

A COMPLETE BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF IMAM AMIN NATHARI



Amin Nathari is widely acknowledged as a critically acclaimed author, lecturer and commentator, as well as one of the leading independent scholars and most passionate voices of his generation on the contemporary socio-political issues of our time. Nathari specializes primarily in the analysis and documentation of events and issues that impact Muslims and the Islamic experience in America today. He is also a renowned and respected activist and servant-leader in the Muslim American community.

FORMATIVE YEARS

Born in Newark, New Jersey in 1964, Nathari cites his experiences growing up as a child in the former Nation of Islam as his major influence.

His parents were teenaged members of the Nation in the 1960's; with his father serving as a young assistant minister in the influential Newark Mosque (#25). In 1973 his father then became a minister establishing a mosque (#82) in Elizabeth, NJ, which witnessed the transition into *traditional* Islam in February 1975.

Nathari's character was developed by the organizational values of self-reliance ("do for self and kind"), awareness and identity ("knowledge of self"), unity, empowerment and other living examples of social responsibility and change of the time. These ideals helped form the basis of his thoughts and ultimately, his work today.

Among those influences are the social implications of the 1967 Newark riots and the election of Newark's first black mayor in 1970. Through the various phases of evolution, transition and growth of Islam in America during his lifetime, Nathari has used the lessons learned, events witnessed and the observations made to become one of the foremost leaders of his generation.

While his faith tradition is Nathari's foundation and source of strength, his life experiences are multifaceted and remarkable. He was one of the first Black Americans to have a prime-time radio station show at the predominately white New Jersey College he attended as a student of journalism in the early 1980's.

After returning home from college and beginning to work within the Muslim community, he became disillusioned with the condition of Black American Muslim community he once knew, and for a few years, while still attending the mosque and Islamic center, shunned away from community service.

Nathari began a career as a professional disc jockey and music producer. He also started an independent record label. As the 80's ended and the 90's commenced, Nathari began to feel a real void in his life. He began to feel as though his peer group and generation had not collectively fulfilled the vision that was collectively instilled in them during those formative years in the Nation.

PUBLIC SERVICE

In the fall of 1993, Nathari committed himself to the mission of improving the quality of life in the community through faith-based public service to humanity. As he began to reconnect with his desire to help move his community to a higher level, he decided to make whatever contribution he could to that struggle regardless of the obstacles or challenges. He chose to honor the legacy of the many leaders before him who struggled, strived, fought, bled and died so that he could have an opportunity to give back and make a difference. Subsequently, his new life as a committed student of Islam and community servant would allow him to utilize his full range of talent and truly live his passion.

His work as an activist and author began in earnest the following year, 1994, building upon his lifelong love of reading and writing, and his formal education as a student of Communications and Journalism. He has continued at a consistent, seemingly non-stop pace ever since.

Nathari was one of the founders of the Muslim Community Center of Essex County (MCCEC), located in East Orange, New Jersey established in 1995. Under his leadership as Executive Director from 1995 until December 2000, the center was cited as a stabilizing force in the community, helping to eradicate urban blight, many of its resulting factors, and was the catalyst for the economic revitalization that is still being experienced today. Nathari also served as the Imam (religious leader) of the center's mosque, Masjid As'habul Yameen (Mosque of the Companions of the Right Hand).

Awards and Recognitions

Throughout his years of service, Nathari has been honored with several awards within the society-at large.

Among the most well-known awards received, Catholic Community Services of the Archdiocese of New Jersey awarded him the prestigious New Ark of Hope award in 1999, for outstanding achievements in the area of community service and leadership in the greater Essex County New Jersey area. Nathari was the first Muslim to receive such an honor and distinction.

More than 10 years later, the Nation of Islam Mosque #12 in Philadelphia recognized him with the Saviour's Day Award in 2009. The distinction is "a symbol of recognition for our community's brightest and best leaders who "want for your brothers and sisters what you want for yourself" and have accepted responsibility to build our community".

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT and PUBLISHED WORKS

In addition to his public service and organizational involvement, Nathari has consistently spent his time teaching classes, facilitating discussions and conducting learning and information sessions at halfway

houses, social service agencies, libraries and many other public and private venues throughout the East Coast and the United States.

A dynamic lecturer and highly sought after public speaker, he has delivered hundreds of lectures and presentations at more than forty (40) mosques and Islamic centers, in addition to more than a dozen institutions of higher learning, including some of the most renowned public and private colleges and universities in the US, as well as libraries, correctional institutions and other venues throughout North America. He has engaged a broad and diverse range of audiences; both small, intimate groups as well as gatherings numbering in the thousands.

Nathari has consistently endeavored to provide a correct and balanced representation of Islam and Muslims both to the media and the general public. He is one of America's leading speakers and writers on the subject of Islam and the Black American experience, and issues impacting the more than three and a half (3.5) million Muslim Black Americans. (His work in this area is of enormous importance in light of the fact that Islam is the world's second largest religion and the fastest growing way of life.)

His latest published book is titled *Making It Plain – Selected On The Record: Selected Blogs, Essays and Writings Amin Nathari* (May 19, 2014 – Sabree Press).

Having been both follower and servant-leader, student and teacher, participant and witness, activist and public intellectual, this work reflects the wide and diverse range of experience, garnered over his lifetime and the past 20 years of community service in the Muslim American community and the society-at-large, which gives him a keen and unique vantage point and perspective on challenging and thought provoking topics as varied as community and economic development; civic engagement and political action; leadership development and succession planning; the identity crisis and the challenges of the modern day slave mentality; and the rise, fall and current state of the Black Muslim Community in America.

Making It Plain – On The Record: Selected Blogs, Essays and Writings of Amin Nathari is intended to foster results-oriented dialogue and to help facilitate a national conversation around the challenges of living Islam in 21st century America, in a language that all can understand.

Arguably, one of his most widely acclaimed books thus far is *45, 35, Now...The Continuum of Islam in America (Examining the Evolution of the Islamic Experience in 21st Century America)* (September 1, 2011 – Sabree Press).

This work highlights 2010 as the anniversary of two watershed, defining moments in not just Black American history, but the history of America itself; 45 years since the February 21, 1965 assassination of Malcolm X, and 35 years since the February 25, 1975 departure of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam and the subsequent assumption of his son (the late) Imam W. Deen Mohammed (then known as Wallace D. Muhammad) as leader of the organization. The latter event was the catalyst for what is widely considered to be the largest influx of Americans accepting and embracing traditional or "Sunni" Islam, and by most, the largest mass religious "conversion" in American history.

Additionally, Nathari is working on his memoir, tentatively titled Going Back to Move Forward – A Life-in-Progress of a Blackman and Muslim in America.

He is a regular guest on several radio shows, as well as network and cable television programs. In the spring of 2016, Nathari will also launch a weekly online broadcast called Making It Plain with Amin Nathari. This program is sure to be a no holds barred, “results-oriented dialogue” around the challenges, issues and opportunities of 21st century America.

ACTIVISM and COMMUNITY/ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Amin Nathari has established an outstanding record of service to the Muslim Community and society-at-large, with his particular area of engagement being within the urban community. He continues to work tirelessly as an activist/servant-leader. He has served and worked at the regional and national levels with several Islamic organizations and their most prominent leaders.

On July 4, 2008 in Philadelphia, PA, Nathari announced the intention to begin a new endeavor named the Islam in America Movement (IAM). IAM is a national organizational initiative whose mission is to empower, strengthen and support the various results-oriented initiatives and projects of Muslims throughout the United States, particularly within the urban communities wherein they live, serve and work.

IAM is committed to working with individuals, groups and other organizations, in developing a multifaceted agenda for the Muslim Community in order to implement a comprehensive domestic program and to empower Black American Muslims as full participants in the development of Islam in 21st Century America for the benefit of humanity and society at large

The priority focus of IAM is two-fold: the development of a comprehensive education initiative with the goal of disseminating Islamic information from a broad and practical perspective for 21st Century America; and the development and implementation of a national Media, Communications and Public Relations initiative aimed at proactively engaging the American media, in efforts to reclaim and enhance the image, perception and representation of Islam in 21st Century America.

After a well-received pilot session in Ramadan 2015, the first project, the Muslim Empowerment Institute (MEI) the education entity of IAM, formally launched its full-time operations on January 1, 2016.

The second project, facilitating the media engagement component, the National Institute of Islamic Civic Engagement (NIICE) is scheduled to launch in earnest in spring 2016.

In addition to his community service and extensive national speaking schedule, Nathari works as a Media and Communications Strategist, advising and serving a variety of not-for profit, political and community service clients. He formerly served as Deputy Director of Communications for the city of Newark, NJ and Mayor (now US Senator) Cory Booker.

Continuing what he refers to as his personal Activist and Public Service Project, encompassing his work as an author, publisher and activist/community servant, Nathari who has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications from Thomas Edison State College in Trenton, NJ, and also attended William Paterson University in Wayne, NJ, also plans to continue his studies in various areas, including Public Policy and Religion, Arabic, and other disciplines.

He gives all credit, praise and thanks to: the Creator for allowing him the opportunity to serve humanity; for his parents who helped lay the foundation upon which he stands, and his greatest inspiration and motivation, his children.