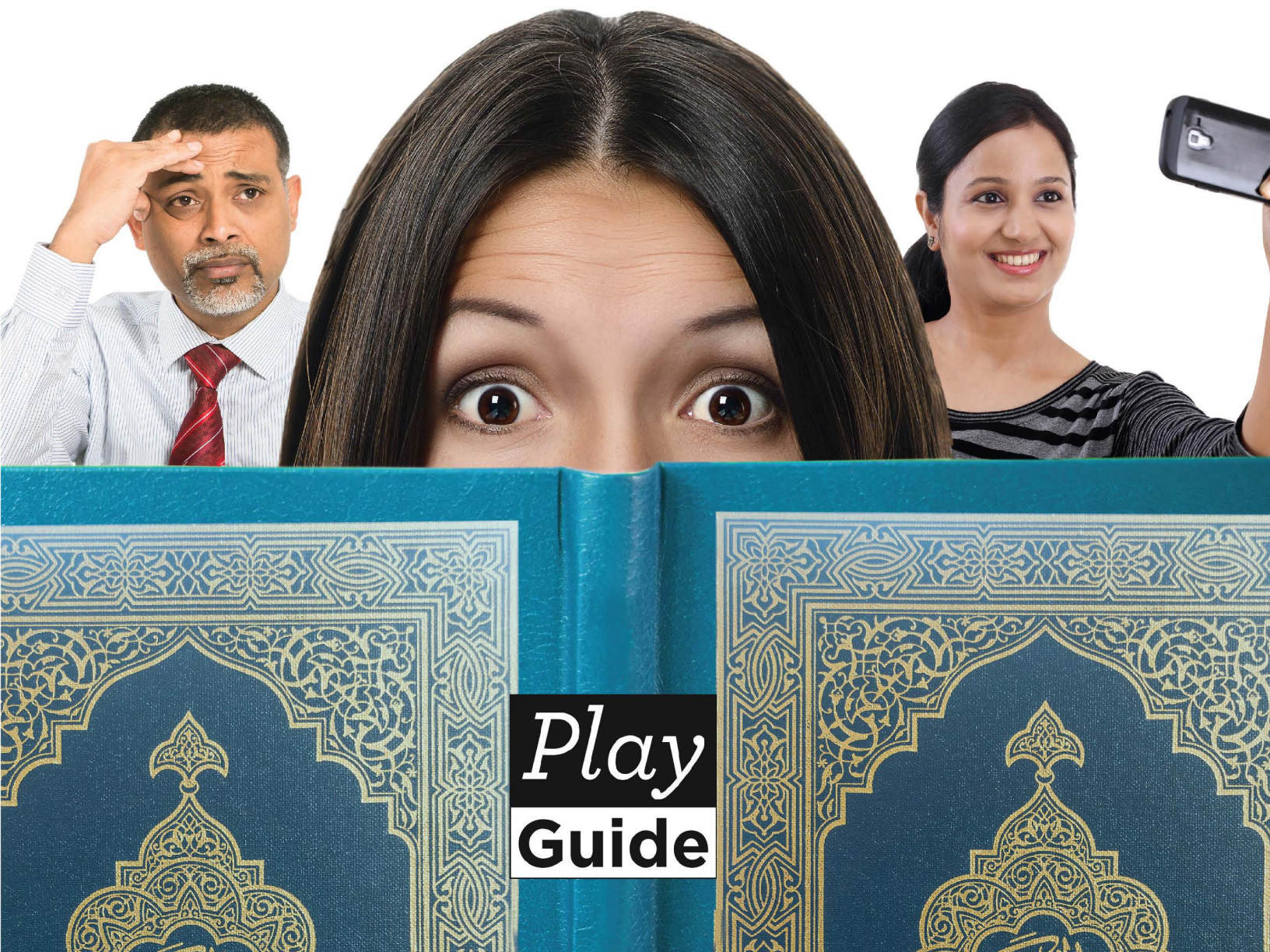


SEPTEMBER 27 - NOVEMBER 5, 2017 | STIEMKE STUDIO

# THE WHO & THE WHAT

Written by **Ayad Akhtar** | Directed by **May Adrales**



*Play*  
**Guide**



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**SEPTEMBER 27 - NOVEMBER 5, 2017**

**STIEMKE STUDIO**

*Play*  
**Guide**

Executive Producers : **Joe and Caran Quadracci**

The Stiemke Studio Season is Sponsored by **Ed Seaberg** and **Patrick Smith**



**Mark Clements**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

**Chad Bauman**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR

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## Table of Contents

### *The Who & The What* at Milwaukee Rep

Synopsis .....	3
Cast and Creative Team .....	3
About Ayad Akhtar	
About Our Production .....	4
Featured Artist .....	5
The Who vs. The What .....	6
Community Engagement Events .....	7

### **Cultural Background and History**

Basics of Islam .....	8-9
Overview	
History	
Practice	
Mosques	
How to Become an Imam	
Pakistani Culture / Fun Facts .....	9
From the Text .....	10-11

### **Cultural Background and History**

Muslims in Milwaukee: Their Voices .....	12-13
Milwaukee Muslim Women Coalition .....	13
Islam Society of Milwaukee .....	13
In Milwaukee .....	14
Glossary .....	15
Other Resources .....	15
Bibliography .....	16

From Milwaukee-native Ayad Akhtar, the Pulitzer Prize-winning writer of *Disgraced* and *The Invisible Hand*, comes a thrillingly fierce and funny new play about identity, religion, and the contradictions that make us who we are. Growing up Muslim with her close-knit family in Atlanta, Zarina is writing about women and Islam when she meets Eli, a young convert who bridges the gap between her modern life and traditional heritage. When her conservative father and sister discover her controversial manuscript, they all must confront the beliefs that define them. Called “a play not to be missed” by the *Chicago Tribune*, *The Who & The What* is a passionate and searing look at a family divided by faith, bonded by love, and searching for truth in contemporary America.

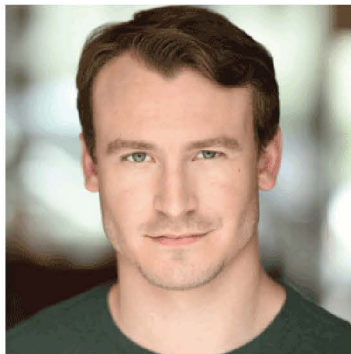
## cast



**Brian Abraham**  
AFZAL



**Soraya Broukhim**  
ZARINA



**Ben Kahre**  
ELI



**Nikita Tawani**  
MAHWISH



**May Adrales**  
DIRECTOR

**Andrew Boyce**  
SCENIC DESIGNER

**Izumi Inaba**  
COSTUME DESIGNER

**Noele Stollmack**  
LIGHTING DESIGNER

**Andre Pluess**  
SOUND DESIGNER

**Dale Brown Casting**  
CASTING

**Frank Honts**  
CASTING DIRECTOR

**Eva Breneman**  
DIALECT COACH

**Richelle Harrington Calin**  
STAGE MANAGER

## creative team

**Kyle Winkelmann**  
STAGE MANAGEMENT FELLOW

**Sophiyaa Nayar**  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

**Nabra Nelson**  
DRAMATURG

## playwright



Ayad Akhtar was born in New York City and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He is a graduate of both Columbia and Brown Universities, with degrees in Theater and Film Directing. He is the author of *American Dervish*, which has been published in over 20 languages and was the 2012 Book of the Year for several publications, including Toronto's *Globe and Mail*. Akhtar is also a playwright and screenwriter; his stage play *Disgraced* won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. As a screenwriter, he was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award for Best Screenplay for *The War Within*. [Ayadakhtar.com](http://Ayadakhtar.com)

“I think that, at its best, what theater does is, it gather us together. We, social herding animals, arrive together in a room, and we behold something that actually happens before us, not something mediated to us by a screen, but the presence of live performers, which hearkens back to a kind of experience of a ritual, and an experience of one mind, one body, a kind of communion that happens in the audience between audience and performers that allows us, reaches into us, where we can experience things more deeply than we can individually.”

— Ayad Akhtar, *PBS News Hour* interview, 10/30/15



# about our production

with Dramaturg, Nabra Nelson

**Nabra Nelson, Dramaturg for *The Who and The What* and Community Engagement Associate at The Rep, gives an inside look into the research for an intricate and moving piece of theater. A**

dramaturg is a dramatist who conducts research in order to further the creative process and collaborate on a specific production. In her own words, Nelson defines dramaturg as, “the person who gets nitty-gritty, facts-based research out of the way to leave a clear path for creativity. I love it since it gives me the opportunity to dive into subjects I might not otherwise have learned about. It is clear how much [the research] can enhance a production”.



When the context of a production revolves around conversations of history, religions, and culture, a dramaturg is a highly necessary member of a creative team. “The way the script approaches Islam is extremely nuanced, challenging, and complex; and it requires a lot of research to fully understand the inner lives of these characters”. Nelson’s favorite part of this position was “being in the room with such thoughtful, open, intelligent, and kind group of people and talking deeply about the subjects in the play. It was also such a pleasure to collaborate again with the Milwaukee Muslim’s Women’s Coalition to provide additional engagement and conversational opportunities.” Without a dramaturg to “help with the research, the team can get caught in the ‘what’ of the play and not be able to dive into the ‘who’”.

**Without a dramaturg to “help with the research, the team can get caught in the ‘what’ of the play and not be able to dive into the ‘who’”.**

Ahktar’s characters show the humanity of a modern day family having to grow and adapt with each other in marriage, beliefs, and art. Nelson eloquently stated, “*The Who and The What* allows its audiences to dive into a very complex and challenging narrative about Islam by presenting a play that is, at its core, universal in its themes of familial dynamics. It is a play that is essential to continue to converse about after leaving the theater because it presents some very difficult subjects, but allows every audience member an access point into the conversation. That is why we have organized a series of panel discussions and an Open Mosque Day in November at a variety of mosques across the city. I am so excited that this is a play that features all Muslim characters and provides a variety of perspectives on Islam and religion in general.”



# featured artist

**SAGENDORPH: What is your design process like? Can you walk us through the stages?**

**INABA:** "The stages of design goes: I read the play first, I get to know the world, and then I do the visual research. Plays that are related to real people or families, it's very helpful to look at real family photos. Then I go to specific research, like garment research, more individual pieces. Then I shop for those pieces. In the fitting, we see it on the body. And sometimes, it's not quite going in the right direction, so we make changes through the fittings and also in rehearsal. A lot of time actors have their own thoughts or ideas on costumes, so I try to incorporate those as much as possible, if I can."

**SAGENDORPH: What was your inspiration for this show?**

**INABA:** "This is pretty much a modern play. But I wanted to get some inspiration from Muslim cultures. I think the important thing is these daughters are Muslim but it doesn't really show how they dress, like they don't have a Hijab or they don't cover up skin, they dress like regular Americans. [These characters] have personalities. I wanted to show the [character] arch with colors. Younger sister starts with very flashy colors and very vibrant, cheerful. But later on she gets a little bit more down to earth. She finds her own way."

**SAGENDORPH: What are the challenges that you faced while designing this show? How do you combat these challenges?**

**INABA:** "We always try to foresee the challenges, or problems, ahead of time. Quick changes are always a problem. Here [at The Rep] I can really focus on what's working what's not working. I can really focus on the costume. I want to find a challenge to make the show better. Lucky thing, being a designer, I can see the show so many times to make it better, but audiences will only get to see it once. That is the impression or the memory they will have around this show."

**SAGENDORPH: Can you describe your inspiration from color, and how you use color to show a character's growth in this production?**

**INABA:** "I thought Zarina, the older sister, is practical or like she's not dressing to impress anybody. So I start with darker, deeper colors. Then she goes on a date [and falls in love] in Act Two, I wanted to see the color shift. In her case, we [also] changed the silhouette. We start her in pants, looking a little hard to approach. Then in Act Two, we decided to put her in a long maxi dress, something more feminine, then she goes back to pants. Then at the end of the show, she has this hopefulness, so I pulled white and grey to make that palette a little lighter. So that there will be a blankness, like a new hope for the future. Each scene has a purpose, I think."

**SAGENDORPH: What is intriguing to you about *The Who and The What*? Why do you think this show is relevant to audiences today?**

**INABA:** "The political situation we are in right now. I think that knowing that America is such a diverse country, but it's not really blended: it's still separated. I'm from Japan, originally, and even though there are many different cultures here, to me it's all American. The more and more I spend time here, living here, I have so many different kinds of people and especially in theater, you get to learn more intimately through stories. So this, *The Who and The What*, is such a good example. I believe there are so many families like this in the United States. We just don't know about that family very well. That inspires me. I hope there will be more opportunities for me to learn, and also I want all the people in this country to be exposed to these stories. It relates universally. The daughter, child, parents, are always caring, for their family. I want people to see that. That it doesn't matter what culture, or religion, you have. At the base level, this is about a father really caring for the daughter and daughter cares about Dad. That's what I want our audience to see. It's not just religion, it's more about family."

with Costume Designer,  
Izumi Inaba

The Who And The What



The Who And The What



The Who And The What





# THE WHO versus THE WHAT

In *The Who and The What*, as Ayad Akhtar states, Zarina is trying to “get at the who” of the prophet Muhammad, by penetrating beyond “the whats.” The following statements are transcribed from Lincoln Center Theater’s interviews with their cast and Ayad Akhtar during their 2014 production of *The Who and The What*:

## The essence, more abstract qualities that make somebody who they are.

## The tangible qualities of a person

Actress Nadine Malouf: “I feel like Zarina has very strong roots in her tradition, in her religion, in her culture, in her love for her family.

But she also has the branches and the leaves and the curiosity and the newness and the constant hunger for knowledge and the complexities of life. She’s kind of pulled in these two different directions – she belongs somewhere in the limbo. Can she be true to the leaves and the roots?”

### ZARINA

- 32 years old
- Writer
- Smartest person she’s ever known
- Daughter
- Older sister
- Muslim

Actor Bernard White: “Afzal is someone who is stuck in his ways, and willing to change, someone who moves about freely in a dark room, curious, decent, unentitled, unworthy, it’s all paradoxes. He’s unworthy in his worthiness, frugal even though he has a lot of money, He’s a guy who says... go wherever you want... Where are you going?”

### AFZAL

- Father
- Millionaire
- Former taxi driver
- Owner of a taxi company
- Widower
- Father of two daughters

Actress Tala Ashe: “I think she is someone who works very hard to stay within the parameters of the culturally correct and the belief system of her life. I think she works so hard to make the what’s of her life stay within that parameter; it’s a real revelation for her to realize her who is somewhere else. Mahwish is the person who is trying to have all the whats of her life be her who, but that’s not actually who she is.”

### MAHWISH

- 26 years old
- Daughter
- Younger sister
- Fiancée
- Wife
- Studying to be a nurse

Actor Greg Keller: “His who is very race and class conscious, he understands who he is through knowing who the other is, his identity is part of that, the essence of who he is, is relationship based.”

### ELI

- Imam
- Convert
- Community organizer
- White
- Suitor



*The Lincoln Center cast of The Who & The What.*



# community engagement events

SUN

Oct 1

**Panel: "The Role of Art in Promoting and Dismantling Stereotypes"** - Curated by the Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition - How can art impact attitudes, behaviors, and values in communities? Is art created solely for the sake of the artist, or does it have greater intellectual and societal impact?

WED

Oct 4  
2pm

**Boswell Books** - Join director May Adrales, as well as actors Brian Abraham and Sorarya Broukhim as they discuss Ayad Akhtar's *The Who & The What* at Boswell Book Company (2559 N Downer Ave, Milwaukee, WI).

WED

Oct 4

**TalkBack** - Join members of the cast and artistic team to discuss the production immediately following the performance.

SUN

Oct 8

**Panel: "Fathers and Daughters"** - Join fathers and daughters from throughout the city to hear perspectives on the influence of father-daughter relationships in moments of disagreement and difference. *(After 2pm performance)*

WED

Oct 11

**TalkBack** - Join members of the cast and artistic team to discuss the production immediately following the performance.

SUN

Oct 15

**Panel: "Contemporary Women in Religion: An Interfaith Discussion"** - Curated by the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, A discussion with women from a variety of faiths in Milwaukee to discuss contemporary conceptions of womanhood in their religion. *(After 2pm performance)*

WED

Oct 18

**TalkBack** - Join members of the cast and artistic team to discuss the production immediately following the performance.

SUN

Oct 22

**Panel: "Depictions and Perceptions of Prophet Muhammad"** - Curated by the Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition, Revered by 1.6 billion Muslims throughout the world, yet misunderstood and even maligned by some: Prophet Muhammad continues to evoke deep emotions. *(After 2pm performance)*

WED

Oct 25

**TalkBack** - Join members of the cast and artistic team to discuss the production immediately following the performance.

SUN

Oct 29

**Panel: "Muslim Women Speak Out!"** - Curated by the Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition, Do Muslim women need to be saved from their faith and culture? Join us as Muslim women share their thoughts and invite the audience to engage in robust discussion. *(After 2pm performance)*

WED

Nov 1

**TalkBack** - Join members of the cast and artistic team to discuss the production immediately following the performance.

SAT

Nov 11  
11am - 4pm

**Open Mosque Day** - Hosted in collaboration with the Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition, *The Who & The What* takes you inside the home of a Muslim-American family; The Islamic Society of Milwaukee would like to invite you inside their doors for an Open Mosque after the run of the show! Don't miss this special opportunity to meet your Muslim neighbors and learn more about their faith and beliefs.

- ISM Brookfield | 16670 Pheasant Dr. Brookfield, WI 53005
- ISM Main Center | 4707 S. 13th St. Milwaukee, WI 53221
- ISM University | 2223 E Kenwood Blvd. Milwaukee, WI 53211



# basics of Islam

## overview

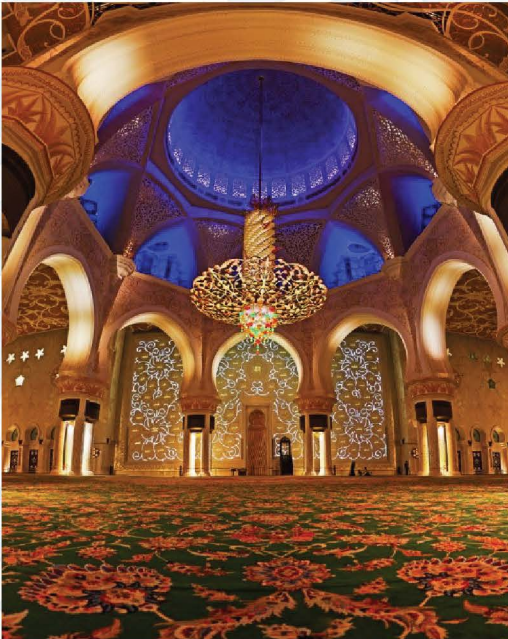
Islam is the world's second largest religion, with 1.6 billion followers, and the fastest-growing major religion in the world. It was founded in Arabia between 610 and 632 by the Prophet Muhammad. At age 25, Muhammad left the caravan trade to embark on a life of contemplation, as a reaction against the polytheistic practices of the inhabitants of Mecca. After the Angel Gabriel announced to him in a vision that he was to be a prophet, Muhammad devoted his life to religious and societal reform, and the abandonment of polytheism.

Muslims, referring to the followers of Islam, revere him as the messenger of the one and only Allah (God), and the last of the prophets descended from Abraham and Jesus. The foundations of the Islamic faith are the Qur'an (or Koran), which is regarded as the true, eternal Word of God, and hadith (tradition) detailing the words and actions of Muhammad.

## history

Disagreements regarding the succession of the prophet induced a division between two Islamic groups: The Sunnis and Shi'ites. Shi'ite tradition rejects the first three successors to Muhammad as usurpers and acknowledge the fourth, Ali, as the rightful leader of the faith, while the Sunni tradition recognizes all four successors as legitimate. From these, numerous other Islamic sects have been derived, including Sufism, which emerged as a form of mysticism in the 8th and 9th centuries.

Sunni Muslims account for 75-90% of the world's Muslim population, Shia Muslims comprise 10-20%, and Ahmadiyya Muslims account for approximately 1%.



## mosques

Merriam Webster's Dictionary defines a mosque as "a building used for public worship by Muslims". Mosques often have features such as a prayer room with a marked wall (mihrab) indicating the direction of Mecca, a minaret (a tower with a balcony) that the muezzin calls the religious to prayer, a dome (symbolic of the vault of heaven), and an ablutions area (a place for washing [wudu] before prayer begins). Traditionally, men and women are usually segregated during prayer. This is typically for the comfort of the women (referencing the nature of their prayer) and to avoid having the men distracted. Some mosques continue to practice this way, while others, such as Mecca's Grand Mosque, have desegregated the two genders. It should also be noted The Qur'an does not require gender segregation, and this is a choice that varies from mosque to mosque. In terms of visitors, Non-Muslims are definitely allowed in a mosque, as long as they are respectful to the people worshiping.

Some standards are universal for dress code and behavior inside the mosque, while others vary from mosque to mosque. Below are examples.

- Men should wear loose, clean clothes that hide the shape of the body.
- Women should wear loose clothing, covering wrists and ankles. Women are expected to cover their head (usually with hijab).
- Clothes should not have distracting or disrespectful images.
- No shoes in the prayer hall.
- Only a man can lead prayer for men. A woman can lead prayer, but it must be for a congregation of only women.
- No loud talking (and avoid talking of disrespectful topics) in prayer area.
- Do not disturb or walk in front of a Muslim who is praying.
- Walls have little on them to avoid distraction. However, some may have calligraphy.

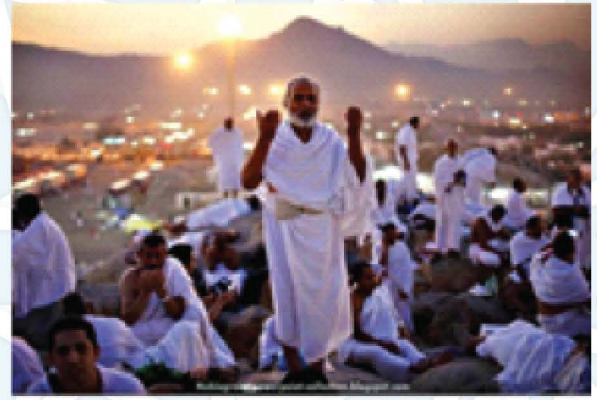




## practice

The primary duties of the Islamic faith are represented by the Five Pillars: profession of faith, daily prayer (five times each day), almsgiving, daylight fasting during the month of Ramadan, and hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca at least once in a lifetime (if possible) which includes homage to the ancient shrine of the Ka'aba, the most sacred site in Islam.

Muslims gather for communal worship on Fridays, during which prayers and a sermon take place at the mosque, which serves as both a house of worship and a center for the teaching of the Qur'an; the imam, or community leader, serves as the teacher and leader of prayer.



The Qur'an and the Hadith outline various dietary laws, which forbid the consumption of pork, carrion, blood, intoxicants including alcohol, and any animal slaughtered in the name of another deity.

The purpose of hijab (veiling) in Islam is primarily to inspire modesty in both men and women. In covering the body, one shields the heart from impurities. Men are instructed to avert their eyes from women, and women are encouraged to wear loose outer garments and to cover their heads and bosoms. The veil affords women modesty, respect and dignity and protects her from harm and the evils of society by covering her beauty.

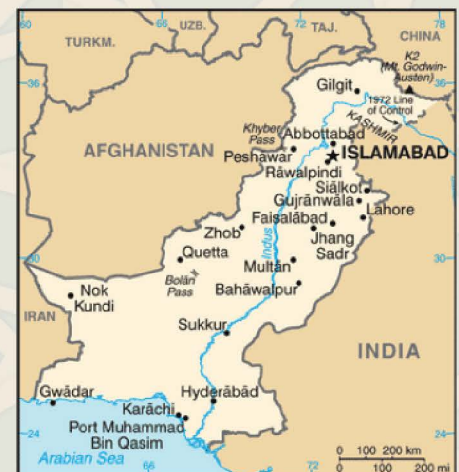
## how to become an imam

The process to become a qualified imam is relatively similar to becoming a priest. One has to go through years of training in traditional Islamic sciences: Arabic first, then study of fiqh (jurisprudence), 'aqidah (creed/belief), Quranic studies, Hadith studies, spirituality, etc. Imams study Arabic first because all the other subjects are taught through books in Arabic, and Islam was originally revealed and recorded in Arabic. This training is about equivalent with a college degree.

"Imam" in Arabic means "leader" and usually refers to someone who has enough religious training (about 4 years of Islamic studies according to most curriculums) to lead a mosque in prayer and the basics of the religion. A mufti is someone who has completed the same training as an imam, but has also done specialized research into jurisprudence (Islamic law). A mufti are consulted on topics such as how to pray, what is forbidden and allowed, etc. Muftis issue fatwas, which are legal rulings/opinions based on the sources of Islamic law - the Quran, sayings of the Prophet, analogous reasoning. Muftis can also specialize in certain aspects of Islamic law such as finance, government, family affairs, etc.

## pakistan

**Location:** Southeast Asia, bordering Afghanistan, China, Iran, and India / **Capital:** Islamabad / **National Anthem:** 'Qaumi Taranah' which translates as 'The Sacred Land' / **Population:** 201,995,540 (as of July 2016) / **Currency:** The Rupee (1 Rupee = 0.016 US dollars) / **Language:** Urdu (the only official language – English being the lingua franca, or bridge language) / **Religion:** 97% Muslim, while the other 3% are Christian, Hindu, etc.



- The word Pakistan comes from the words "Pak" (a Persian word denoting pure or clean) and "Istan" (a Hindi word that refers to a place).
- Popular sports in Pakistan include: Hockey, Cricket, Football, Badminton
- Female relatives are protected from outside influences. It is considered inappropriate to ask questions about a Pakistani's wife or other female relatives.
- The most popular jobs among women in Pakistan are nursing and teaching.
- Pakistan is the 24th largest global economic country in the world.
- Greetings are often between members of the same sex. Men shake hands with each other; women hug and kiss each other.
- Gifts are not opened when received, and are given with two hands.
- At dinners, guests are served first, then the oldest. This goes on in a pattern until the youngest is served.
- Subjects that are considered "taboo" in Pakistan include: Sex, Homosexuality, Dating, Challenging Islamic beliefs



# from the text

**The Who and The What characters, especially Zarina, question texts and core religious beliefs throughout the play. Below is context from Islamic scholars, the text of the hadith (teachings of the Prophet Muhammad), and the Quran (the Islamic holy book) referenced directly in the play to offer some insight for the characters' opinions.**

"And when you ask [his wives] for something, ask them from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their hearts."  
(THE QURAN, VERSE 33:53)

ZARINA: It's about The Prophet. About the day he married Zaynab bint Jahsh. Wife number seven. Who is the reason for the revelation of the veil."  
(THE WHO AND THE WHAT, PAGE 22)

## The Revelation of the Veil

*Hadith Narrated by Anas:*

[At the Prophet's wedding banquet] The Muslims wondered, "Is she (Saffiyya) considered as his wife or his slave girl?" Then they said, "If he orders her to veil herself, she will be one of the mothers of the Believers; but if he does not order her to veil herself, she will be a slave girl. So when the Prophet proceeded from there, he spared her a space behind him (on his she-camel) and put a screening veil between her and the people.

*Narrated by Anas Bin Malik:*

When the Prophet died I was twenty years old, and I knew about the order of Al-Hijab (veiling of ladies) more than any other person when it was revealed. It was revealed for the first time when Allah's Apostle had consummated his marriage with Zainab bint Jahsh. When the and then all left except a few who remained with the Prophet for a long time. The Prophet got up and went out, and I too went out with him so that those people might leave too. The Prophet proceeded and so did I, till he came to the threshold of 'Aisha's dwelling place. Then thinking that these

people have left by then, he returned and so did I along with him till he entered upon Zainab and behold, they were still sitting and had not gone. So the Prophet again went away and I went away along with him. When we reached the threshold of 'Aisha's dwelling place, he thought that they had left, and so he returned and I too, returned along with him and found those people had left. Then the Prophet drew a curtain between me and him, and the Verses of Al-Hijab were revealed. (Volume 7. Book 62. Number 95)

## Muhammad's Daughter, Zainab

Muhammad had three sons and four daughters, all of which were born from his first wife Khadija except one son.

His oldest daughter was Zainab, who was born before Muhammad became a Prophet. She married her maternal cousin, Abu al-As ibn al-Rabi' and Khadija gave her a wedding present of an onyx necklace.

Zainab became a Muslim soon after Muhammad first declared himself a prophet. The Quraysh pressured Abu al-As to divorce Zainab, saying they would give him any woman he liked in exchange, but Abu al-As said that he did not want any other woman, a stance for which Muhammad commended him. Muhammad had no jurisdiction over Mecca and therefore could not force them to separate, so they continued to live together despite Abu al-As's refusal to convert to Islam. Zainab remained in Mecca when the other Muslims emigrated to Medina.

Abu al-As was one of the polytheists who was captured at the Battle of Badr. Zainab sent the money for his ransom, including the onyx necklace. When Muhammad saw the necklace, he refused to accept any cash ransom for his son-in-law. He sent Abu al-As home, and Abu al-As promised to send Zainab to Medina.

Zainab was attacked on her way to Medina, where she suffered a miscarriage due to a fall from her camel that is thought to have led to her death many years later.

Zainab did not see her husband again until September or October 627, when he entered her house in Medina by night, asking for protection. The prophet told Zainab to treat Abu al-As like a guest but not to touch him like a husband. Abu al-As then converted to Islam and Muhammad restored his marriage to Zainab, and they resumed their married life. Zainab died shortly thereafter.

ELI: When what was over?

AFZAL: She broke up with him. Just like the Prophet's daughter did. Left the man she loved, because he wouldn't become a Muslim.

(THE WHO AND THE WHAT, PAGE 35)

## Muhammad's Daughter, Fatimah

She is the youngest of his daughters and the only one recognized by the Shiites (they believe the rest were adopted). She is also the only of his daughters to have sons. She took great care of her father when her mother Khadija died, and was always very close to him.



"Fatima was the model of Prophet's teaching among women"

Fatima saw and dressed the wounds sustained by her father due to the stones thrown on him by the non-believers.

She is a central figure in Hadith Al-Kisa (The Hadith of the Cloak) in which the Prophet covers Fatimah, Ali (her husband and his cousin), and her sons in his cloak and they are thereby purified.

This hadith is central to the Shia beliefs. For the Shia, it is the basis of the doctrine that the leader of the Muslims should be purified (per Quran 33:33) and from that particular direct line of descendants of Muhammad through Fatimah and Ali that have thus been purified by God. It also serves as the majority Shia doctrine that this line of descendants are infallible, pure, and sinless (ma'sum). The Shia believe that the hadith shows that Muhammad, Fatima, Ali, Hasan, and Husayn are the only members of the Ahl al-Bayt in the family of the house.

Here is a great resource about her: <http://insideislam.wisc.edu/2012/01/important-figures-fatima-al-zahra/>

"Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will; but do some good act for your souls beforehand; and fear Allah. And know that ye are to meet Him (in the Hereafter), and give (these) good tidings to those who believe."  
(THE QURAN, VERSE 2:223)

#### The Prophet saying that wives are like farms

That is, God's purpose in the creation of women is not merely to provide men with recreation. Their mutual relationship is like that between a farmer and his tilth. A farmer approaches his field not just for the sake of pleasure, but to acquire produce. Similarly, man ought to approach the tilth of the human race with the purpose of acquiring produce, that is, offspring. What is of concern to the Law of God is not the particular mode of cultivating one's tilth, but rather that one should go only to one's tilth and not elsewhere, and that one should go there for the purpose of cultivation.

"Yes, woman is called the tilth for man, but it is not that a parallel is being drawn between her and tilth. Actually it is a simile, that it is man whose seed a woman carries in her womb. It is in this context that this simile is given for understanding. For those who really understand the Quran, this verse asks for better attitude towards women. you see, a farmer looks after his tilth, waters it, protects it against all climate conditions. In the same way man is supposed to take every care of woman, for he has been given more physical strength and has been made her protector and manager of her affairs." ([HTTP://WWW.LETME TURNTHETABLES.COM/2008/06/WHY-QURAN-CALLS-WOMEN-TILTH-FOR-MEN.HTML](http://www.letmeturnthetables.com/2008/06/why-quran-calls-women-tilth-for-men.html))

MAHWISH: You know what I opened to? The Prophet saying that wives are like farms. The husbands could farm them any way they wanted. (THE WHO AND THE WHAT, PAGE 35)

"He frowned and turned away when a blind man came his way. How do you know if (his heart) might be purified or recall (God) and by recollection be rectified? For those who are called wealthy, you attend to them closely and don't bother if they are purified! Yet from one who comes to you hopeful, fearful and clearly humble, you let your attention be shunted aside." (THE QURAN, VERSE 80:1-10)

#### The Prophet and the Blind Man

Written by Irving Karchmar

Original Source:

<https://darvish.wordpress.com/2008/03/10/the-prophet-pbuh-and-the-blind-man/>

This Quranic verse, directed toward the Prophet himself (pbuh), is the harshest reminder in the revelation itself of allowing oneself to be distracted by the affairs of the world, and thereby, even momentarily, losing the insight of its true teachings of love and compassion, kindness and guidance in the worship of Allah, the One who has no partners.

It is further related that Aisha, the wife of the Prophet (pbuh), said that if any chapter of the Qur'an could be wiped out, he had wished it would be this short chapter entitled, He Frowned, that addresses him as the one who frowned and chastises him for his treatment of the blind man.

The old and feeble blind man came seeking some knowledge about the new religion of Islam, but his arrival interrupted an important meeting of Arab tribal elders, powerful and rich men, who, if they had embraced the religion, would have greatly strengthened the community, which was under constant threat."

The Prophet (pbuh) had done what almost any other leader would do in looking out for his community through practical means; he ignored the blind man and continued to talk to the powerful tribal elders.

He admonishes even His own Prophet (pbuh) for ignoring the true seeker, for not taking a moment to answer the old blind man. Most certainly this would have been a real lesson to the tribal elders about the new religion of Islam.

ELI: The Prophet's not perfect. Nobody said he –  
ZARINA: Because of that time he, like, frowned at some Blind Guy. So a chapter in the Quran gets named "He Frowned" and we're supposed to be impressed at how revealing he is about his failings.

(THE WHO AND THE WHAT, PAGE 22)



# Muslims in Milwaukee: Their Voices

*By Janan Najeeb*

Walking into the Islamic Center of Milwaukee (ISM) on any Friday for congregational prayers, one is struck by a strong and thriving Muslim community. More than 1,500 worshippers, representing multiple ethnicities and races usually fill the prayer hall. A large overflow crowd packs the gymnasium, where they listen to the sermon and participate in the prayer via telecast.

Yet, many Milwaukeeans know little about them. At the same time, the unprecedented hostile rhetoric of some U.S. presidential candidates toward Islam in the current campaign season, combined with war in predominantly Muslim countries and the wave of immigration from the Middle East westward, have made Islam in America a hot topic of debate.

With political candidates using fear of terrorism to discriminate against Muslims and the rising Islamophobia that results from conflating ISIS and its atrocities with ordinary Muslims, getting to know our Muslim neighbors is all the more important.

## Who Are Milwaukee's Muslims?

The number of Muslims living in greater Milwaukee is estimated to be between 15,000 and 20,000, consisting of predominantly younger families. They are a family-oriented community, known for their great diversity and attention to academic achievement, with generally above-average vocational and financial status. Muslim physicians, engineers, teachers and business owners are a noticeable presence in Milwaukee, with many living near area mosques.

There are eight mosques, two full-time Islamic schools and a number of organizations that sprang up to serve local Muslims as well as others, including a day care center, a senior center, a free community clinic, a public Islamic library, hair salons that offer privacy to Muslim women who cover their hair in public and a multitude of restaurants and ethnic grocery stores selling halal foods, particularly meat, prepared according to Islamic laws, making them permissible for Muslims to eat.

Many of Milwaukee's Muslims say they are alarmed at the hysterical diatribes, bigotry and racism that have become normalized by some of the Republican presidential candidates. Donald Trump and others have

In March of 2016, Janan Najeeb introduced readers of Shepherd Express to a diverse group of Muslims in Milwaukee in her article "Muslims in Milwaukee: Their Voices." To read more about the speech therapist, personal trainer, real-estate agent, firefighter, pharmacist, physician, professor, or any other Milwaukee community members, click here: [Shepherd Express, Muslims in Milwaukee: Their Voices](#).

stated that they would prevent Syrian refugees, particularly those of the Muslim faith, from entering the country. Some have also said they would encourage surveillance of mosques and create a national database to track American Muslims. What is most alarming are the millions of followers that are euphoric at this blatant bigotry. This rhetoric is in marked contrast with Republican President George W. Bush, who in an extraordinary gesture, stood inside the Islamic Center of Washington, D.C., only six days after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and said:

The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. That's not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace. These terrorists don't represent peace. They represent evil and war. When we think of Islam we think of a faith that brings comfort to a billion people around the world. Billions of people find comfort and solace and peace, and that's made brothers and sisters out of every race—out of every race.

America counts millions of Muslims amongst our citizens, and Muslims make an incredibly valuable contribution to our country. Muslims are doctors, lawyers, law professors, members of the military, entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, moms and dads, and they need to be treated with respect. In our anger and emotion, our fellow Americans must treat each other with respect.

Othman Atta, a Milwaukee attorney and the executive director of the Islamic Society of Milwaukee (ISM), the largest Islamic organization in Wisconsin, which operates three mosques and the full-time, K-12 Salam School, sees a significant difference between what was being said after 9/11 and today.

"Although there were Islamophobic statements after 9/11, it was limited to particular well-known Islamophobes,"

Atta said. "Now we are seeing the mainstreaming of this. These individuals who are encouraging anti-Muslim sentiment are some of the same people that have racist attitudes towards others as well. According to polls, negative attitudes towards Muslims have increased significantly since 9/11; much of this is due to certain media sources, presidential candidates and particular groups that have political or religious agendas."

The Muslim community is responding. There is increased effort to establish more significant relationships with groups that are not bigoted or racist, and there are many of them, said Atta. Requests from schools, churches and peace and justice organizations to visit the Islamic Center or to invite Muslim speakers for educational opportunities are on the rise.

In addition, the ISM has always been involved in giving back to the Milwaukee community. It contributes thousands of dollars to stock the food pantry at the Islamic Da'wa Center, a mosque and community center serving Muslims that live on the north side of Milwaukee.

The ISM also underwrites part of the free health clinic run by the Muslim Community and Health Center (MCHC), conducts blood drives, regularly provides and serves meals at St. Ben's Community Meal and volunteers to help as needed across the city. Volunteerism is highly encouraged in the Muslim community. "Most people have not had an opportunity to interact with Muslims and people fear what they don't know, especially if they are being inundated with hateful and bigoted ideas," said Atta. "Creating opportunities to interact is important in dispelling those fears." The Islamic Society of Milwaukee is part of Doors Open Milwaukee that takes place in September, giving the Milwaukee community an opportunity to visit a mosque and meet their Muslim neighbors.



## How It All Started

Milwaukee's Muslim community began as a loosely connected network made up of university students and families from a wide range of countries, as well as African American Muslims, each with their own cultural practices and religious understanding. It has grown into a close-knit community that is well established in Milwaukee.

In 1982, the building housing the Islamic Center on South 13th Street and Layton Avenue was purchased. It became the second mosque in the Milwaukee area. The first was a smaller facility, Masjid Sultan Mohammad, at 317 W. Wright St., which had its beginnings in the Nation of Islam, a black separatist movement, but it disassociated from that movement and joined mainstream Islam in the 1970s.

Today a large number of families have settled in the vicinity of the Islamic Center. Another concentration of Muslim families live in Brookfield, Elm Grove and Waukesha. That community, in conjunction with the Islamic Center, recently established a mosque in Brookfield to serve that growing community of Muslims.

Atta attributes the growth not only to immigrants and converts to Islam, but to the children and grandchildren of the many families that have made Milwaukee their home. American Muslims are increasingly American born.

**For the full article, and to be introduced to Milwaukee's Muslims please visit:**  
<http://shepherdexpress.com/article-27477-muslims-in-milwaukee-their-voices-news-features.html>

### About the Author:

Janan Najeeb is a prominent member of Wisconsin's Muslim community. She is a founding member and president of the Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition. She operates the Islamic Resource Center, Wisconsin's first Islamic public lending library, and last year she founded the Milwaukee Muslim Film Festival.



### Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition (MMWC)

The Milwaukee Muslim Women's Coalition is the only independent Muslim Women's organization in Wisconsin. The MMWC runs the Islamic Resource Center, a cultural center which includes a public Islamic lending library and provides an array of programming that promotes cultural literacy and dialogue. These include book clubs, author talks, workshops, art exhibits, networking brunches, films and much more. The MMWC is a highly sought after resource by media, elected officials, interfaith organizations, educators and many other institutions including as a designated visitor site for many guests of the State Department. Run by a board of professional Muslim women, the MMWC works tirelessly to build coalitions that work for social justice, harmony, peace and understanding.

To learn more visit their page: [www.mmwconline.org](http://www.mmwconline.org)



### Islam Society of Milwaukee

*Mission Statement:* To be an exemplary American Muslim Community that serves all of God's creation with mercy, justice and respect of human dignity.

One of the first organizations for Muslims in the Milwaukee area is a "Muslim Students' Association" formed at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee between 1970 and 1972. In July of 1976, the Islamic Association of Greater Milwaukee established themselves as the first officially registered Muslim organization with the State of Wisconsin. Since its origin, the IAGM functions to serve the Muslim community through public lectures, holiday arrangements, and community holiday prayers. The association has grown exponentially since its creation, and has expanded to three main worship areas throughout the Greater Milwaukee Area, including the establishment of the Salam Elementary School, a thriving Islamic School accredited by both the Wisconsin's Religious and Independent Schools Association, and the prestigious North Central Association.

The Islamic Society of Milwaukee is part of the worldwide community of Muslims which are estimated to number 1.5 billion people\*. The most populous Muslim country is Indonesia. 300 million Muslims live in countries where Islam is not the majority religion. The country that has the largest number of Muslims, but is not a Muslim majority country, is India. In the United States, a credible estimate of the number of Muslims is between six to eight million. In Southeastern Wisconsin, there are an estimated 15,000 Muslims.

To learn more, visit their page: <http://www.ismonline.org/>



# In Milwaukee

In the city of Milwaukee, there are **seventeen mosques** and the Islamic Society of Milwaukee owns three of them. ISM Main Center, ISM Brookfield, and ISM University are all celebrating Open Mosque Day on November 11th from 11am to 4pm.



## ISM Main Center

Formed in 1982, the ISM Main Center is the primary center for Milwaukee's Muslims. They host many programs for girls, youth, community empowerment, students, and scholars.



## ISM Brookfield

The primary center for the Waukesha area Muslims.



## ISM University

A university that mostly serves the Muslim students and staff of UWM, as well as Milwaukee's east side community. ISM University hosts programs geared towards education, such as, Sunday school, practicing reciting the Qur'an, learning Arabic, and book clubs.



**Abaya:** A simple, loose over-garment, essentially a robe-like dress that covers the whole body except the head, feet, and hands. This is often worn with the hijab or niqab.

**Allah:** Arabic for God.

**Allah hu Akhbar:** An Islamic phrase that means "God is great." This phrase is often a part of prayer.

**Behti:** A term of endearment that is specific to daughters.

**Bismillah:** "In the name of Allah."

**Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim:** "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful."

**Burka:** The most concealing of all Islamic veils. It is a one-piece veil that covers the face and body, often only leaving a mesh screen to see through.

**Dozakh:** A term that refers to hell.

**Gamaa':** a colloquial term for a place to have Friday prayer.

**Hijab:** The word hijab describes the act of covering up, but is generally used to describe the headscarf most commonly worn by Muslim women in the west. It comes in a variety of styles and colors, and covers the head and neck but leaves the face clear.

**Mashallah:** "God has willed it."

**Masjid:** Mosque: a place of worship.

**Nikah:** Muslim marriage.

**Niqab:** A veil for the face that leaves the area around the eyes clear, worn with an accompanying headscarf.

**PBUH:** An acronym for Peace Be Upon Him, typically used by Muslims when talking about the Prophet Muhammad and other prophets as a sign of respect.

**Subhanallah:** Refers to the phrase "God is perfect" or "Glory to God."

**Tauba:** To repent.

**Ya Allah:** "Ya" is commonly used as an Arabic calling prefix, which go before a name that is being called. In this context, "Ya Allah" translates to "O God", and is the act of calling upon God.

**Quran:** <http://al-quran.info/#home>

**Hadith:** Sahih Al-Bukhari:  
<https://www.sahih-bukhari.com/>

**Riyad-us-Saliheen** (Quran mixed with Hadith):  
[http://www.2muslims.com/books/2discoverislam\\_com\\_riyad\\_us\\_saliheen.pdf](http://www.2muslims.com/books/2discoverislam_com_riyad_us_saliheen.pdf)

## Books about the Prophet:

- *The Eternal Message of Muhammad* by Abd al Rahman Azzam
- *The Sealed Nectar* by Sheikh Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarkpuri
- *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* by Dr. Martin Lings
- More suggestions:  
<http://aboutislam.net/reading-islam/about-muhammad/best-biographies>
- prophet-muhammad-pbuh/

## Videos / YouTube Channels:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhGngll4Ktg&sns=em>
- Sheikh El Sharawi sermons
- Zakir Naik lectures  
<http://www.huda.tv/huda-tv-programs/watch-live-streaming>
- Lesley Hazelton
- Nouman Ali Khan

## Prayer (how to):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKbIG-Zoagk>

## Prayer (recording):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kScrL8m1qMs>

## Top 10 Most Controversial Quranic Verses about Women:

[https://wikiislam.net/wiki/Top\\_10\\_Controversial\\_Verses\\_Concerning\\_Women](https://wikiislam.net/wiki/Top_10_Controversial_Verses_Concerning_Women)

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# VISITING THE REP

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee Center downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.

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