Abdulsattar Ghazali's personal website, the first mosque in the United States was built in 1915 by Albanian Muslims in Biddeford, Maine, where a Muslim cemetery has survived [1]. The construction of mosques increased significantly in the 1920s and 1930s, and in 1952 there were more than 20 mosques in the United States, according to Amadou-Muhtar M'Bou's Islam and Muslims in North America [2,109].

By the middle of the twentieth century, there were several Islamic groups in the United States. The most prominent of these are traditional Sufi, Ahmadiyya, and a number of smaller organizations of Afro-American Muslims whose leaders include Sheikh David, Sufi Abdul Hamid, Nobel Drew Ali (real name Timothy Drew), Elijah Muhammad, and several other leaders. Nobel Drew Ali founded the Moorish Science Temple of America in 1913 and began writing various 'sacred' texts based on his narrow and shallow Islamic knowledge, which promoted African-American nationalism among Muslims.

Among the organizations mentioned above, the 'Nation of Islam' (NOI) is significantly different from the others. The Nation of Islam was founded in 1930 by Wallace Fard Muhammad, inspired by Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple of America, whose main goal was to ensure and protect the rights and freedoms of



Afro-American Muslims. It was later revealed that Fard had instilled nationalist and separatist ideas in the members of the organization. In 1934, Elijah Muhammad became the leader of the Nation of Islam and consecrated Wallace Fard Muhammad. The consecration of Wallace Fard Muhammad was later accepted by the public as a deification. Sadly, Fard was later declared a 'prophet' in defiance of the Sharia.

In 1975, the Nation of Islam was declared a traditional Sunni organization by Warith Deen Muhammad. Subsequently, Silis Muhammad developed the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and later, Luis Farrakhan revived Fard's theoretical views. At present, the influence of this organization on African-American society is significantly great.

Another major organization after the Nation of Islam is the American Society of Muslims (ASM), better known as African-American association of Muslims, which is a follower of the Nation of Islam. Members of the American Society of Muslims accepted Warith Deen Muhammad as their leader. The group has largely promoted the Nation of Islam as a separatist group. While it is not known how many Americans were attracted to the American Muslim community, most of the organization's supporters were African Americans.

Another major Islamic organization is considered to be the Islamic Society of North America. The Society is an association of immigrant Muslim organizations and the main organization of representatives of Islam in North America. According to the organization's official website, '... the community is predominantly consists of immigrants, with more members than members of the American Muslim Community.' Most mosques in the United States are accepted by the Islamic Society of North America as its affiliates. The annual meeting of the Society is the largest gathering of Muslims in the United States [4].

In addition to the organizations mentioned above, there are a number of other large organizations that also serve to protect the interests, rights and freedoms of a particular segment of society.

After the events of September 11, 2001, significant changes took place in the lives of Muslims in the Islamic world, as well as in the United States. According to Tolerance.org, '... after the events of September 11, 2001, a number of Muslims living in the United States were periodically harassed and attacked by members of other populations.' [5]

After the September events, many Americans realized how many Muslims there were among them, and at that time there was a growing interest among non-Muslims in gaining an understanding of Islam and its essence. Among the people of the



United States, selling Islamic books has become the most lucrative business. In the following weeks, the Quran was listed as the best-selling book in American bookstores.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attack, the U.S. president spoke out and asked the people not to attack and oppress Muslims because of the prejudice of Americans against the Muslim population. However, pressure and attacks were already taking place.

The pressure from the Americans was two-sided. On the one hand, their attitude was directed at the Arabs, on the other hand, there were attacks on Muslims or ethnic groups similar to Muslims, in neighborhoods inhabited by Muslims on a regular basis for a certain period of time. As an example of this, in 2006 a woman (wearing a headscarf) who was taking her child to school in California was shot dead by unknown individuals, Muslim leaders in the United States say the incident was religious in nature [6]. Russia's Izvestia newspaper reported on September 1, 2002, that despite statements by American and several Western European politicians that Islam and terrorism were incompatible, '... a number of Christian people began slandering Islam after 9/11.'. Priest Franklin Graham, who called Islam, one of the world's largest and most ancient religions, a 'religion of immorality', has become an evil and disgusting figure for millions of American Muslims, and he has been hated by the Muslim population [6].

It is important to note that the attack on Islam and Muslims has only increased interest in Islam among the non-Muslim population of the United States. As mentioned above, at that time the demand for Islamic books, especially the Holy Qur'an, increased dramatically, and the sale of Islamic books became one of the most profitable businesses. This process went on decades, the number of visitors to American Islamic sites is increased day by day, and the number of converts to Islam among the population is also escalated.

As the number of converts to Islam increases, it is not clear how many Muslims currently live in the United States. The number of Muslims living in America has varied in different sources and it has been constantly changing. For example, if a source says around 3 million, the number of Muslims will reach about 15 million, according to the American Supreme Islamic Council. According to David Barrett, a leading expert on religious statistics in the United States, the number of Muslims in the United States exceeded 10,000 in 1900, and by 1970 it had risen to 800,000 (200,000 African Americans), and in 2000 to 4.1 million (200,000 African Americans). . The largest survey conducted in 1990 by New York University

scientists Barry Cosmin and Seymour Lachman found that Muslims made up 0.03 percent of the U.S. population [7].

It is also clear from the above old data that the Islamic society in America is a rapidly growing segment of the population. The following factors can contribute to the rapid development of Islam in this country:

- 1) The influx of large numbers of Muslim immigrants into the United States;
- 2) Peoples who have always believed in Islam are eager to have many children as possible, and the number of children in each family is higher than in non-Muslim families;
- 3) The sharp increase in the interest of the majority of the American population in the study of Islam after 9/11.

It should be noted that the influx of Muslim immigrants has slightly decreased after the 9/11 attacks, but the number of Muslims has not stopped due to the intensification of the process of checking the documents required for entry and the residence in the United States.

The above-mentioned circumstances did not leave the US government officials indifferent either. Alex Aleksiev, a Pentagon and CIA national security adviser and a senior fellow at the Center for Political Security, said in a speech at a seminar in Moscow in 2003 that he was concerned about the conversion of the U.S. military to Islam, which negatively affected U.S. foreign policy and military capabilities, because more than three thousand American soldiers converted to Islam during the wars in the Persian Gulf. As a way out of the situation, Aleksiev said that active measures should be taken against the wide spread of Islam [8].

The fact that the majority of Muslims living in America are completely opposed to vices such as international terrorism and religious extremism is reflected in surveys conducted by various organizations. As an example, according to a survey by the U.S. Pew Research Center, 53 percent of American Muslims say their lifestyles have become significantly more difficult since the 'September events'. When asked to cite the reasons for the above attitudes, more than ten percent of them answered such as racial discrimination (19%), terrorism (15%), society's lack of understanding of Islam (13%), and lifestyle (12%). 76% of respondents said they were worried about the spread of Islamic extremism around the world and 61% in the United States [9]. Surveys show that a large proportion of American Muslims have no propensity for terrorism or religious extremism, and many of them have also stressed how serious a sin it is to kill innocent people in Islam.



In conclusion, it should be noted that religious diversity is very rare in the countries of the world, as in the United States. The idea that the buds of Islam in North America were started by Portuguese Muslims who traveled in the 12th century, but that they did not settle in North America, found historical evidence that the advent of Islam in America coincided with the mid-16th century. The African Muslim population, which enslaved in the New World, played a major role in the spread of Islam in America. Among today's African Americans, more than half of the indigenous population who believe in Islam are their descendants.

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