Islam in the USA: History, Ways of Expansion and Influential Figures

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By

Bechairia Meryem

Board of Examiners:

Maameri Fatima, Director

Boudjelit Amina, Member

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Abstract

Islam in America expanded fast in the recent years due to the large interest in the faith that led to conversions. Those conversions were the result of the answers given by the religion to the questions that are unanswered in Christianity. Islam for the new converts means a guide for their lives and a solution to their problems. The numbers of Muslims in the United States of America cannot be compared to Christians and Jews as they are still a minority; yet, this Mémoire claims that the growth of Islam is remarkable and this has been proved through the involvement of Muslims in all fields of the American life. In conclusion, our research has found out that Islam has succeed in creating an identity in the American mind; therefore, Americans nowadays do not see Islam as the religion of terrorism but a religion of peace and tolerance.

Key Words:

The United States of America, Islam, Muslims, Growth, Minorities, Tolerance.
RESUME

Islam en Amérique élargi rapidement ces dernières années en raison du grand intérêt pour la foi qui a conduit à des conversions. Ces conversions ont été le résultat des réponses données par la religion aux questions qui sont sans réponse dans le Christianisme. Islam pour les nouveaux convertis signifie que le guide pour la vie et la solution à leurs problèmes. Le nombre de Musulmans aux États-Unis d'Amérique ne peuvent pas être comparés aux chrétiens et aux juifs comme ils sont encore une minorité ; pourtant ce Mémoire affirme que la croissance de l'Islam est remarquable et cela a été prouvé par l'implication des musulmans dans tous les domaines de la vie Américaine. En conclusion, notre recherche a découvert que l'Islam a réussi à créer une identité dans l'esprit Américain, donc les Américains de nos jours ne voit pas l'islam comme religion du terrorisme, mais une religion de paix et de tolérance.
ملخص

شهدت السنوات الأخيرة توسعًا سريعاً للإسلام في أمريكا وذلك بسبب الاهتمام الكبير الموجه للعقيدة الإسلامية من طرف المجتمع الأمريكي. وهذا أدى إلى افتتاح الإسلام. هاته الاعتقادات كانت نتيجة الإجابات التي قدمها الدين على الأسئلة التي لم يتم الرد عليها في المسيحية. الإسلام يعني ليهولاء المعتقدين الجدد الدليل لحياتهم وحل لمشاكلهم. لا يوجد سبيل للمقارنة بين إعداد المسلمين واعداد المسيحيين واليهود في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية لان المسلمين يعتبرون أقليات. إلا أن هذا العمل ينهه ان الإسلام ينمو ويتطور بشكل ملحوظ. هذا ما يؤكد مشاركة المسلمين في كل مجالات الحياة الأمريكية. في نهاية البحث وجدنا أن الإسلام نجح في خلق هوية في عقل الأمريكيين وبالتالي فإنهم لا يرون الإسلام دينا للإرهاب وانما دين السلام وتسامح.
Dedication

I dedicate this work to my precious mother who supported me in every step of my life, my beloved father who always gave me courage to finish my studies. Thank you for being there for me.
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List of Abbreviations/Acronyms

AIC: American Islamic Congress

C.E: Common Era

CAIR: Council on American-Islamic Relations

EU: European Union

EUMC: European Monitoring Center for Racism and Xenophobia

FBI: Federal Bureau of Investigation

IIIT: International Institute of Islamic Thought

MUNA: Muslim Ummah of North America

NACMW: North American Council for Muslim Women

NOI: Nation of Islam

USA: The United States of America
List of Figures

Figure 1: Gender and Age of Muslim Immigrants in the USA…………………..13

Figure 2: Reasons of Muslim Immigration………………………………………………….15

Figure 3: Results of Islamophobia…………………………………………………………..16

Figure 4: US Muslim Vs Foreign Born…………………………………………………………….19

Figure 5: US Muslims Vs Foreign Born (Year of Immigration)……………………………………….30

Figure 6: The Number of Mosques in the USA…………………………………………………..31

Figure 7: The Importance of Religion for Americans……………………………………………….32

Figure 8: Muslims' Affiliation…………………………………………………………………………47

Figure 9: The Origins of Arabs in the USA………………………………………………………….49

Figure 10: Education between Arab Americans Born in USA and Outside………………50
# Table of Content

Abstract

Dedication.................................................................................................................. ii

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................... iii

List of abbreviations or acronyms.............................................................................. iv

List of Tables............................................................................................................. v

Table of Contents..................................................................................................... vi

General Introduction ................................................................................................ 1

Chapter One: Islam Came to America.................................................................... 5

Introduction................................................................................................................ 5

I. **Islam before Columbus**.................................................................................... 6
   1. Muslim Traces on the Land.............................................................................. 6
   2. African-Native Contacts and Arabs-Native Contact................................. 7

II. **Islam with and after Columbus**..................................................................... 9
   1. The Ways Islam spread in America................................................................. 10
   2. Islamophobia................................................................................................... 16

III. **Muslim Organizations and Communities**.................................................... 18
    1. Nation of Islam.............................................................................................. 19
    2. Moderate Organizations............................................................................... 22
IV. Muslim Women in America .................................................. 22
   1. The organizations of Muslim Women ................................. 23
   2. The difference between Arab Muslim Women and American Muslim
      Women ........................................................................... 25

Conclusion ................................................................................. 27

Chapter Two: Islam and the New Converts ................................. 28

Introduction ................................................................................ 28

I. Mosques and their Presence in the USA ................................. 30
   1. The Significance of Mosques in the Practice of Islam in America... 32
   2. The Number of Mosques in Comparison with Churches .......... 35

II. The Dialogue between Religions Vs the Converted Christians .... 36
    1. The Dialogue between Religions ........................................... 37
    2. Converted Christians ......................................................... 38

III. The Difference between American Muslims and Arab Muslims... 45
    1. American Muslims ............................................................ 46
    2. Arab Muslims ................................................................. 48

Conclusion .................................................................................. 50

General Conclusion ................................................................. 52

List of Works Cited ................................................................. 55

Appendixes
General Introduction

Islam is a religion that saves, protects and appreciates all that is related to human beings and their lives. The importance of Islam lies behind how and why it is the religion that God has chosen for his worshipers. In America and for decades, Islam was seen as the main source of terrorism. In recent years, however, Americans who could not find the convincing answers to their questions and the solutions for their problems have resorted to Islam as guidance and a solution to their turmoils.

The United States is a multi-religious country where Christianity ranks first followed by Judaism and Islam; then, there are minor faiths like Buddhism, Sikhism, and others. Other Americans, however, are atheists; they do not belong to any religion. Before 9/11 attacks of 2001, Americans were not interested in Islam as a religion because of their exceptionalist views; but after that event, they started asking questions and became curious about knowing more about the religion of Islam. Although, the number of Muslims might not be effective in the American nation, Islam is expanding in a remarkable way.

This research aims to investigate the theories relating to the presence of Islam in America from its beginning until the present time. It also, aims to find out and analyze the factors behind the fast growth of Islam in that country such as the slaves, immigrants,
Islamophobia, and missionaries. Another objective is to introduce the stories of those people who had an effective role in spreading the religion to the Americans.

Questions arising about this research are: First, among all the theories that tackle the presence of Islam in the U.S, which one/ones is/are the most accurate? Second, Islam’s spread in America was not by coincidence; however there are many factors that helped in this growth, what are they and in what ways they succeeded in highlighting the real meaning of Islam? Third, Muslims’ interaction with Americans dates back to centuries ago, but what changes occurred in their relations from one period to another? Another question is whether the Arab Muslims are one of the reasons behind the spread of Islam or American Muslims are the one who created a new form of Dawah (invitation)?

A Statistical study fulfills the research requirements. Pew Research Center about Religion and Public life projects poll database; it is one of the helpful online source of information related to the American converters to Islam. In addition, Islamic organizations in the USA provide knowledge about the nature of Islam and how Americans view it. The historical description is another option this Mémoire adopts to study the growth of Islam and its impact on new converters.

This Mémoire relies on primary sources such as the videos that tackle the lives of two major converts, Yucuf Estes and Lawrence Brown. Estes speaks about how his deep involvement in Christianity led him to the right path of Islam. He also explains how Christians believe blindly in what they are told about while Muslims always claim the reliability of their sources from Qur’an and Hadith. Brown discusses his way to Islam,
how he has overcome all the difficulties he had gone through and all the losses and failures he had endured in order to be a Muslim. He also explains how he came to be a Muslim after he failed to be a Christian.

The Mémoire investigates a number of secondary sources such as Edward Curtis’ *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Differences in African-American Islamic Thought* (2002) which focuses on the Nation of Islam’s leaders and their methods in spreading their views about Islam. The book explains how each one of them succeed to affect the people and to make them believe in Islam from his point of view. It shows the way the Nation of Islam went through, from extremism to moderation and from universalism to particularism.

Jane Smith’s *Islam in America* (1999) explores how Islam reached America. It also sheds light on Muslims’ lives and how they practice their religion. It deals also with women in Islam, their treatment and their life under the shades of Islam, especially the new converts.

The work is divided to two chapters: Chapter one “Islam Came to America” shows how Islam came to exist in the USA and who brought it to that land? These questions and more are to be answered in this chapter focusing on historical data. It also tackles the way in which Islam succeed to create its own identity in the American nation overcoming years of hatred. Chapter two “Islam and the New Converts” focuses on the reasons that caused atheists and Christians to leave their beliefs and convert to Islam as they found in it the answers to their crucial questions. In conclusion, this Mémoire claims that Islam spread fast in America even though its population is considered as a minority.
Chapter One:

Islam Came to America

Introduction

Islam in the Arab world grew due to the conquests made by the prophet Muhammad Blessings and Peace Be upon Him (BPUH) and his companions then by the adherents of the religion (Michalopoulos, Naghavi and Prarolo 3). Another reason to the growth was the contact between the Muslim merchants and the merchants from other nations (Michalopoulos, Naghavi and Prarolo 3). Decades passed and Islam started its way out to Europe and Asia until the 19th Century when it appeared in the United States of America (USA). Many theories showed that Islam might have been there before Columbus’ trip. They related it to 1492 when Muslims were expelled from Andalus; others said that African Muslim sailors were the first to settle in the American continent and many other theories discussed the Islamic occurrence in the continent. This chapter discusses the theories, their reliability and truthfulness. In addition, it deals with the times when Muslims became a part of the American society after years of marginalization. Another point is the effectiveness of Muslims in spreading their religion, the role of Muslim women and the organizations that helped in keeping the Islamic spirit alive in the American society.
I. Islam before Columbus

Theories examined and introduced by historians show evidences of the presence of Muslims and Africans in the Americas long before Columbus. Many historians said that when Columbus arrived to America, he found traces of mosques on the land. Archaeologists like Barry Fell and Ivan Van Sertima highlighted the idea that Muslims had contacts with the natives “Indians” in about AD 700. The theories focused mainly on the archaeological findings and the researches made on those findings which illustrate that Arab-Muslims and Africans passed by the land in around 1455 and left their marks (Sertima 54). Curtis shows some of the evidences on the presence of Islam on the land that was seen through the practices of natives and that can be found only in Islamic traditions such as polygamy that was one of the signs of the contact between Muslims and Natives before Columbus (50).

1. Muslim Traces on the Land

The first to recognize the traces of people in the time before Columbus and after Indians are archaeologists. They explained that America was not a dead land as it was inhabited by the natives who had contacts with sailors and traders from other parts of the world including the Europeans, Arabs and Africans. In their way in exploring American territories, they came across Arabic, Celtic, and Norse writings and drawings. In his review of the book Saga America by Barry Fell, Hurst said that Fell introduced Arabic petroglyphs and artifacts providing clear evidences on the Islamic society that established itself. Evidences of schools in Nevada, Colorado, Indiana and New Mexico were found (147). He found statements that were written in Arabic indicting names and places most of them in Kufic (Zeghoudi 1). In addition, Columbus wrote in his papers about a mosque he saw from his ship on the coasts of
Cuba and later archaeologists found remains of those mosques and some of the Quranic verses (Mroueh).

Evidences also were a part of the *Chronology of Islam in America* where Ghazali gives information about the documents that provide facts about Islamic presence in America. The Sung Document of 1178 is one of the sources that many believe it came only from the imagination of the author who created it, to present an idea of the people who lived in California during the 12th century (Ghazali 2). There are also the voyages of the king Abu Bakri to the New World in 1310 (Ghazali 2). Alexander Von Wuthenau was also one of the archaeologists who presented evidences about the Islamic people who lived in America; those people were mainly Egyptians (Hurst 147). Other traces date back to the tenth century and before when Arab sailors lost their ways and found themselves on the shores of the Americas (Hurst 147).

On the one hand, the American people accept the evidences provided for they understand that Arabs and Muslims were geniuses and their achievements in all fields of life were accredited. On the other hand, not all people believe in the theories but what those archaeologists show is physical proofs and arguments. The period before Columbus was full of active Muslim discoveries.

2. **African-Native Contacts and Arabs**

The Africans who went to America in that time were there for a specific purpose not to live there or to deliver their culture. They travelled as traders who bought and sold goods and supplements then back home. When they reached
America, they found traces of life. Natives who inhabited the land welcomed the new visitors and helped them achieve their goals.

There were many contacts between African Muslims and Natives as it was told by Columbus that when he visited America Natives said that before he came there were black people visiting America. Sertima in his book *They Came before Columbus* gave evidences on the relation that was between Blacks and Indians when there were no Europeans on the continent. One of the most visible contributions of Africans in America is the Olmec stone monuments, which represent heads of black people that established a civilization in America when it was unknown (21). This civilization can be seen as the first and strong one that left evidences with that size. When archaeologist Matthew Stirling found one of the heads in 1938 there was no doubt that the Olmec civilization was of a great importance and that African were part of the American society before the Whites. There were also remains of the bodies of those people buried in the site of the Olmec (Sertima 15). The Pyramids also proved that Egyptians lived in Mexico in a period and they left the thing that pharaohs were known for (Sertima 87).

Arabs navigators were known because they visited parts of the world searching for knowledge, gold and adventure. Examples of those people who were famous more than westerner navigators and sailors were Ibn Batota, Khashkhash Ben Said Ben Aswad, Suleiman Al-Mahri... and others. Historians said that Columbus relied on the maps of Arabs to reach the American continent (Lehrburger 5).

Arabs were from the beginning contacting the Natives for there was a trading process between the two. During the Umayyad dynasty, the sailors from Arab roots lost their way and found themselves in America where they found new sources and
they went back to their homes full of supplies (Zeghoudi 2). Later on, a navigator called Khashkhash Ibn Aswad visited America in AD 889 bringing with him many precious things (Zeghoudi 2). A cartographer called Al-Masudi draw a map of the world and the surprise is that the Americas were part of it. Other Arab sailors, mainly from Spain, visited the land leaving their imprints and taking gold, metals and treasures (Zeghoudi 2).

The period before Columbus was full of achievements of the Muslims at the new land. They created, flourished and left a civilization. They also benefited from the experiences of the Natives and they brought with them things that were unavailable in their homelands. The Natives learned more about culture from the other part of the world and took much of the knowledge of the Muslims in all fields of life and particularly in religion practicing.

II. Islam with and after Columbus

The date 1492 is considered as the turning point in the world order for it draws the end of a civilization and the beginning of another one. The end of the Islamic rule in Spain and Columbus’ reaching of the Americas were two events that changed the view of Europe from the Arabian part to the newly discovered continent. Smith said that Muslims of Spain and Africans were among the people who sailed with Columbus (50). History shows that Columbus was influenced by Al-Idrissi; therefore, he had some Muslims members on his ship for translating the works of Al-Idrissi about the Muslims who visited America (Smith 50). Among those Muslims, there were Martin Alonso Pinzon and his brother Vicente Yanex Pinzon who were experts in ships and they belong to the crew of Columbus’ ship as he wrote in his diaries (Hassall n.p). In 1527, a Moroccan sailor called Estevanico or Esteban the Moor [his
real name is Mustafa Zamouri] reached America and settled there. He was sent by the Portuguese navigators to discover weather this New Land is a better place to live in or not (Chipman n.p). Those details were seen as nothing more than hypotheses because there is no evidences accept the papers of Columbus.

1. Ways Islam Spread in America

Islam reached America earlier than any other faith but it began to be noticed in the 19th Century (Smith 50). It emerged because of the slave trade that was the main source of labors in the South (Johnson 222). Immigrants also were one of the reasons that increased the knowledge of Americans about the religion of Islam. Muslims migrated to the US to achieve wealth and fame. After years they succeeded in being a part of the American nation so they became permanent citizens. Immigration to America was an open door to a new, better and prosperous life (Luibhéid 127). When Islam started its way in the USA, it was a collective choice of people who can be citizens with no interest giving to their nationalities, ages, races or reasons of their coming to the land. Recently, the entrance to America became much more difficult because of the selective choice of members.

1.1. Slaves

Muslims slaves practiced their religion in two different ways: the first was secret because of fear; those were considered as Christians. They kept their religion secret while practicing the religion imposed on them. The second way was public; those who claimed their belonging to Islam discriminated, hunted and killed (Smith Intro). Slavery was an effective way to spread the religion because of the continuous contact between Muslims and Non-Muslims.
Slavery in America began as soon as the Whites took control over the land. Slavery lasted in the United States from the 15th Century to 20th where Black Slaves resisted the control of the White Masters they were seen as properties more than as humans. The history of slavery cannot be told because half of the truth is untold (Johnson 58). Between 1500s and 1860s, there were more than 10 million slaves in the USA; most of them were Muslims due to their African origins. It is believed that the colonizers brought the first group of slaves in 1619 to Jamestown, Virginia (Maameri 67).

The first slaves brought from Europe were in the sixteenth century and the ones brought directly from Africa were before 1500s (Kachur 19). Not all the slaves survived to pass the middle passage and those who did were used for sugar production which was a new and expensive crop for the settlers (Kachur 28). The slave trade was practiced in the British Empire to enlarge the number of labors with cheap prices and hard work (Kachur 5). Slavery increased due to the circumstances Africa was living like wars and famine (Kachur 19). The North American economy was based on the plantation system and the number of slaves in that area was high (Kachur 7). In 1732, an African Muslim slave called Ayyub Bin Suleiman Jallon was freed and later he was sent to England on his way back home (Ghazali 2). One of the famous Muslims in America was Omar Ibn Said who had written about his experiences in slavery in Arabic (Diouf 8).

Muslim slaves were not only laborers, as Diouf said in her chapter entitled “African Muslims in Bondage: Realities, Memories, and Legacies” (77). Many of them were of African elites and intellectuals and their faith helped them to survive and to overcome the difficulties of slavery and the bad work conditions (Diouf 138).
They succeeded in recording their works in Arabic and rebelled against their masters to establish their own community in America like the Bahia rebellion in 1835 in Brazil, which was planned by Muslim scholars Shaykh Dandara, Shaykh Sanim and Malam Bubakar Ahuna and noted by Diouf as “Islam was an excellent organizing force” (161).

Islam was not declared because of fear and the last surviving Muslim in Brazil died in the 1920s while the last Muslims who allegedly converted to Christianity died 1959 (Pipes N.p). Muslims left some of their practices traditions, and attitudes in the communities they lived in. Islam provides stability and strength to those slaves to overcome the hardships and a way to preserve their identities as Africans and Muslims (Pipes N.p). They combined all elements of the nation from the beginning slavery to its end. They also created a future for the homogenized America that blacks’ history shadowed the existence of other races (Johnson 224).

1.2. Immigrants

The first Muslims immigrate to the USA were not there for settlement (“New Immigration and the First Organizations” N.p). Their goal was purely economic which means that they found that America was the best choice to make wealth but success and the ability to coexist and collaborate in the new society led them to deviate from their original purpose and permanently lived there (“New Immigration and the First Organizations” N.p). Among the factors that helped in this decision were the laws and the revolutions of Civil rights that were adopted by the minorities. This made Islam one of the ways to establish a free community based on respect, sharing ideas and unity. Most of the new comers to Islam were African Americans who were interested in building Islamic institutions to gather and unify the Muslim minorities
They were faced by one problem, which is the preservation of their Islamic identity and cooperation with the multicultural society. The Immigrants were relatives, which made the establishment of the Muslim society much easier. Before and after 1964

The Muslims who entered the USA before 1964 were of all levels and classes. While after 1964, there was a selective choice in the number of Muslims in the USA. Muslims start their engagement with the society by building mosques such as the Islamic Center of Washington D.C. in June 1954, which is considered as both a praying place and a cultural center to gather Muslims on different occasions. There is also the Muslim Students’ Association, which was established by students at the University of Illinois and the idea spread to other universities of the country. In 1957,
President Eisenhower gave a speech in a mosque as a message to people that Muslims are Americans and should be part of that society (American Muslims 16).

The period after 1964 was a revolution in highlighting Muslims and their faith. Presidential efforts to create a homogeneous nation was seen though their respect and contributions with the different elements of the society, among them the Muslims starting by 1969 when President Nixon invited a member of the Islamic Centre of Washington to attend his inauguration (American Muslims 17). In 1974, President Ford congrats the Muslim community with Eid el-Fitr (American Muslims 17). In 1980, Jimmy Carter explained that the American people respect Islam and Muslims because they share together a long history (American Muslims 17). In 1991 started the intervention of Muslims in government with Charles Bilal who became the first American Muslim who was elected Mayor of an American city in Texas. He was followed by Imam Siraj Wahhaj who becomes the first Muslim to give the invocation in the House of Representatives and in 1992, Imam Warith Deen Muhammad was the first Muslim to give the invocation in Senate session. In 1993, Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad became the first Muslim chaplain in the American Military; this way, he talked about his faith and gathered more Muslims and converters. In 1996, Hillary Clinton celebrated Eid el-Fitr in the White House. The year 1999 marked the appointment of the first Muslim Ambassador to the Republic of Fiji who sworn the oath with his hand on the Qur’an. The beginning of the 21st Century was full of achievements of Muslims in America beginning by the creation of the first Muslim sorority called Gamma Gamma Chi, which was open to Muslims and non-Muslims. In 2007 and 2008 two intellectual Muslims, Keith Alison from Minnesota and Andre Carson from Indiana, entered Congress.
Reasons of Immigration after 1964

Figure 2: Reasons of Muslim Immigration

Source: Center for Immigration Studies

- **Refuge:**
  - Ethnic Persecution:
  - 1. Expulsion of Asians from Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya led to the immigration of 6000 Muslims
- **Religious Persecution:**
  - 1. Hindu-Muslim clashes in India
  - 2. A case of a French Muslim seeks asylum
- **Islamism:**
  - 1. Ahmadi sect was determined as not a part of Islam in 1979
  - 2. Iranian Revolution of 1979
  - 3. Members of the Anti-Islamist movements such as the Association of Islamic Projects of Lebanon
- **Anti-Islamism:**
  - Muslims run from Islamic countries to the USA to practice their freedom in order to express their views
- **Civil Wars:**
  - Immigrants of a huge number went to America because of the 1971 Pakistani civil war, 1975-90 Lebanese civil war, and the 1990s anarchy in Somalia
- **International Wars:**
  - Israeli victories 1948-49 and 1967
  - Soviet invasion of Afghanistan 1979
  - Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990
- **Education:**
  - By the 1990s, the educational system of the USA attracted students who later on preferred to become citizens there for the opportunities are higher and circumstances are better
- **Islamist Ambitions:**
  - Political and religious ambitions led to the immigration of Islamists.
2. Islamophobia

Islamophobia is the phenomenon that is defined as the fear and hatred of anything related to Islam (Ramberg 6). The term was introduced in the 1980s when people in Europe hated, criticized and despised Islam and Muslims; yet those Europeans started practicing it after the events of 9/11 (2001) (Allen 144). In 2006, made a research by the EUMC (European Monitoring Center for Racism and Xenophobia) on how many of the members of the EU (European Union) can define Islamophobia. The results were seven of fifteen members do not know the exact meaning of the word, only two members could define it and the rest were able to...
know the closer definition (Allen 147). Islamophobia was not a consequence of the 9/11 but it dates back to the 19th century Europe as it is explained by the diagram above. Islamophobia’s consequences showed that Muslims suffered from aggressive treatments began by the verbal abuse until the physical violence (Allen 153). Westerners started expressing their feelings towards Muslims sometimes aggressively while other times peacefully (Allen 144). Allen said that the definition of Islamophobia is in a way unclear and inappropriate to fit the situation that Muslims lived in (144). The phobia is to be different and to have a thing that others do not have and that is the case of Muslims (Allen 150). Americans were aggressive towards anything related to Islam; they showed how much they want Islam to disappear (Allen 150).

In her analysis of the data given by the FBI and some of the Arab and Muslim organizations, Disha found that the increase in the percentage of hatred against Arabs and Muslims in the period between 2001 and 2002 increased in a remarkable way (28). The number of crimes in 2000 caused by religious bias was around 18.3%; it increased in 2001-2002 to 18.9% (Disha 28). Anti-Arab and Anti-Muslim crimes were higher than any other hate crimes like against Blacks or other racial groups of the society (Disha 33). Islamophobia grew due the exaggeration of the Media that portrayed Muslims generally and Arabs particularly as terrorists that should be feared and the government that supported the media in its intolerant actions (Disha 33). Another element that helped in the spread of the phenomenon was the sentiments that both Muslims and Non-Muslims feel toward each other (Disha 33). There is also the lack of information about Islam by the American people that raises their influence by all what is said and showed by the media (Disha 33). A Pew research reported that Americans who believe that Islam and Christianity or Judaism has nothing to share
increased by 11% and *USA TODAY* explained that more than a 20% of the Americans refused to be surrounded by Muslims.

The environment was uncomfortable for Muslims who were attacked and blamed for the events. Mosques and Muslim organizations turned into suspected places that hold terrorists which placed them under government surveillance. Policies were created to restrict Muslims and to protect the American society such as the Patriot Act of 2001 which sought to prohibit terroristic actions in the USA and in the world (Allen 153).

### III. Muslim Organizations and Communities in America

With the increase of the number of Muslim in the USA, people tried to preserve their identities and beliefs; therefore, there was a need of a controlling and a guiding power. Organizations, communities, sororities, and institutions were founded and established. The major ones survived and continued their works while those with no roots collapsed. Intellectual leaders appeared and Muslims created a way to be unified and to have contact. In 2004, the Zaghbi International Corporation found that 25% of the American Muslims were Arabs, 30% were Asian and 20% were African Americans and the rest were from Muslim origins such as Iranians and Indonesians. Statistics given by Pew Centre in 2007 showed that 65% of the adult Muslims were born outside America, 15% were a second generation Americans and 81% of the Muslims were American citizens.
1. The Nation of Islam (NOI)

The organization opened its doors to the Muslims of Detroit in 1930 by Fard Muhammad. Fard Muhammad was influenced by the ideas of Noble Drew Ali who was a radical Muslim. He addressed mainly African Americans to collaborate and create a better Muslim community that can survive in a country varied in faiths. His followers were immigrants who witnessed the inequality and the marginalization from Whites in the South. Fard believed in separation between Blacks and Whites and he extremely installed in the adherents the idea that their culture should not mix with the
other cultures to keep clean and safe. The organization was seen as an extremist vision of Islam, which was by their explanation a tradition that is introduced specifically to Blacks and in some occasions to the rest of people (Curtis 4).

1.1. Elijah Muhammad

Elijah Poole had crossed a hard way to become Elijah Muhammad from unemployment to leadership following the path introduced in Fard’s messages to African Americans (Curtis 63). When he became leader of the NOI, he spread his teaching in a creative way that was based on the translations of the Qur’an and the Bible and he was an intellectual mind until the appearance of Malcolm X (Curtis 63). Elijah made great efforts to establish a community that does not refer to whiteness in any way. Cutis said that he has an absolutist and particularistic views on how to lead his Nation (63). For Elijah, Fard was the Devine and he should be followed blindly. His mission to spread Islam was prophetic and his contact with old texts and books of Islam helped him to apply his vision (Curtis 63). In 1975, Elijah Muhammad passed away leaving behind him a Nation of more than a quarter million followers and a son called Warith Deen Muhammad to lead them (Curtis 63).

1.2. Malcolm X

Malcolm X was more than an American activist; he was a hero for humans in general and for blacks in a specific way. Malcolm Little used X as his last name because he never knew his real family’s name. Malcolm was intelligent and dreamed of becoming a lawyer but he failed to do so due to his color. The reason behind his joining to the activist work was the sight of a Black man from NOI being insulted by the police. In 1964, he delivered one of his most important speeches entitled “the
Bullet and the Ballot” that was as an invitation to African-Americans to ask for their right to vote and to be part of the American society in the same way as the Whites.

Malcolm X joined the NOI in order to fight for the rights of Blacks that were oppressed and inferior in their country. He has two different personalities: one that appeared in his beginning with the organization and one after becoming a Sunni Muslim. He helped Elijah Muhammad in spreading his ideas through the expansion of the movement. He started his way in explaining his views about Islam with delivering speeches all around the country and outside the United States. He was one of the most wanted figures to speak on campuses and known colleges of the country. He stressed the main elements for a Black community that appreciated its blackness and a nation of people that were separate from Whites and better than them.

Malcolm saw Islam from a universalistic point of view. He combined between Islam as a religion and Islam in politics (Curtis 86). His views contradicted with Elijah’s and it was believed that this was the reason behind his assassination in 1965. Malcolm was shot for leaving the organization and creating his own vision of Islam. When he was a part of the NOI, Malcolm was radical in his views and was one of the followers of Elijah’s vision but when he left and became a Sunni he learned how to be moderate and to be a part of the society.

2. Moderate Organizations

The Nation of Islam was extremistic in view and isolated in believing; therefore, other organizations appeared that were open minded towards others. The American Islamic Congress (AIC) is an organization formed in 2001 by Zaineb Al-Suwaij to gather Muslims under the umbrella of toleration, understanding and justice.
It was based on moderation to create a unified community and shared qualities of a great nation. There is also the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) that focuses on the protection of the Civil Rights of Muslims by trying to overcome and change the widespread stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. Another organization is International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) that is considered as an academic, cultural and educational institution which focuses on Islamic thoughts provided by Muslim intellectuals in the field of Islamic knowledge (Barazangi 10). The Muslim Brotherhood leaders formed it in 1980s. Women organizations were also an effective part of the American Islamic organizations such as the Muslim Ummah of North America (MUNA) which is an organization formed in 1990 to spread the Islamic Dawah and to achieve equality in Muslim life. It calls for a permanent and continuous practicing of religion for a better life.

IV. Muslim Women in America

Women are protected by Qur’an, Hadith and Islamic law. Allah in his Holy Book raises the status of women and gives them similar rights to men without crossing limits to preserve their identity. He said “And for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women” (Qur’an 2: 228). American women are a minority within their own culture. The question asked by Americans is why their women prefer to convert to Islam? Islam for women means family, unity, safety and protecting rights (Lesher 205). Women see Islamic commands as regulations to their lives and protection to their femininity, sexuality and an invitation to a life surrounded by caring people and clear and ideal way. Converted women found the answers for their questions about their identity, status, rights and duties in Qur’an and they took lessons from women in Islam such as the prophet’s wives (Nieuwkerk 44).
1. **The Organizations of Muslim Women**

Muslim women in the USA were active in order to save a place for themselves that maybe they could not achieve in their mother countries. In order not to deviate from their original societies, the majority of women chose to keep their faith alive through their Hijab (Elwell 29). In the beginning, this was refused and seen as inappropriate in a society of modernization. They were ignored by others and disrespected by the Westerners in general and Americans in particular (Elwell 29). The idea of being Muslim women spread through the organizations formed by those women who respect their religion and belongings (Elwell 29).

Conversion of American women grew fast due to the effectiveness of women gatherings and establishment of committees and lectures speaking about the Islamic religion and its respect of women’s lives and rights. In the first period of the conversion of women to Islam, there were no evidences on the exact number of new followers because of the absence of surveillance (Nieuwkerk 78). Women’s roles in the American organizations related to Muslims were very few due to their adherence to men’s leadership which led them to separate their organizations and communities. Women’s gatherings were mainly for helping those who could not preserve their Islamic identity and who were treated harshly by the society or by men.

When women could not find themselves heard by men in their organizations they preferred to create a place where they could produce and benefit from. Organizations, communities, councils and sisterhoods were women’s shelter to find protection and rights’ defenders. From the best examples of these organizations there is Karamah (dignity) which is a nonprofit organization of Muslim women lawyers that deals with the issues of violation and was created to protect human rights through
advocating women to be more powerful in defending their rights. It was founded in 1993 by Azizah al-Hibri who claims that the name should be a sign of equality between men and women and the position of women in society (Barazangi 13). Another one is the North American Council for Muslim Women (NACMW), an organization founded in 1992 in order to serve Muslim women of all ages, classes and races to achieve their goals through education, to teach them about Islam, their rights protected by Allah and his prophet and train them to have self-confidence and the power to be an active part of their society (Barazangi 13). One of the active organizations is the Sisters in Islam which was founded in 1988 and is a non-governmental organization based on the principles of Qur’an and the rights of women that were protected by their Lord (Skinner, Ruther, and Cantlon 628). Women succeeded in achieving their goal and becoming an active part of the society. Islam added to their success the protection and the availability of their demands. They lived under the umbrella of their patriarchal society but Islam refused the idea of enslaving them.

2. **The difference between Arab Muslim Women and American Muslim Women**

   “The family pattern of these two communities is approximately American. The wife is not merely the equal of her husband; she also dominates the family” (qtd in Haddad 12).

   Family life and responsibility were of a great importance in the lives of American Muslims who tried to surround themselves with Islamic symbols to overcome the dominance of the Christian society (Haddad, Smith and Moore 82). The structure of the family was introduced by the Qur’an which stated that the family is
composed of a pair, a female and a male who are linked by marriage and to protect the
structure Muslim immigrants tried always to keep close to each other (Haddad, Smith
and Moore 84). Researchers found out that women urged the mosque building not
only that but they also helped financially (Haddad 12). Before 1990s women were
religiously active home but after they contributed publically in social, educational and
academic life (Haddad 14). Activism became a must in Muslim women’s lives
because it is a way to made them feel they are equal to men, overcome oppression and
segregation and to be an efficient part of the society (MacGinty 388). Activism for
them was a way of Dawah and to change the portrayal of Islam in the minds of the
Americans (MacGinty 388).

Arab Muslim women in America suffered from issues of identity; many of
them faced self-searching, self-learning and self-identification for their “Arabism”
and “Islamicity” to become an American citizen with an Islamic belonging (Barazangi
1). Barazangi said that Arabism and Islamicity were not guaranteed by “Islamic dress
code” and the belief in Allah and his messenger because of the outsider vision toward
women’s identity as Muslims (2). Hijab was used by Americans as a tool of
segregation and was also used by Muslim males, so in many occasions women were
obliged to justify their appearance (Barazangi 3). When women started their way to
identify their belongings they first had to understand the Islamic principles then to
benefit from the elements of the foreign culture in order not to change their identity as
Arab Muslims (Barazangi 15).

American Muslim women learned how to be convinced by Islam as a way to
practice it (Monem 111). Monem said that they were surrounded by Christians who
made them feel distant and strange and the only way they could preserve their Islamic
identity was through the creation of organizations to help young women to overcome the vision of the society and the second American Muslim generation to establish themselves as a part of the society (112). Those organizations were a medium for women to express their Islamic views and answer questions related to them from an Islamic point of view (Monem 117). African American Muslims embraced Islam because of the teachings, lectures and speeches delivered by Elijah Muhammed and Malcolm X (Gillette 152).

For both Arab Muslim women and American Muslim women education was the solution to overcome the stereotypes and the negative image about Muslims (Monem 117 Bullock intro). Muslim women were able to participate in what is seen as secular Western culture some of them created a new future for Muslim women in America while others were tight to the origins of women in Islam (Haddad, Smith and Moore 164).

Conclusion

Islam in America grew fast due to many reasons such as immigration, and contact between Muslims and non-Muslims. Enslavement was another reason why Islam expended in the USA. Archaeologists said that Islam appeared on the American continent before the coming of Columbus but nothing was proved until they start finding some of the Islamic traces that were left after their disappearance. Natives were in contact with Muslims and took many of their traditions and way of life. After the coming of Columbus, Islam was a part of the establishment of European colonialism because members of the crew of the ship were Muslims. Slavery was a
practice that helped Islam to be known by the American society. The American vision towards Islam changed from one era to another because people became curious about this new religion and Muslims made efforts to create a good image of their faith.

The involvement of Muslims in the American society was noticed due to the efforts made by Muslims and non-Muslims to achieve the goal of becoming the most powerful multicultural society in the world. Even though there were a group of people supported the idea of banning Muslims from entering the USA but American realized that Islam is one of the components of the American nation (Holly N.p). It was an invitation to Muslims to spread their culture within a variety of people. Mosques, organizations, governmental involvement and productions led to the establishment of a strong Muslim Ummah in the USA.
Chapter Two

Islam and the New Convertors

Introduction

Islam came to America from different sides and in different ways. It creates its own identity in the American nation not to compete with other religions and not to clarify that Islam is not terrorism, because Islam is higher than that. It came in order to spread the religion as Allah and his prophet asked every Muslim to do so. Islam was based on particular practices that needs a place were to be done.

This chapter will discuss the following points in details giving a glance on how converters enriched the Islamic thought and how much Islam is tolerant and respective towards other religions. It also explains the way Islam grew in population, which led to the growth of the places of worshiping that was the first thing Muslims thought about when they entered the USA. They were looking about where and how to practice their religion privately and safely. The places where Muslims gather were inappropriate to serve the needs of the religion, so they thought about building Masjid (mosque), centers and organizations. The first mosque built on an American land was by the Albanian immigrants in 1915 in Bedford, Maine, where there were remains of a cemetery until 1996 (Russell 65). Followed by series of mosques openings in other states of the US, which was arousing by 87% between 1915 and 1970s and that, can be seen as an
explosion in the spread of the Islamic nation in America (Russell 65). The growth of Muslim population in the US was due to the conversion of mostly Christian people. The largest number of converters is women. The main reason behind such conversion is marriage because it is forbidden for Muslims to marry Non-Muslims, which obliged women to convert to Islam to be able to marry a Muslim and create a Muslim family (Smith 65). While males convert to the religion due to the arguments and answers giving by Islam as many of the converters tell when they are speaking about their way to Islam.

One of the things that helped in the spread of the faith was a step took by scholars from both Islam and Christianity trying to understand the similarities and differences between the two religions in a modern, respective and a civilized discussion. This discussion was first presented by Badru Kateregga and David Shenk as a dialogue similar to what Zakariya Razi done with the schools of thought in Islam but in their dialogue they compared between the two religions (Farsy). The last thing that will be discussed in this chapter is the difference between missionaries i.e. the people whose job is spreading their religion wherever they are and they had no other reasons to live for in a foreign nation, and immigrants who settle in America for business and wealth making.
I. **Mosques and Their Presence in the USA:**

Masjid in Islam has an important role in practicing the right religion. Its importance came from the importance of Salat (Prayer) which is the second pillar of Islam after Shahada (declaring the belief) (Beverly 11). It is both a religious and an educational system which is created to worship Allah alone as he said in this verse: “And the mosques are for Allah (Alone): so invoke not anyone along with Allah” (Qur’an 72:18). Uthman bin Affan said when people argued too much about his intention to reconstruct the mosque of Allah’s Apostle, “You have talked too much. I heard the Prophet saying, Whoever built a mosque, Allah would build for him a similar place in Paradise” (Al-Bukhari 441).
Figure 6: The Number of Mosques in the USA

Source: Pew Research Center
1. **The Significance of Mosques in the Practice of Islam in America**

Pew Research Center’s survey of 2007 showed that mosques in the USA are classified according to ethnic groups: 28% are South Asian, 27% are African American, 16% are a mixture of Asian and Arab mosques, while 15% belongs to Arab and 14% are for other ethnic groups. The importance of religion in the American population is showed through the following chart:

![Figure 7: The Importance of Religion for Americans](source)

Masjid in the Islamic world is a place where people should benefit from the teachings of the Islamic Law and to be closer to Allah. There are special places that gather Muslims all around the world, they concerned them as sacred like Al-masjid al-
Haram in Makkah and it is the place where Muslims make their Pilgrimage for it is the first place Allah favored as his House saying in Surat Al-Imran:

Verily, the first House (of worship) appointed for mankind was that at Bakkah (Makkah), full of blessing, and a guidance for al-Alamin (Mankind and Jinn). In it are manifest signs (for example) Maqam (place) Ibrahim (Abraham); whosoever enters it, he attains security. And hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) to the house (Ka’bah) is a duty that mankind owes to Allah, those who can afford the expenses (for one’s conveyance, provision and residence); and whoever disbelieves [i.e. denies hajj, then he is a disbeliever of Allah] then Allah stands not in need of any of the Alamin (Qur’an 3: 96-97).

Besides al-masjid al-Haram Allah favored al-masjid al-Aqsa which is called Bait-ul-Maqdis in Jerusalem

Glorified (and Exalted) be He (Allah) who took his slave (Muhammed) for a journey by night from al-masjid al-Haram to al-masjid al-Aqsa, the neighborhood whereof We have blessed, in order that We might show him of Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, lessons, signs, etc.). Verily, He is the All-Hearer the All-Seer (Quran 17: 1).

Then there is masjid al-Madinah and it is the mosque of the prophet Peace upon Him which is also counted as a sacred place for Muslims.
The beginning of mosque constructions was from Maine, which contains five mosques today (Russell 65). Since then Mosques became a need for every Muslim that is why they start asking for more. The first mosque that still exists was built in 1919 in Connecticut, followed by a mosque in Brooklyn in 1926. 1930, was the opening of a mosque in Kansas and 1935 was the first mosque in Iowa and exactly in Cedar Rapids (Russell 65). After 9/11 (2001) mosques and Islamic organizations were under higher surveillance.

As it is showed in the map six states contain more than a 100 mosques which are: New York, California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey. There are also seven states that passed the 50 mosques which are: Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, Virginia, Ohio, Maryland, and North Carolina. Other states are ranging between 5 and 45 mosques per state. In a survey done by Bagby Ihsan in 2000 called Masjid Study Project, he found out that the number of mosques in the United States in the period between 2000 when the number was 1209 mosques, and 2011, the number became 2106, which means that the number increased by 74%. In 2004, Bagby made another survey but this time he precise the place, which was Detroit. He found out that 58% of the worshipers are seeing the mosque as a place of ritual and increasing faith while the other 42% see it as a center of activities and learning (Bagby 8). He said that the number of mosques in Detroit increased from 28 mosques in 2000 to 33 in 2003. The conversion led to the expansion of mosques that benefited from a growth of 10% (Bagby 10).

Mosques became a must in the USA due to the increase of the Muslim population. Examples of the first mosques in the USA, there is in Michigan a Mosque that is
considered as the largest mosque that belongs to the Shi’its from Lebanon and Iraq but it received Sunni Muslims. It was built in 1964 in Dearborn, rebuilt and opened in 2005. In New York, the first Mosque was the State Street Mosque that was built in 1955. North Dakota contains the first mosque built by Muslim farmers in Rose which was destroyed in 1978 and a new mosque was built same place in the in 2005. In 2010, there was a project to build a new mosque in Lower Manhattan called the Zero Ground Mosque two blocks away from the World Trade Center but it was rejected because Americans saw it as a humiliation to the memory of 9/11 (Foley 9).

Normally the number of mosques decline after the event of 2001 but the opposite happened because the number increased. Americans became more curious about understanding Islam for being safe and that was one of the reasons of the growth of Christian converters.

2. The Number of Mosques in Comparison with Churches

Each faith has its own place of worshiping, Muslims call it Masjid or a mosque, Christians said Church while Jewish address it as Synagogue. Their spiritual meaning gives them a charm and improves their ability to affect people. Each one of them is characterized by something special that only can be applicable on it. Their designs differ but their message is the same to worship God and to believe in the faith (Rubenstein and Nunley 74).
The mosque for Muslims is where you can find peace and tranquility as long as you are close to Allah. It is not decorated with paintings or other things. It is a place where people gather to worship Allah. Featured by the minaret, which is a tower made to facilitate the Adan made by the Imam and to be heard by the Muslims in their houses. Mosques in the USA were of a great growth in number in the recent years. 2106 mosques were built in America since 1915, when the first Muslim immigrants settled. Christians are 70.6% of the American population that established itself since the creation of the US. Church which is derived from a word in Greek that means “master” or “lord” it is both the gathering of believers and the place where to practice that believe (Rubenstein and Nunley 74). The number of Churches was around 320,000 in 2007 even though there is a decline in the number of Christian in the past few years as it is said by Thumma, Travis and Warren in their book *Beyond Megachurch Myths*.

As a result, the numbers show a fast growth of Islam while there is a decline in the number of adherents of Christianity. The period after 9/11 (2001) there was a great interest in Islam and Muslims and that was one of the influential elements that made conversion happen and the Muslim population grew.

II. The Dialogue between Religions Vs the Converted Christians

The end of the Cold War was a turning point in the civilizations’ domination, because the Islamic World at that point of time was increasing its power to confront the West, which led to a clash of civilization, and as a result the world order changed (Huntington 29). The Dialogue between religions came to overcome the clash that
happened. The USA was against such a gesture and one of the clear evident on this is the banning of Tarik Ramadan from entering America in 2004. He found himself in the list of terrorists that are unable to enter the United States even though he was known as one of the defenders of moderation and a rejecter of terrorism and extremism (Eck).

1. The Dialogue between Religions

The differences created by the history were a reason behind the refuse of the others that do not share the same values and way of thinking. A dialogue means two people talking, sharing ideas, advices and extracting conclusions. In religion this dialogue is made to understand each other’s faith and how it works. It can be taking in a formal or informal ways between individuals and communities. Its object is to benefit from the similarities and learn from the differences in a mutual and understandable way.

The first kind of dialogues between religions is the one that two persons from different faiths meet and make a conversation about their religions. This kind was showed through the book A Muslim and a Christian in a Dialogue. In the first part, the Muslim author spoke about the Muslims and their lives under Islam followed by responses of the Christian one, while in the second part they changed the roles and became the Muslim responding to the Christian’s ideas. This type of conversations explains that religion is not to close on the one’s life but it is to share in order to know more. Allah asked us to learn about others and to communicate with them. He created people different to complete each other and he said that to know more about other people’s ideas, languages and faiths is to be warned and to be saved from them (Kateregga and Shenk 6). The
second kind of dialogues is the one that came from a converted person who is acknowledged about both faiths. This type was discussed by Baagil in his book *Muslim Christian Dialogue*. He answered the most common questions asked by a Christian about Islam and in the same time trying to convince him that his holy book, his beliefs and all what is related to his religion are mistaken with proofs from the Bible and the Qur’an. Later he was the reason behind the conversion of the Christian man and the discussion turned into a conversation between two Muslims who knows the religions deeply to understand that Christianity is not the right path.

There is a slight difference between the study of religions and the dialogue between religions. Both fields share the meaning of an idea that creates the unity of religions. The study of religions is the examination of the construction of the faith and the dialogue is to coexist, respect and tolerate the other religions (Pye 5).

2. The Converted Christians

Conversion is always related to the life events that chock the converters and make them think deeper in life. It makes them more curious about their existence and asks questions about the creation (Brown). They are in their one of the sincerest moments in their lives, they are humbled, week and destroyed. That is why they resort to God because in this sensitive situation they are unconscious. Christians in that time they do not believe in Trinity they only believe in God (Brown). Even Muslims are tested by hardships to show how much their belonging to Islam is strong but sometimes calamities make people approach Allah but as soon as they get tranquility they forget their Lord who helped
them. About this kind of persons Allah said in his book: “And when harm touches you upon the sea, those that you call upon vanish from you except Him (Allah Alone). But when He brings you safe to land, you turn away (from Him). And man is ever ungrateful” (Qur’an 17: 67)

For those who entered Islam after making researches and find out that Islam was full, unique and impressive in every detail they succeeded in their way close to Allah. The number of converters was determined, by Bagby in his study on mosques, by 41% since the 1990s. The period of 1970s characterized by the highest number of converters who were mainly African Americans but it declined in the 1990s (Bagby 17).

2.1 Stories of Conversion

Converters like to share their experience with Islam. They see it as a way to make other understand why a Christian born man or woman prefers to change his/her religion. Their experiences allow other to compare between the two religions and extract which one is better. The converters such as Yusuf Estes and Lawrence Brown try to make their best to speak about their encounters with Islam and not ask people to convert but give them the chance to try the new religion.
2.1.1. Yusuf Estes

Yusuf Estes is an American converted Muslim from Texas his real name was Joseph Estes. He was born in 1944 from a Christian family. He is one the figures of Islam that enriched the Islamic population through his story of the way in which he found the right path and the true religion in 1991 (Estes).

Estes said that before coming to Islam he was a passionate Christian, he thought that the message he is communicating and transferring to people will save them when the last Day “Elyawm alakhir” comes. He used to work in business besides his Christian message delivering. He had a bad image about Islam and Muslims and he never thought about meeting them because he saw them as terrorists, hijackers and kidnappers. He said that he was asking himself how to trust people who worship a black box in the desert and kiss the ground five times a day. He was wondering also about their treatment towards women and children and how they are seemed to be in a prison.

One day he was obliged to have a job with an Egyptian Muslim man. The idea he had about Muslims was different from what he actually saw. He thought he would meet a man like Bedouins but the surprise was that the man looks normal as anybody else without even a big beard that is why Estes immediately thought about how to convert him to Christianity. Another time Estes was astonished when he saw the man living his work and does the five prayers on time. He was doing that every day except on Fridays he would go to the “Masjid”. Another thing the man used to do is Fasting on Mondays and Thursdays. Beside all these qualities the man was honest in doing his work.
Until it came the day that changed the views of Estes when the man asked about the Bible, Estes said that there is three versions one with him because he is Protestant, another with a Catholic friend, and a version of his father. The man said that Muslim share the same version of Qur’an that is in Arabic, the way it came and it is perfect, nothing is missing, no words are missing, not even a dote is missing. The man asked about the Trinity, here Yusuf Estes tried hard to explain giving many examples but he failed to persuade him. The man said one thing and they set there with no expression, he said: It is pretty simple Say: He is Allah, One. Allah-us-Samad (the self-sufficient Master). He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him (Qur’an 112).

After that incident Estes started doubting, not about God, but about the Bible that contains many serious mistakes. He began his researches with what is Christianity? It came from Jesus Christ but did Jesus say he was a Christian? He found that there is no insight on that, the only thing said about this subject was taking from the Antioch which means long after Jesus was gone, and after Paul came to change the religion. He asked himself if the name is not right, the book is full of mistakes and even the other religions are not an impressive option so what about Islam?

On the one hand, he knew that Muslims believe in Jesus “Isa” and believe that he is a prophet, a miracle birth, and he did miracles even he spoke when he was born. While Jewish who were closer to Christians do not believe in him. The only difference between the belief of Muslims and Christians in Jesus is that Muslims believe he is the son of Marry and Christians believe he is the son of God, Muslims also believe that Jesus is not
dead but he is with Allah and he will come in the last day. On the other hand, in the Bible they believe that God when he wants something it will happen like in the Qur’an when Allah says to something be it will be (كون فيكون).

Another thing Estes knew about Islam that it is based on proofs. You cannot say any word that you cannot prove like in Christianity, where they say many things that does not exist in the Bible. So when the Egyptian man explains anything to Estes, he recites the Qur’an in Arabic even though he does not understand, but because it is the words of Allah and his Prophet BPUH are the proof that what is said is 100% true. The recitation of the Arabic verses and Hadiths, with giving him the equivalent in English made Estes more curious to listen. Example of what the Muslim told him, Hadith the prophet Mohammed Blessing upon Him خيركم من تعلم القرآن وعلمه (khayrokoum man taalama l qoran wa aalamahou) which means in English “The best of you are those who learn the Qur’an and teach the Qur’an.”

Estes said that his friend was tolerant in answering his questions and he knows about his religion as a geologist more than he knows about Christianity as a preacher. He explained to him the five pillars of Islam and the six pillars of faith. He Said t that the Muslim man told him that Allah pre-destine and controls everything, and here comes a question so why we are punished or rewarded? In Islam everything is the result of our intention “Niya” but after that everything comes is Allah’s qadar (destiny) and that is when you live as a Muslim, by understanding that Islam means to be surrender, submitted, to obey and to give up but more than that to be sincere, which means Islam does not came by force it came by heart.
The Catholic priest became a Muslim and Estes’ wife became interested in Islam and Estes himself was thinking about all what his Egyptian friend told him. The night of his Islam he went to his friend and he was waiting for him to say: “be a Muslim” but his friend told him: “I am not the one to guide you the only one who is able to do so is Allah”. Yusuf Estes went home, put his head on the floor and said: “God if you are there guide me”. The moment he raised his head he was convinced that Allah is the one and only and Mohammed is the last messenger and his should follow him and tell people about his way to Islam (Estes).

2.1.2. Laurence Brown

Laurence Brown is an America doctor in George Washington University Hospital. He is one of the converters to Islam who had a strong affection on people especially that his way to Islam was hard. He spoke about his daughters who were the reason behind his Islam. The first daughter Christina was a miracle that Allah sent to Brown to make him think about his greatness. Brown did not recognize until Allah chocked him with the situation of his new born daughter Hanna (Brown).

Brown said that Christina was standing on her feet since her birth; he thought that this is impressive but he never thought that Allah is approaching him. In 1990, his daughter Hanna was born with a coarctation of the aorta. This is a medical situation that means she is not going to survive for a long time because her body is not getting enough blood and her tissues were suffocating. Brown at that time was under chock, he was unable to believe that his daughter is dying and he cannot help her even he is a doctor.
When the doctor came to see her Brown preferred to leave the room and went to a praying room in the hospital. For the first time in his life he was in need of help from a supreme power. Because Brown was an atheist he just said what he felt: “O God if you are there, I do not know if you are there or not, please help me”. And then he made a promise if God helped his daughter, then guided him to the most pleasant religion to Him he would follow it.

After 15 minutes, he came back to the intensive care room where his daughter was. He felt something going on and then the doctors said that his daughter is fine. There was no logical explanation for how the child who was minutes ago in a serious condition just gets better. Now, Brown was obliged to fulfill his promise and he started searching about the right religion. His passed through Buddhism, Tarvuism, Shintoism, and Hinduism but none of them was the right religion for him.

Judaism was having some truthfulness in its details but that was not enough to make him believe in it. Here comes Christianity which is the second of the Abrahamic religions. He approached all the sets of Christianity but he could not found the answers for his questions. Trinity does not exist in the Bible so why it is believed by Christians? Many Christian priests do not know what is in the Bible they accepted Christianity blindly because their ancestors were Christians. Jesus was the son of God and in the same time the son of Man and there is no logical explanation for that. And many other mistakes were in the Bible that no one can give answers.

His way through all these religion made him out with a conclusion that Jesus is a prophet, God is one, and the relation between the creator and the creature is direct, and
man is accountable for his actions. Years passed and Brown was unable to find the right path that God favoured to him. Islam was his last direction because everything was clear and answered with proves and arguments by Allah and his prophet Peace be Upon Him.

Islam was the conclusion in the chain of revelation. God guides who he wills and sincere is the road towards Allah and his path. Allah never disappoints his worshipers when they resort to him and being honest in asking him. Converting to Islam and continue being Muslim is a hard test to be passed (Brown).

The conclusion that can be derived from these two stories that Christianity is the religion of contradicts. The contradictions existed in it were due to the diversity of the Bible’s versions. While in Islam Qur’an is one version recited in Arabic translated to other languages to facilitate its recitation for new converters. For the people who want to understand the real meaning of Qur’an they should learn Arabic.

III. The Difference between American Muslims and Arab Muslims

In 2007 Pew Center released a study that said that 65% of Muslims are adults born outside the USA, while 15% are second generation, and 81% of all Muslims are American citizens. They also, said that the majority of Muslim African Americans are males while the majority of American Muslims of white skin are females. The International Corporation of Zaghibi in 2004 explained that 25% of Muslims in the US are Arabs, 30% are Asians, 25% are African Americans and 20% are Muslims of other races.
1. **American Muslims:**

   In 2005, President Barack Obama met American Muslims in the White House to discuss the problems they face in their daily life as Muslims such as civil rights, anti-Muslim bias, and extremism. It was the first time Obama has a meeting with the American Muslims even though he met all the parts of the minorities in America. This meeting was seen as an invitation from both sides to overcome the growing sentiment of anti-Muslims (Warikoo).

   Islam has always been a part of America's story… [S]ince our founding, American-Muslims have enriched the United States. They have fought in our wars, they have served in our government, they have stood for civil rights, they have started businesses, they have taught at our universities, they've excelled in our sports arenas, they've won Nobel Prizes, built our tallest building, and lit the Olympic Torch. And when the first Muslim American was recently elected to Congress, he took the oath to defend our Constitution using the same Holy Koran that one of our Founding Fathers—Thomas Jefferson—kept in his personal library… Barack Obama
American Muslims considered as both a minority among American and among Muslims. It is 2% of the total population in the USA, the majority of them are Sunni. Mosques and Islamic Organizations are not of a strong supporter to the American-Muslims, so that is why their issues in The Islamic faith are of less importance in the discussions of Islam in America (Harvard Conference 9). But after all the American-Muslims are a part of Islam and that was seen through the 2011, when a museum in New York wanted to reopen its Islamic gallery that contains images of the prophets they were afraid of the reaction of the American Muslims and tried hard to convince them (Harvard Conference 15).

American Muslims were numerous from different backgrounds. 30-42% of them are African Americans and there is a growth in the number of European Americans (Leonard 5). Only 10-20% of them attend the mosque due to the lack of knowledge about the Islamic law and jurisprudence and also they do not understand the Arabic language that makes it difficult for them to cooperate with other Muslims (Leonard 7). Before 9/11
the American Muslim leader aimed to change the American nation through the American Islamic Umma, but after the events the media attacked Muslims and prevented their involvement in the political life. American Muslim saw the 9/11 from two sides, one as an opportunity to spread Islam with the great attention put on it by the Media and the other saw it as a decrease in the achievements of Islam in the previous years (Leonard 13).

Economically the American Muslims are less effective than American Jews (Mazrui 493). Politically, they are accredited for the efforts made by the American Muslim Council in the foreign policy making (Mazrui 494). The Jewish succeeded in overcoming the national origin issues to create their American Jewish identity while Muslims are still suffering to identify their belonging (Mazrui 495). American Muslims are economically weaker than Jewish but politically stronger (Mazrui 505).

2. Arab Americans

Arab immigration began in 1880s; the number of Arab Americans living in the USA today is 3.6 millions, their majority native-born (Arab American Institute). 42% of those immigrants are Muslims (Baker et al. 1). Recently, there was a fattest increase in the number of Arab Muslims in America 82% of them are citizens (Arab American Institute). The majority of the Arab Muslims are the third and fourth generation of the immigrants of 1948 (Pulcini 27).
In 1998, Bill Clinton addressed an Arab American conference in the Arab American Institute as the first president to take a step forward to say that they belong to the American nation (Kulczycki and Lobo 460). Arab Muslim became more visible in the recent years due to their involvement in the political life (Kulczycki and Lobo 460). After 9/11 (2001) Arab Muslims became a subject of hate crimes (Kaushal, Kaestner and Reimers 276). The 2001 FBI annual hate crime report showed that there is an increase in the number of hate crime against Arab Muslims and even against Sikhs who are similar to Muslims (Kaushal, Kaestner and Reimers 276). There was also an increase in the number of discrimination mainly against men because women are not recognized as a threat (Kaushal, Kaestner and Reimers 277). This discrimination resulted in the loss of jobs, changing in the locations and the decline of wages and earnings by 11% while the work hours were stable (Kaushal, Kaestner and Reimers 286).
Education in the USA is reflected through the incomes. Pew Research Center in a survey made in 2007 found that 16% of the Muslim’s incomes are $100,000, 10% get $75,000 to $95,000, and 15% their incomes around $50,000 to $74,999, 24% gets between $30,000 and $49,999 and 35% get less than $30,000.

**Conclusion**

In the end of this chapter the results that can be extracted are the following: the American nation was enriched by Islam that is the main reason behind the vast growth of Muslims. Mosques are not the source of terrorism as it was seen after 9/11 but they help Muslim to contribute in the American society. The videos published online by converters speaking about their experiences and ways of achieving the right religion were of a great affect on the minds of the Christians who are still suffering from the contradictions of the
Bible and the less acknowledgment of the priests who cannot answer their questions. In order to have experiences and information about the other religions scholars tried to create a way of communication that is called the dialogue between religions. American Muslims and Arab Muslims are considered as a minority in the American society but they succeeded in creating a visible identity through the political work.
General Conclusion

This research work is an investigation of Islam in America. It explains how Islam reached the new land. After analysis, it shows that although Islam is a new religion in America and its image has recently worsened because of 9/11 (2001), the number of converts has grown fast along with the growth of the religion. Islam started its way to America before the arriving of Columbus due to the contact between Native Americans and African Muslims and Arabs. Archeologists said that this contact was because of trade and goods’ exchange. The contact reached its highest point with the Arabs who were famous for their voyages to other lands wanting to expand their knowledge and to enrich the other nations with the achievements of sciences, literature, philosophy and religion they had from the Qur’an and Hadith. Historians discussed the theory of the presence of Muslims on the ship of Columbus even claiming that Columbus reached the Americas because of Arabian maps that show the unknown land. Slavery was another reason behind the growth of the Islamic population in the USA in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries.

Muslims before 1964 were allowed to enter the USA without limitations. All kinds of people were able to get their opportunity to settle and create a life in America but with the great number of immigrants and overpopulation, the government created a selective system of immigration to reduce the number of Muslims specifically and others generally. With 9/11, the growing sentiment of hatred toward Muslims was not a barrier
to the expansion of Islam but it was a reason to enrich the Islamic nation in the US. Because of the lack of information about Islam, Americans have become more interested about the religion of ‘terrorism’ as they were seeing it. Curiosity led them to make researches and get more acknowledged about the religion.

Muslims in the 19th century were actively involved in the American nation due to the creation of organizations and communities of Muslims to gather them under the umbrella of Islam and to preserve their Islamic identity. Some of these organizations were extremist in their views about others and considered themselves as a separate society within the large American society such as the Nation of Islam that addressed the African Americans as the only American to serve the right Islam. Other organizations were created only to practice Islam and to spread it. Women also were active in the Islamic community to protect the rights of women in a foreign society and to save those converts from discrimination.

In the present time, Islam has reached an impressive point in the American nation. Mosques are in every state and Muslims can practice their religion freely. Although there was an opposition from some groups who succeeded to stop building a new mosque in New York, the number of Mosques between 2001 and 2011 inflated by 74%. Conversion of Christians has been an important phenomenon in the recent times. Converts believe in the power of Islam through making researches, comparing between the two religions and the help that they get when they are in their hopeless times. The dialogue between religions helped in the conversion of many Christians due to the mistakes and contradictions that exist in the Bible. Until now, Muslims have been a minority in the
USA and American Muslims have constituted a minority within Muslims. They are considered as a crucial part of the Muslim nation because of their involvement in politics. Even though they are less involved economically as Jews, they have been a part of the American society for long times while Arabs have only been recognized lately as active components of the American society.

To sum, the Islamic faith is a part of the American society. It is expending in a remarkable way through the conversion of Christian who for a long time were in clash with Muslims. Muslims are establishing their community that is getting involved more in American life. By building mosques and organizations, delivering speeches and initiating conferences to talk about Muslims’ religion as the right path that is not that of terrorism, they send a message of peace and tolerance to the whole world.
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Appendixes

This is the famous Red Bird Petroglyph known since pioneer days and enrolled on the National Register of Historic Sites.

On December 7, 1994, this historic stone fell from a sandstone cliff and rolled onto highway 66 on Lower Red Bird. On December 9, 1994 it was transported here and set up in its home.

At least 8 Old World alphabets are engraved on it. These alphabets were extinct when Columbus arrived in the New World in 1492.

The alphabets are first century Greek and Hebrew, Old Libyan, Old Arabic and Iberian-Punic which probably dates from the 9th century B.C. Ogam, Germanic Runes and Tifinagh-Numidian are also on this stone.

Of all the hundreds of important, translatable and published inscriptions in the U.S.A., this is the first one to have been given official protection. Clay County and the City of Manchester have granted protection to this stone. In doing so, they have obtained a good name and public esteem worldwide.

Red Bird Petroglyphs in Clay County, Kentucky

The Stone
Red Bird River Petroglyphs

Handwritten notes by Columbus inscribed in the Latin edition of Marco Polo’s Book « Le livre des merveilles du monde »
Semitic or Arabian writing found in southeastern Colorado

Slaves at work collecting sugarcane in a Caribbean sugar field

The Olmec Head