




Newsletter
2024



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

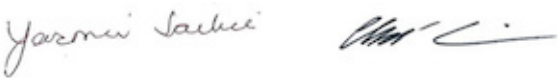
In our book 'People's Peace: Prospects for a Human Future,' we reflected on the elusive nature of peace. The creation of the Center of Muslim Experience in the US (CME-US) is a small but possible contribution to the ongoing transformation toward peaceful coexistence.

Conversations surrounding identity, belonging, and coexistence have gained new urgency globally. Despite witnessing unimaginable acts of violence, the collective action of people standing against oppression worldwide gives us hope. CME-US stands at the intersection of history, culture, and social justice, and we are committed to fostering a better understanding of Muslim experiences in the U.S. and globally through academic research, public events, and student engagement.

We are excited about our upcoming initiatives, including the launch of a student-prepared handbook on Muslim Youth and Islamophobia, thought-provoking discussions on intersectionality, and the development of a 'Guide to Muslim America.' Your unwavering support makes all this possible, and together, we can build a more inclusive and empathetic society.

Thank you for being a vital part of our community.

Warm regards,



Dr. Yasmin Saikia and Dr. Chad Haines
Co-Directors, Center of Muslim Experience in the US



Mission

- Undertake research to combat negative representations of Muslims
- Strengthen student success
- Serve the community and connect individuals with similar goals

What You'll Find In This Newsletter

Vision

We aim to illuminate the positive contributions of Muslims to American society, achieving national and global recognition for America's Muslims.

Publications and Op-Eds
Research Workshops
Post-Doc Research
Student Engagement
Community Outreach
Events



Meet the Team



Dr. Yasmin Saikia



Dr. Chad Haines



Khushbo Khalil



Jameel Subhan

Research: Writing Our Story as American Muslims

Co-Directors Chad Haines and Yasmin Saikia have published the third and final book, 'On Othering: Processes and Politics of Unpeace,' in their trilogy on 'People's Peace.'



In every sphere of life, division and intolerance have polarized communities and entire nations. The learned construction of the Other – an evil “enemy” against whom both physical and discursive violence is deemed acceptable – has fractured humanity, creating divisions that seemingly defy reconciliation. How do we restore the bonds of connection among human beings? How do we shift from polarization to peace?

'On Othering: Processes and Politics of Unpeace' examines the process of othering from an international perspective and considers how it undermines peacemaking and is perpetuated by colonialism and globalization. Taking a humanistic approach, contributors argue that celebrating differences can have a transformative change in seeking peaceful solutions to problems created by people, institutions, ideas, conditions, and circumstances.

Excerpt from Haines' chapter, 'Unfree Muslims':

[F]rom 2015 on, anti-Muslim hate crimes doubled. This was the era of Donald Trump ... His rhetoric situated Muslims, and other minorities, as outside, if not directly undermining, America's greatness ... I suggest, [that American Islamophobia is based on] assumptions and values of a radical difference between America and Islam. ... In this discourse, [Muslims] do not belong, not just because they are a security risk (something that can be countered and corrected) but because their religion and worldview are inherently oppressive and deny individuals freedom – thus, completely un-American ... Like communism and socialism, Islam is [imagined as] the antithesis of freedom, which is the cornerstone of what makes America great, so the argument goes.

Published Op-Eds

“Blood, Identity, and Belonging in India Today”

Yasmin Saikia, *Shuddhashar*, August 1, 2024

This piece explores contemporary issues of identity and belonging in India, focusing on the symbolic and literal implications of "blood" in societal divisions.

“Muslim Heritage is Not Foreign: Safeguard India’s Plural Past”

Yasmin Saikia, *MaktoobMedia*, July 21, 2024

Saikia argues for the importance of preserving India’s diverse cultural heritage and recognizing the integral role of Muslim contributions to the nation's history.

“Experience the Spiritual Journey of Ramadan Umrah: A Unity of Hearts”

Yasmin Saikia, Faith Matters, *The Arizona Republic*, April 24, 2024

This op-ed reflects on the spiritual significance of Ramadan Umrah and the unity it fosters among Muslims during this sacred time.

“As Gaza is Obliterated, Scholars and Academics Need to Speak Up”

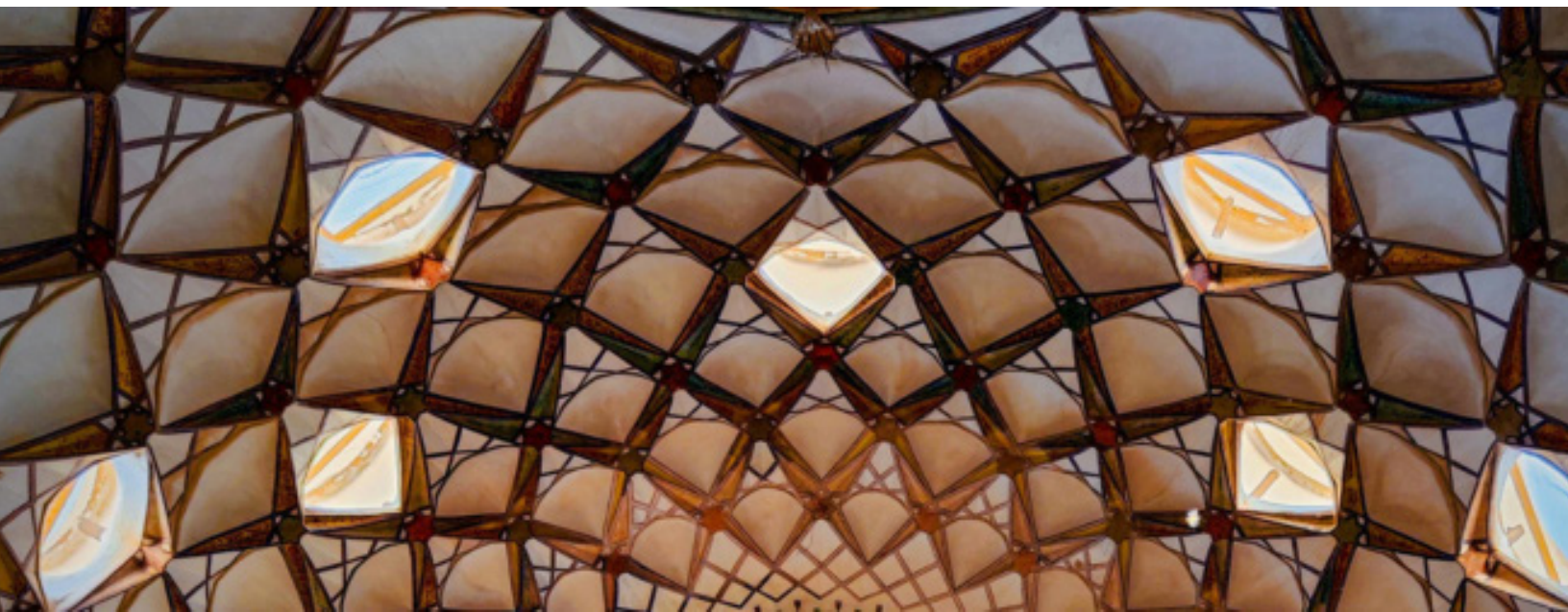
Yasmin Saikia and Chad Haines, *AnalystNews*, February 29, 2024

Saikia and Haines call for a more vocal response from scholars and academics regarding the crisis in Gaza and the urgent need for ethical leadership.

“How Arizona Muslims Are Fighting the ‘Islamophobia Industry’”

Chad Haines, *The Arizona Republic*, February 12, 2024

Haines discusses the efforts of Muslim communities in Arizona to combat the pervasive Islamophobia industry through proactive civic engagement.



Research Workshop: Muslims in Liberal Democracies

To understand the exclusion of Muslims in the United States, it is essential to examine their treatment in diasporas globally. In Fall 2023, in collaboration with CME-US, the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict (CSRC) explored this issue at the annual peace workshop with Dr. Timothy Winter from the University of Cambridge. Scholars from Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States presented research on how Western democracies manage minority Muslim populations through exclusion as well as police surveillance, biased policy implementation, knowledge production, and documentation erasure. The findings from this workshop will be published in a special guest edition of the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*.

In Spring 2025, in collaboration with CME-US, CSRC is hosting a transformative workshop that moves from theory to action, uniting public-facing academics and journalists to reshape narratives about Muslims. Through storytelling and narrative techniques, participants will critically examine media representations offering an urgent and insightful analysis on this crucial issue. Emmy and Peabody Award-winning journalist, Laila Al-Arian will deliver the annual peace lecture, "(Mis)Representing Muslims in the Media," on February 6, 2025.

Research Workshop: Muslims in the Media

A major driver of Islamophobia is the relentless stream of negative stories about Muslims in the media. Dr. Ali Hussain from the University of Sharjah, with support from CME-US's Co-Directors, led a project funded by the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) and the Luce Foundation to engage Muslim youth as citizen journalists, enabling them to share their personal experiences with educators and journalists and thus contribute to a more nuanced and accurate representation of young Muslims.

This effort will culminate in the launch of the "Muslim Youth and Islamophobia Handbook," which is designed to support classroom teaching and responsible reporting about Muslims.



Infographic from workshop

The infographic pictured here, prepared by Mohd. Sarim Ashrafi, is one among the many created by the workshop students. The infographic shows that facing anti-Muslim hate can be a daunting experience, but knowing you're not alone can make all the difference.

WE SEE YOU, WE HEAR YOU, AND WE STAND WITH YOU!

Experiencing Islamophobia can be isolating and painful. We understand your struggles and want you to know that you are not alone. Your feelings are valid, and your resilience is inspiring.

What to do when you face anti-Muslim hate?

LEGAL SUPPORT

Seek legal support so that criminals could be punished. Organizations like the **Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)** provide legal assistance to victims of discrimination.

REPORT ANTI-MUSLIM HATE

Reporting anti-Muslim hate crimes and cases of Islamophobia is very important. Organizations like **Tell MAMA** document the cases of Islamophobia and support the victims.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Anti-Muslim hate can be very challenging to your mental health, especially if you are alone. Either access culturally competent therapists or join local Muslim community centers where you feel home.

SHARE YOUR STORY

Your voice matters. Sharing your experiences can help raise awareness and build understanding. Try reaching journalists or influencers who can give you voice through their channels.

LEARN ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS

All individuals are granted rights in a free country irrespective of their faith and background. Learn about your rights and how to report incidents of anti-Muslim hate and Islamophobia.

EDUCATE OTHERS

Use your knowledge to educate friends and allies about Islam and the impact of Islamophobia. Participate in local initiatives and campaigns that combat discrimination and promote inclusivity.

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STAY INFORMED

Keep up-to-date with news and resources on combating Islamophobia. Follow organizations and leaders who advocate for Muslim rights.

Prepared by
Mohd. Sarim Ashrafi



Post-Doc Research: Elections and the Muslim Vote

Dr. Ramazan Akkır, Associate Professor at Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University in Turkey and a visiting scholar with a post-doctoral fellowship from the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), is currently conducting research on how Muslims in America exercise their civic power and the dynamic between Muslim Americans and the Democratic Party.

His research shows that historically, many Muslims in the United States supported the Republican Party, but due to negative responses from Republicans to conflicts in Muslim-majority countries, many Muslims shifted their allegiance toward the Democratic Party. However, ongoing violence in Gaza and President Biden's support for Israel may be causing a reversal in this trend. Muslim voters are currently dissatisfied with both major parties, as they lack a clear political alternative that aligns with their views on the Israel-Palestine conflict.



Student Engagement: Fellows' Presentation



As part of the AZ Humanities-funded project Muslims and Global Phoenix, and with support from the Office of the Dean of Humanities, we have facilitated research projects on Muslim community life in the Phoenix Valley. Three Fellows contributed to this effort: Simra Maheen and Omera Ali, both undergraduate students, and Najim Asefi, CME's 2023-2024 Resident Research Fellow. Their research focused on distinct yet significant aspects of the Muslim community in Phoenix: Muslim-owned businesses, Muslim student belonging at ASU, and Afghan refugees.

- Omera Ali investigated how Muslim students at ASU find their sense of belonging and purpose on campus.
- Najim Asefi examined the lives of Afghan refugees in the Phoenix Valley and the challenges they face in resettling in the U.S.
- Simra Maheen aimed to highlight the experiences of Muslim business owners in the Valley.

CME-US organized a student panel where these Fellows presented their findings. We hope that this research will help CLAS and ASU gain a deeper understanding of the local Muslim community and enhance their engagement with it in the future.



Student Engagement: ASU Indian Muslim Students Report

Read excerpts from the report:

Funded by the Indian American Muslim Council, and supported by the Center of Muslim Experience in the US, Muhammad Atif, a graduate student, conducted research on Indian Muslim students at Arizona State University. The survey gathered both quantitative and qualitative data on their demographics, academic pursuits, challenges, and interests. While studying in the U.S. offers personal and professional growth, these students face obstacles like limited support, difficulty securing jobs or internships without referrals, exclusion from student organizations, and challenges in finding housing. Addressing these issues is crucial to helping them thrive academically and personally.

The report offered the following recommendations:

- Establish halal food options on campus, particularly featuring South Asian cuisine.
- Provide networking support and guidance for new Indian Muslim students and other international students to secure on-campus jobs and professional summer internships.
- Create an office dedicated to identifying and addressing issues of Islamophobia and specific discrimination that Indian Muslims may face, given the political situation in India.
- Support the activities of the newly established Indian Muslim Student Network.



Student Engagement: Indian Muslim Students Network



With the support of CME-US, the Indian Muslim Students Network (IMSN) has been established as a pioneering student organization in the U.S. Led by President Muhammad Atif, IMSN serves as a central hub for Indian Muslim students to connect, network, and support one another. The organization has already hosted three successful events:

- In February, IMSN, in collaboration with MOVE, organized a professional development workshop for students pursuing careers in Engineering and Technology.
- During Ramadan, IMSN, along with the Bangladesh Student Association, the Pakistani Students Association, and the International Students and Scholars Center, hosted a community iftar for South Asian Muslim students.
- IMSN also participated in community efforts to distribute suhoor meals to those in need during Ramadan.
- These activities highlight IMSN's commitment to fostering community and providing valuable support to its members.



Community Outreach: Community Dinner and Discussion



On February 25, 2024, CME-US organized a discussion on the theme of 'Home and Belonging.' The event was supported by funding from AZ Humanities project Muslims in Global Phoenix project, Javed Khan, who has generously supported CME-US's work from its inception, and Cogenie, a Phoenix-based Muslim-owned business. The event brought together a diverse group of Muslim and non-Muslim community members to explore how Muslim Phoenicians experience the concept of home and belonging.

The evening featured four powerful speeches from local Muslim leaders – Ahmed Hashim, Mike Abdullah Colon, Chad Haines, and Maryam Masud – alongside remarks from Imam Omar Tawil, which set a thoughtful tone for the discussions that followed.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who participated with such enthusiasm. We hope to make this gathering an annual tradition and continue to unite our community, explore themes related to Muslim life in America, and celebrate the achievements of CME-US.



Community Outreach: Brightening Ramadan with Illumination

Building on last year's success, CME-US partnered with ASU's Muslim Students Association, the Muslim American Society, and ICC Tempe to install a 15-foot crescent moon atop A-Mountain. Students and community volunteers collaborated to create this striking installation, which illuminated the city every night throughout Ramadan.

The crescent moon serves as a public symbol of Islam, representing a bright light and a source of radiating goodness for both Muslims and the wider community. It has also played a role in educating non-Muslims about the Islamic values that Muslims strive to embody in their daily lives.



Public Talks and Community Events 2023-2024

August

Dr. Chad Haines delivered the keynote address at ASU's Afghanistan Student Alliance anniversary event, titled "The Impact of U.S. Interventions in Afghanistan on Muslim Belonging in the U.S."

Drs. Haines and Yasmin Saikia provided the keynote at the Arizona Muslim Corps Graduation Party with their presentation, "Celebrating Our Journey: From a Glorious Past to a Magnificent Future."

October

CME-US faculty affiliate Dr. Andrea Shaheen Espinosa organized an educational performance lecture by Egyptian musician Karim Nagi.

November

Dr. Saikia delivered the Sir Syed Memorial Lecture on "The Role of AMU Alumni in Muslim Minorities' Experiences in the United States."

In collaboration with the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict and Jewish Studies, CME-US hosted a community discussion panel, "Toward Mutual Understanding: How Should We Talk About the War in the Middle East?" Dr. Haines participated in the panel.

Dr. Saikia spoke at the screening of the documentary "A Town Called Victoria" with Project Humanities at the Tempe History Museum.

January

Dr. Haines participated in the Barrett Community Dialogues with his talk, "Asking Hard Questions About Israel & Palestine."

February

Dr. Haines represented CME-US at the Muslim Public Affairs Council's event, "Visualizing Peace and Justice in America."

Dr. Saikia presented her work at ASU's Humanities Institute panel, "Spirit of the Law."

March

Dr. Saikia spoke at the Indian American Muslim Council's regional meeting on "The Role of Academics in Combating Hindutva and Islamophobia."

April

CME-US's Dr. Hamza Iqbal organized a community Ramadan iftar at Barrett, The Honors College.

Faculty affiliate Dr. Espinosa directed ASU's Middle East Music Ensemble spring concert and community outreach performance.



Ways to be Involved

By contributing just \$10 per month, you can become a 'Friend of the Center' and partner with us in shaping Muslim American history. Support scholarship, disseminate knowledge, transform narratives, and strengthen belonging for Muslims in America. All donations are tax-deductible and sadaqa. For zakat donations, please contact the Center directly.

Your support for the 2024-2025 academic year will impact:

- Annual Lecture
- Development of a 'Guide to Muslim America'
- Indian Muslim Endowed Chair
- Oral History Project on Muslim Americans
- Post-Doctoral Research Fellows
- Sir Syed Endowment Fund
- Undergraduate Research Fellows
- Virtual Museum and Digital Repository

Donate

Thank you for helping us advance these important initiatives! At CME-US, we strive to connect like-minded individuals and serve the community. Whether you're a student, academic, organization, activist, or community member, we welcome your involvement. Please reach out to us via email to learn more.



A Big Thank You to our Supporters!

Suhail Agwani and Saima Chohan

Rasheed Ahmad

Mohammed Ahmed

Rasheed and Aisha Ahmed

Shazim Ashraf

Tasneem and Mohammad Ashraf

Fozia Basharat

Shaista Begum

Maham Chaudhry

Saima Chohan

Jeffrey and Wendy Cohen

Arzuhan Kavac and Hasan Davulcu

Abdul and Mahfooza Diwan

Javed Ellahie

Charles Francis

Brian Gratton and Catherine O'Donnell

Iftekhar Hai

Akhtar and Syma Hamidi

Roohi Husain

Salina and Hasan Imam

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Javed and Shaheena Khan

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Samina Salim

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Sumbul Shakoor

Mustafa Siddiqui

Brian St. John

Tashie and Naheed Zaheer

Amin and Rozina Zama

American Endowment Foundation

CharityVest Inc.

Mulberry Street Fund

Sterling Charitable Gift Fund

Tokat Family Foundation Inc.



Did You Know?

Here are some notable highlights about Muslim Americans:

Diverse Representation: Muslim Americans come from 77 different nationalities.

Historical Recognition: The Prophet Muhammad is depicted on the Supreme Court's frieze as one of the world's greatest lawgivers.

Olympic Achievement: Ibtihaj Muhammad, the first Muslim-American hijabi Olympian, won a bronze medal at the Rio Olympics in 2016.

Architectural Innovation: Fazlur Rahman Khan, an American Muslim, reimagined skyscraper design and is the architect behind the Willis Tower and the John Hancock Center in Chicago.

Jazz Influence: Muslims have significantly influenced jazz music, with Ahmad Jamal, a prominent Muslim-American jazz musician, winning a Lifetime Achievement Grammy and inspiring Miles Davis.

Nobel Laureates: Three American Muslims, all scientists, have been awarded Nobel Prizes. Ahmed Zewail, an Egyptian-American chemist, was the first, receiving the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1999.

Oscar Winner: In 2018, Mahershala Ali became the first American Muslim to win an Oscar for his role in Moonlight.

