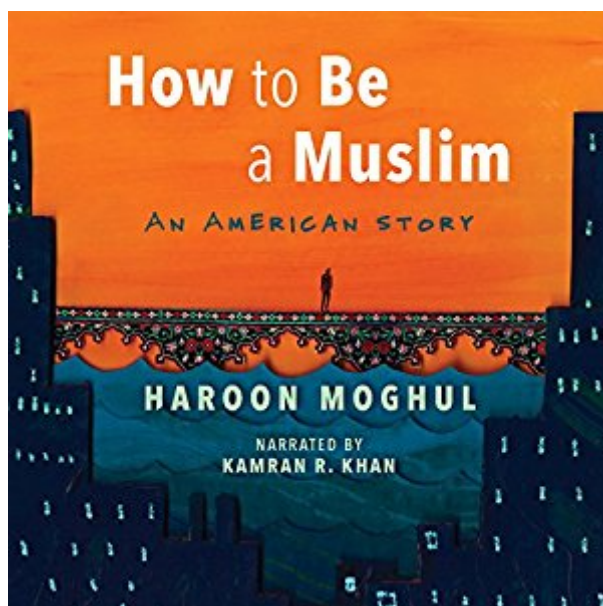


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How To Be A Muslim: An American Story



Synopsis

A young Muslim leader's memoir of his struggles to forge an American Muslim identity. Haroon Moghul was thrust into the spotlight after 9/11, becoming an undergraduate leader at New York University's Islamic Center and forced into appearances everywhere: on TV, before interfaith audiences, in print. Moghul was becoming a prominent voice for American Muslims even as he struggled with his relationship to Islam. In high school he was barely a believer and entirely convinced he was going to hell. He sometimes drank. He didn't pray regularly. All he wanted was a girlfriend. But as he discovered, it wasn't so easy to leave religion behind. To be true to himself, he needed to forge a unique American Muslim identity that reflected his beliefs and personality. How to Be a Muslim reveals a young man coping with the crushing pressure of a world that fears Muslims, struggling with his faith and searching for intellectual forebears, and suffering the onset of bipolar disorder. This is the story of the second-generation immigrant, of what it's like to lose yourself between cultures and how to pick up the pieces.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Funny and moving - the book shares an honest look at being an American Muslim in a time when it's never been more challenging.

It's very interesting book, it wasn't for me, it was for a friend he loves it.

Interesting read!

V interesting read.

I gave it to my husband. He's still reading it, he is taking a lot of notes. Good sign. He likes it.

arrived fine --- having started reading it yet

David Brooks wrote the Road to Character to restore his true identity, Haroon Moghul wrote, How to Be A Muslim, to restore ours. If you think I am being dramatic maybe its because you have never been on the edge of a ledge in the way that Haroon and countless other American Muslims have. Although Haroon Moghul's ledge was more literal, the metaphorical ledge is a place where many Muslims are currently finding themselves. And with few, if any voices to talk them off, young Muslims are jumping into the murky waters of half-baked philosophies, atheism, pop culture or regressing into a brand of Islam full of protocol but devoid of any spiritual ambiance. This memoir was generous and cathartic precisely because it offered up a kind of honesty that will make you want to exhale; A much-needed validation that we are not alone in our fears, doubts, and desires. Mr. Moghul brings up the private phobias of the American Muslim mind; Mainly that we feel fraudulent not because we are, but because as much as we love Islam and God and religion, decades of fearing complicated thoughts and appetites has left us feeling emotionally and spiritually underprivileged. We demand a level of authenticity from ourselves and our faith experiences that I believe our parents would have found self-indulgent, but which in reality has been self-actualizing. Haroon shows us that to be weak and flawed is a given, but to be weak and flawed and totally authentic and honest about it, is to be strong and nearing perfection. This book is peppered with priceless epiphanies. Highlighter not included.

Haroon Moghul's memoir, HOW TO BE A MUSLIM: AN AMERICAN STORY, is a mixed bag of interesting elements. First of all, it could be a very useful and fairly in-depth primer on Islam, something many Americans could benefit from reading, particularly in these troubled times. They might be surprised to learn that Muslims honor Jesus too, although as an important prophet and not the Son of God. Or that Islam holds that Muhammad too ascended into heaven after his death, and from Jerusalem. Or that as God's Messenger -"Within a stratified, patriarchal and classist society, Muhammad founded a community that cut across tribal boundaries, making women equal to men,

and offering belonging beyond class."Yes, women as EQUALS. It seems that Christianity is not the only religion that has fouled up its founder's original ideas and intents. And Moghul, readily admits - and describes in great detail throughout the narrative - that he has had his religious doubts. He even dabbled in atheism as a teenager, confused, hormones raging. And he had his reasons, having battled serious and chronic health problems throughout his life. (He is only thirty-six.) But, in an attempt to try to understand Islam, he has studied its history and practice in great depth from his college years at NYU and beyond, and has traveled to Mecca and Medina as all of the faithful are expected to do. He is, in fact, something of a world traveler, despite his relative youth, having led Muslim tour groups to important Islam destinations around the globe. A college student at the time of 9/11, as a leader of the Muslim student community, Moghul was thrust into the national spotlight early on as an unwilling 'expert,' and, in that capacity, has been studying, learning, lecturing and traveling sporadically ever since. But there is a very human side to Moghul's story too. We get an intimate look at his childhood and adolescence, as tortured and confused as any American kid, even though he lived a life of privilege in a palatial home in Connecticut (his parents were both doctors). Girls were a mystery, and his parents were no help. In fact they even refused him the opportunity of attending sex ed classes at his middle school. Besides his chronic and often debilitating physical ailments, he was also diagnosed with bipolar disorder as a young man, and has been in and out of treatment for many years now. Probably because of this, his first marriage fell apart, a crushing event which left him deep in depression. While still at NYU, and intermittently for years afterwards, Moghul has been instrumental in establishing centers for the study of Islam. A most impressive NYU Center still stands as testament to his efforts. He tells us - "In my more recent travels across America, I find thriving Muslim communities, especially on college campuses." Indeed, quite by coincidence, while I was reading this book, I came across the Islamic Center in our own nearby college town, Ferris State University, in Big Rapids, Michigan. I graduated from Ferris fifty years ago, and I'm quite sure there was no such place then. I'm not even sure if there were any Muslim students at Ferris in the sixties. I think HOW TO BE A MUSLIM would make valuable required reading for any class in Comparative Religions, say. There is a wealth of information here on the origins and history of Islam, as well as how it relates and compares to other major faiths. Haroon Moghul is a very talented writer, who has overcome some major obstacles in his life. This is a story well worth reading. Very highly recommended. - Tim Bazzett, author of the memoir, BOOKLOVER

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