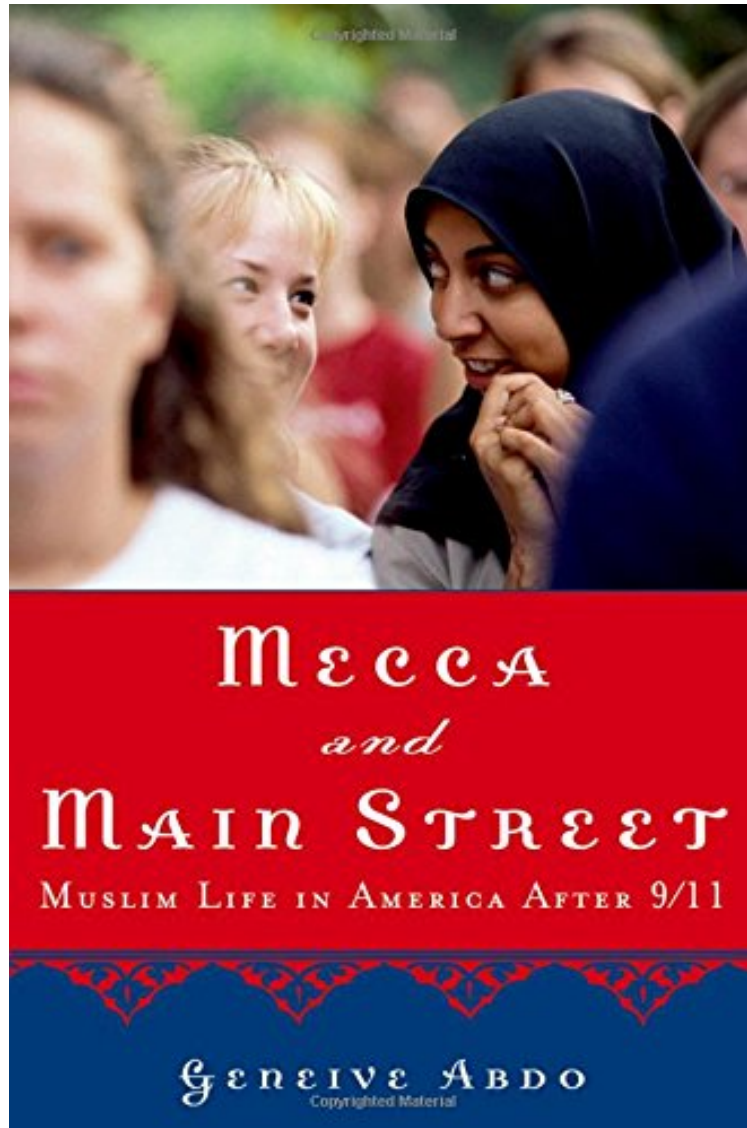


[FREE] Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America after 9/11

Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America after 9/11

Geneive Abdo

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Geneive Abdo : Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America after 9/11 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America after 9/11:

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. She deserves lots of credit By Lostplanet It is seldom seen that a non-muslim has to say anything positive about muslims, specially in the Unites States. Lot of credit goes to Ms. Abdo for her fair and balanced view of Muslim life in America. Americans really need to open up their hearts and minds about muslims and stop judging through a tainted glass of hate and right wing brain washing. Don't judge the whole muslim

"umma" due to the actions of 0.000001 % fanatics who think they are doing it in the name of religion. The only complaint I have is that she didn't discuss much about Muslims in America from the Indo-Pak sub continent, as they make up a substantial number in this country. 11 of 15 people found the following review helpful. The best insider to Islam By Chris Carl 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. To the other majority of journalist, because it lacks the sensationalism of the extremist Islam that they want to create for their audience, does not cover this. But I do my best to inform Americans of this, especially our military. My military friends tell me how their friends in intelligence are being more aware of who the good guys and bad guys in Islam are. They know the names and ideas of these groups in a more sophisticated fashion and not just looking at the old method of stereotypical long bearded man and scarf lady which basically has no foundation. I think Geneive's book somewhat paints this internal struggle at the end of the book. Also a side note: It's important to mention that these groups that are intolerant and distasteful have only been around for 50-100 years. McCarthy-like journalists try to make it seem as if they have been around throughout Islamic history. A good analysis of this topic is "Islam Fundamentalism and the Betrayal of Tradition" by Joseph Lombard, a book that I have freely given to professors and soldiers alike. Now the other point I love about this book is the hopes, dreams, and fears of the Muslims living in America and how they are fully American and should be shown to Americans everywhere. There are stories about women rebelling against oppressive un-Islamic customs of their cultures that is both heart warming for Americans and Muslims alike. There are also stories of heroic Muslims trying to show the loving side of Islam: what Muslims cherish despite the efforts of extremist and over-zealous "patriotic Americans" to try and keep them silenced. Another part I like is the internal woman's movements and how westerners improperly try to portray it and what the reality really is for Muslims. Geneive is not telling Muslims how they feel but conveying it. I could go on and on about the virtues of this book but I do not want to ruin it for everyone. I am sure there are Muslims that might not like it because they suspect every non-Muslim with bad intentions and I am sure there are Americans who won't like this book because it doesn't buy into their idea of how Islam should be. About the Muslim beliefs and practices, she does a good job showing the perspective of what Islam has been for 1400 years and how the majority of Muslims view it world wide rather than just how the majority of Muslims view it in America. Some Muslims in America make the religion a free for all interpretation because that's what was first conveyed to them. This is incorrect as there are legitimate scholarly principles to each discipline of learning that once you master, you might be authorized to teach. That being said, one mistake I found in the book was that Geneive portrays Sunni Islam without hierarchy. There is a hierarchy in Islam but it is through knowledge not power. The most knowledgeable and pious a person is his opinion is taken as more of an authority on an Islamic discipline than the lesser. Without structure and hierarchy, religion can be in the hands of the ignorant that can lead to the extreme zealotry or the extreme liberal who waters down a religion until it becomes meaningless. This mistake I forgive because most Muslims I come across aren't even aware of this either. Overall this is a good and authoritative book for any one wanting to learn about their Muslim neighbor. I myself and many others who would like to convey that such a topic couldn't have had a better job done on it. -Chris 6 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Some good ideas By Agent Asiah As an American Muslim myself, I was looking forward to Abdo's work. I was wary of reading a book on Islam by a non-muslim journalist. Thankfully, I was pleasantly surprised with Abdo's approach of Islam and Muslims in general. She doesn't take the opinion that the religion needs to be modernized and secularized; she makes it known early on that she doesn't feel that being more western makes for a "good" Islam (as opposed to a "bad" eastern/traditional Islam). It seems her years in the Middle East, and perhaps her own experience as an Arab minority in the US have given her enough experience to write with a sensitivity that most Muslims will appreciate, especially after such books as Irshad Manji's Trouble with Islam (which coincidentally Abdo mentions unfavorably in her own work). So, besides the point that I was pleased that she kept herself politically correct and culturally aware, I was not too impressed with the book. Its sloppy editing and slapdash writing lead to an end product which feels like it was published a little too early in

order to capitalize on the 5th anniversary of 9/11 (a feat which the inside cover of the book jacket mentions). This is unfortunate because it seems Abdo has been researching this book for many years, and it could have been a lot better with a bit more work. In Mecca she doesn't seem to focus on the main topic, but strays (sometimes interestingly) into the foundations of Islam, particular character histories, and even her own journalistic past in the Middle East. She also repeats facts and stories over and over again, to the point that it feels she is trying to take up space, and simply produce enough material to get the book published. All of this is tragic to me, because Abdo presents some fresh insights into the American Muslim experience. I have read many other secular books on Islam, hoping to find something to recommend to friends and those interested to know about my religion and my lifestyle. Abdo's book hits some things right on the head. I would suggest it for those who already know a little bit about Islam, or maybe a Muslim or two, and are looking for a different perspective than that presented on Fox News. It is a worthwhile read if you can get past some of the structural errors.

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.

"There is no better time and no better book to understand the American Muslim experience today than *Mecca and Main Street*." --John L. Esposito, author of *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*"Geneive Abdo's work captures in great detail the immense hardships Muslims face in the post-September-11th world and offers hope for their success and co-existence in America. Her book shatters stereotypes about Muslims and teaches us that more understanding of Islam is needed for global peace." --Archbishop Desmond Tutu, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize"Given rising anxiety about the possible alienation of American Muslims, a readable book offering a responsible yet sympathetic profile of that community should be welcomed. Five years after 9/11, Geneive Abdo, who has reported skillfully on Islamism in Egypt and Iran, has produced just such a book. Abdo's description of the neo-traditionalism of this community is fascinating. She depicts a typical 'enclave culture,' a religious community that sees itself as beleaguered and is therefore preoccupied by boundaries--between us and them, male and female, real Muslim and impostor."--*The Washington Post*"Honest, perceptive, and nuanced.... Introduces a Muslim community that is both an American immigration success story and a population struggling to define itself under unprecedented circumstances." --*Christian Science Monitor*"There is no better time and no better book to understand the American Muslim experience today than *Mecca and Main Street*. Abdo has written an important, insightful and provocative book. 'Must reading' for anyone who wishes to engage American Muslims in their faith and rich diversity." --John L. Esposito, University Professor and Founding Director of the Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, and author of *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*"Abdo has written a book that succeeds in striking a very difficult balance; it is simultaneously honest, highly informative, critical, thought provoking, entertaining, and very readable--in fact once picked up, the reader will have a hard time putting the book down. This is one of the few studies on the subject that is firmly grounded in the realities and dreams of American Muslims. The author insightfully elucidates both the internal and external strife and challenges that plague Muslims living in the United States in particular, but also more generally, those living in the West. Muslims and non-Muslims alike will benefit greatly from reading *Mecca and Main Street*." --Khaled Abou El Fadl, Professor of Law, UCLA School of Law, and author of *The Search for Beauty in Islam* and *The Great Theft*"Going beyond abstract debates about what Islam does or doesn't say, Geneive Abdo vividly describes the many concrete ways in which American Muslims practice their religion. Shunning the clichéd opposition of 'good' liberal Muslims to 'bad' fundamentalist or conservative Muslims, Abdo shows how the new generation is shaping a truly Western, yet still orthodox, Islam. Contradictions, compromises, and tensions between U.S-born and immigrant Muslims accompany an ongoing shift from diverse ethnic communities to a common faith community--a faith community that is definitively Western. *Mecca and Main Street* fills a vacuum in the study of American Muslims." --Olivier Roy, author of *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*"Islam is the fastest growing religion in America, yet for most Americans the lives of their Muslim neighbors remain shrouded in mystery. In this rich and probing book Geneive Abdo provides an intimate account of American Islam; its roots, beliefs and the challenges that confront it today. With an eye for detail and nuance, sharpened during years of reporting from Egypt and Iran, Abdo lays bare the diversity of this community of migrants and converts as it balances faith with modernity in post-9/11 America. Well-written, engaging and sophisticated, this is a must read for all Americans and Muslims." --Vali Nasr, author of *The Shia Revival: How*

Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future

About the Author Geneive Abdo is the Liaison for the Alliance of Civilizations at the United Nations. A recognized authority on Islamic political movements and the author of well-received books on Islam in Egypt and Iran, she is also a respected journalist. During nearly a decade as a correspondent in the Islamic world, her work was featured in such publications as The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, The Guardian, The Economist, and The International Herald Tribune. She has been a commentator on numerous news programs, including the BBC, NPR, CNN and PBS.

From The Washington Post Homegrown, radicalized Islamists have set off bombs in Madrid and London; could it happen here? Given rising anxiety about the possible alienation of American Muslims, a readable book offering a responsible yet sympathetic profile of that community should be welcomed. Five years after 9/11, Geneive Abdo, who has reported skillfully on Islamism in Egypt and Iran, has produced just such a book. Her reporting shows that Muslim immigrants have much in common with Americans from other lands and cultures. Traditional Muslims arriving from the Middle East and South Asia fear that their children will succumb to the allure of big-city life and abandon the faith. Such newcomers are embracing the same strategies adopted by Jewish immigrants a century ago: setting up religious schools, charities and houses of worship that double as community centers. Yet Muslim settlement in America has had its own patterns, of which Abdo offers a brief but lucid history. The first to arrive were slaves from West Africa who were converted to Christianity. The subsequent "prairie" generation, which arrived in the mid-19th century, homesteaded in the Midwest but proved too isolated to flourish. A new wave of Muslim immigrants followed the liberalization of U.S. immigration laws in 1965 -- and set out not merely to survive but to thrive. Muslim Americans, Abdo writes, are now amply represented in white-collar professions and enjoy a median income slightly above that of the overall population. Abdo's description of the neo-traditionalism of this community is fascinating. She depicts a typical "enclave culture," a religious community that sees itself as beleaguered and is therefore preoccupied by boundaries -- between us and them, male and female, real Muslim and impostor. Defections as well as intrusions fuel the community's sense of danger, as do the glittering vulgarity and the "anything goes" gusto of American society. Jarringly, Abdo at times seems less a reporter than an advocate of a cloistered worldview, as when she puts down Irshad Manji, a Muslim dissenter, as a self-promoting phony. Nonetheless, Abdo's account of the struggles within Muslim organizations on college campuses suggests how the community as a whole may resolve its intramural conflict: by finding a middle way between traditionalist hardliners and those who want to preserve their Muslim identity without isolating themselves, much as modern Orthodox Jews and evangelical Protestants have done in secular universities. Abdo shows how 9/11 shook the world of American Muslims. Suddenly, they were seen by their neighbors -- and their government -- in the global context of Islamist terror. A combination of aggressive law enforcement, indiscriminate use of immigration laws and hyped-up prosecutions left Muslims in doubt about their place in society. Those who reacted by keeping their heads down (or veiled) to avoid attracting attention only exposed themselves to accusations of indifference to the tragedy -- or worse. The net result, Abdo concludes, is a community increasingly inclined to separatism. Elsewhere, this has provided fertile ground for radicals such as Osama bin Laden. The United States is scarcely on a slippery slope to Europe's fate, but the security of our society, Abdo shows, now depends on a spirit of inclusiveness and generosity. In Washington, that means appointing more Muslims to government jobs, preserving civil liberties, being more attentive to their foreign policy concerns and making adjustments consistent with U.S. strategic interests. In our neighborhoods, that means an awareness that when we talk about Muslims, we are talking not about the enemy but about the person next door -- someone whose family, like those of other immigrants, came here to escape harsh and uncertain lives. ed by Steven Simon Copyright 2006, The Washington Post. All Rights Reserved.