



I Speak for Myself: American Women on Being Muslim

Maria M. Ebrahimji, Zahra T Suratwala

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Muslim American women are the subject of endless discussions regarding their role in society, their veils as symbols of oppression or of freedom, their identity, their patriotism, their womanhood. Yet the voices and life experiences of Muslim American women themselves are rarely heard in the loud rhetoric surrounding the question of Muslims in America. Finally, in *I Speak for Myself*, 40 American women under the age of 40, share their experiences of their lives as Muslim women in America. While their commonality is faith and citizenship, their voices and their messages are very different.

Readers of *I Speak for Myself* are presented with a kaleidoscope of stories, artfully woven together around the central idea of limitlessness and individuality. A common theme linking these intimate self-portraits will be the way each woman uniquely defies labeling, simply by defining for herself what it means to be American and Muslim and female. Each personal story is a contribution to the larger narrative of life stories and life work of a new generation of Muslim women.

There are approximately six million Muslims living in the United States and over one billion around the world. While the events of 9/11 certainly engaged Americans with the religion of Islam, many enduring stereotypes continue to belittle the Muslim American experience; this often leads to a monolithic interpretation of Islam. Such a treatment is especially inappropriate when reflecting on the Muslim American identity, which is by far one of the most culturally, ethnically, and socially diverse of any in the Islamic world. Women of the Muslim community in America could be described as both patriots and practitioners (of faith). Their experiences call for a body of literature that reflects how they celebrate and live Islam in distinctive ways.

In the wake of the current rising tide of Islamophobia (see *Time Magazine*, Aug. 30, 2010), *I Speak for Myself* is a must read for Americans seeking understanding of Islam from young women who were all born in the USA.



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