



# AMERICAN MEDINA

STORIES OF MUSLIM CHICAGO

## EDUCATOR LEARNING GUIDE

The *American Medina: Stories of Muslim Chicago* exhibition offers teachers and students an opportunity to learn about Muslim communities in Chicago. This guide contains classroom-based activities and resources for an optional field trip visit to the Chicago History Museum. Please contact the Museum regarding field trip availability.

Materials within this packet are from the collection of the Chicago History Museum and were created for the exhibition.

### This packet features:

- \* A Closer Look
- \* Field Trip Resources and Information
- \* Making Connections
- \* Additional Teacher and Student Resources

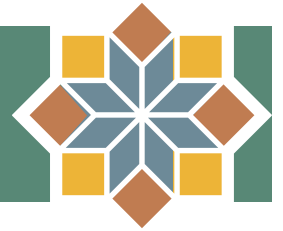
## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Many people see Chicago as the American Medina drawing Muslims from all over the country and world as Medina, Saudi Arabia has done for centuries. Beginning with the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, which featured some of the first mosques in the United States, Chicago is now home to a diverse Muslim community: followers from the US and abroad; members of various sects; and converts and those who were raised in the faith.

This exhibition draws from more than 100 interviews conducted with Muslim Chicagoans sharing their stories of faith, identity, and personal journeys. Dozens of objects from local individuals and organizations, such as garments, artwork, and photographs, as well as videos and interactive experiences expand on how and why Chicago is known as the American Medina.

The exhibition strives to be inclusive of all people who identify as Chicago Muslims no matter the sect or organization.

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- Warm Up: Defining Community, Journey, Identity, and Faith
- Activity: Foundational Moments for Chicago's Muslim Communities
- Activity: Chicago's Muslim Community through Oral History

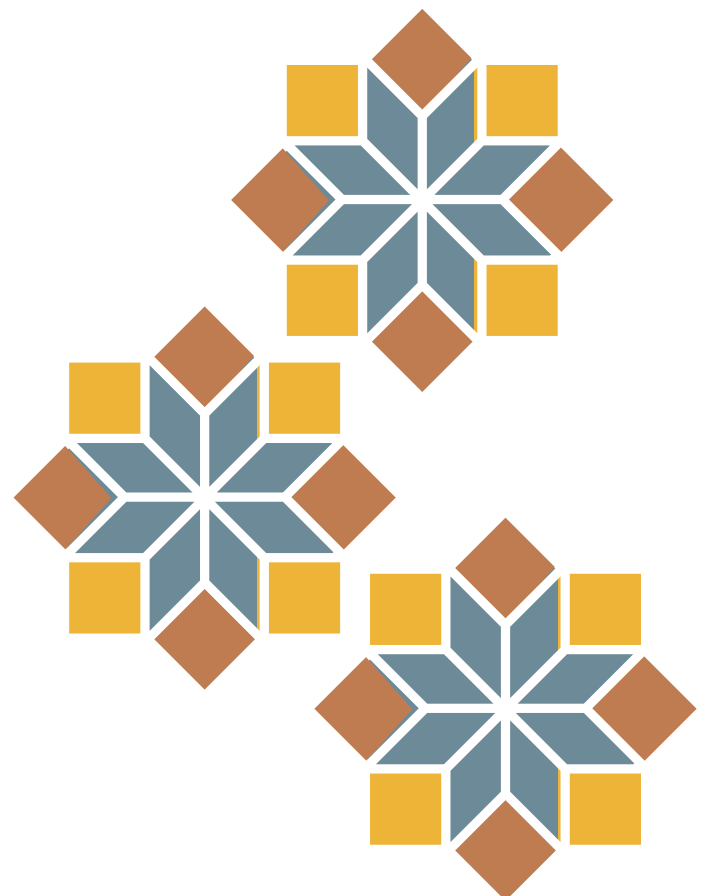
### \* Visiting the Exhibition (Optional)

- Gallery Reflection Guide

### \* Making Connections

- Warm Up: Identity Hexagons
- Activity: Journey Oral History Project
- Activity: Creating a Journey Exhibition

### \* Additional Resources



## A CLOSER LOOK



### ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How are cities and towns influenced by the communities within them?

### SUPPORTING QUESTIONS:

- How have Chicago's Muslim communities impacted and shaped the city?
- How do journey, identity, and faith play a role in all people's lives?

**Use the activities below to introduce the major exhibition themes of journey, identity, and faith that are explored in *American Medina: Stories of Muslim Chicago*.**

- **Warm Up:** Defining Community, Journey, Identity, and Faith
- **Activity:** Foundational Moments for Chicago's Muslim Communities
- **Activity:** Chicago's Muslim Communities through Oral History

### IL STATE STANDARDS Middle School

- SS.IS.4.6-8.MC
- SS.IS.6.6-8.MC
- SS.H.2.6-8.MC

### IL STATE STANDARDS High School

- SS.IS.4.9-12
- SS.IS.6.9-12
- SS.H.6.9-12
- SS.H.7.9-12

### COMMON CORE State Standards (Anchor)

- Reading 1
- Reading 4
- Reading 9
- Writing 2
- Writing 7

\* A Closer Look

**WARM UP ACTIVITY: DEFINING COMMUNITY,  
JOURNEY, IDENTITY, AND FAITH**



**TIME:** 25 minutes

**SUPPLIES:**

- \* Oversized paper
- \* Markers
- \* Post-it notes

**SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. In small groups, ask students to define one of the words above (community, journey, identity, faith) on an oversized sheet of paper/poster board.
2. Have groups rotate to a new word. Using Post-it notes or a different color marker/pen, invite students to add to the definition and help clarify it.
3. Repeat above procedure so each student sees all four words.
4. Ask students to return to their initial word, and re-write the definition to incorporate the edits their classmates have made.
5. Have students present definitions to the class. If a word is used more than once, create a joint definition. Ask all students to agree to the definitions and use them throughout their work around *American Medina: Stories of Muslim Chicago*.

\* A Closer Look

## A CLOSER LOOK ACTIVITY: FOUNDATIONAL MOMENTS FOR CHICAGO'S MUSLIM COMMUNITIES



TIME: 1 class period/45 minutes

**This activity introduces students to the Muslim communities through historic moments from the past.**

### SUPPLIES:

- \* Timeline activity
- \* Interpreting Foundational Moments student analysis sheet
- \* Foundational Moments texts (6 moments represented)
- \* Paper/pens
- \* (Optional) Computers for additional research

### SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Cut events on timeline apart and give one set per group.
2. Give students the empty timeline sheet and ask them to match the dates to the descriptions.
3. Go over answers to see how many groups correctly placed the moments.
4. Hand out Interpreting Foundational Moments student analysis sheet and one Foundational Moment text per group.
5. Discuss the moments once complete. Possible discussion questions:
  - How long ago was the first foundational moment?  
*Note: This timeline focuses on Muslim communities in Chicago. Many historians believe the first Muslims in the Americas were forced here as part of the transatlantic slave trade. Islam was introduced to West Africa (the region most affected by the slave trade) as early as the 600s CE (Common Era); it is estimated that 10 to 15 percent of enslaved Africans were Muslim.*
  - What conclusions can you draw from this timeline?
  - What questions do you have about this timeline?

As an extension, students could do additional research into some of these moments to find out more information and present it to classmates to further their knowledge.

\* A Closer Look

**ACTIVITY: FOUNDATIONAL MOMENTS FOR CHICAGO'S MUSLIM COMMUNITIES**



**TIME:** 1 class period/45 minutes

**TIMELINE**

DATE	EVENT
1893	Ottoman and Egyptian mosques were built for the World's Columbian Exposition as part of exhibitions featured on the Midway Plaisance in Jackson Park.
1906	The Bosniak/Bosnian Muslim Mutual Aid Association and Benevolent Society formed.
1920s	Mufti Muhammad Sadiq established an Ahmadiyya mission and formed a community in Bronzeville.
1925	The Moorish Science Temple of America moved its headquarters to Chicago.
1930s	The Nation of Islam moved its headquarters to Chicago.
1950s	The Bosniak/Bosnian Muslim Religious and Cultural Home was established in Lincoln Park.
1976	W.D. Mohammed formed the World Community of Al-Islam in the West.

\* A Closer Look

**ACTIVITY: FOUNDATIONAL MOMENTS FOR CHICAGO'S MUSLIM COMMUNITIES**



**TIME:** 1 class period/45 minutes

**TIMELINE**

EVENT
Ottoman and Egyptian mosques were built for the World's Columbian Exposition as part of exhibitions featured on the Midway Plaisance in Jackson Park.
The Moorish Science Temple of America moved its headquarters to Chicago.
The Bosniak/Bosnian Muslim Religious and Cultural Home was established in Lincoln Park.
W.D. Mohammed formed the World Community of Al-Islam in the West.
The Nation of Islam moved its headquarters to Chicago.
The Bosniak/Bosnian Muslim Mutual Aid Association and Benevolent Society formed.
Mufti Muhammad Sadiq established an Ahmadiyya mission and formed a community in Bronzeville.

\* A Closer Look

**ACTIVITY: FOUNDATIONAL MOMENTS FOR CHICAGO'S MUSLIM COMMUNITIES**



**TIME:** 1 class period/45 minutes

**TIMELINE**

DATE	EVENT
1893	
1906	
1920s	
1925	
1930s	
1950s	
1976	



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERPRETING FOUNDATIONAL MOMENTS**

Group or Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

What are the key dates in this summary?

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What key locations are discussed in this summary?

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Who are some of the people involved? What did they do?

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What are the beliefs/purpose of this community?

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## Foundational Moment: World's Columbian Exposition

In 1893, the World's Columbian Exposition brought great works of art, science, and industry to Chicago. The Midway Plaisance displayed cultures from around the globe, as the fair planners wanted to highlight Western culture as “civilized” and all other cultures as “primitive” by comparison.

Participants from the Ottoman Empire and Egypt constructed mosques as part of their displays on the Midway to share their religion and culture. Fairgoers could hear the calls to prayer and visit the mosques, some of the first to be built in the United States.

Palestinians and other Arabs came to Chicago to work at the fair. Some stayed in Chicago afterward and settled in the South Loop. These early mosques and communities helped make Chicago the American Medina.



ICHi-093582, CHM

## Foundational Moment: Moorish Science Temple of America

Influenced by Islam, Christianity, and Freemasonry, Noble Drew Ali founded what would become the Moorish Science Temple of America (MST) in Newark, New Jersey, around 1913. By 1925, he moved the MST headquarters to Chicago and held its first national convention here in 1928.

Ali wrote *The Holy Koran of the Moorish Science Temple of America: Circle Seven*, the foundational text for the movement, which supported his belief that African Americans were originally Moorish, with an identity rooted in Morocco, and should return to Islam, their true religion. MST theology would influence Elijah Muhammad and other Nation of Islam leaders.

This early African American community, along with other Muslim groups and organizations in the early twentieth century, helped make Chicago the American Medina.



Courtesy of Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

## Foundational Moment: Muslim Mutual Aid Association and Benevolent Society

In the early 1900s, the first Bosniaks arrived in Chicago and settled throughout the city. Bosniaks are South Slavic Muslims from Bosnia, today part of the country Bosnia and Herzegovnia in southeastern Europe. Among the first Bosniak immigrants to Chicago was Mustafa Sarich.

Sarich helped build the Muslimansko Podpomagajuće Društvo Džemijetul Hajrije (Muslim Mutual Aid Association and Benevolent Society) to assist members with healthcare expenses. In the 1950s, this group founded the Muslim Religious and Cultural Home as a mosque and restaurant in Lincoln Park.

One of the country's oldest and possibly first Muslim organizations, it is now called the Bosnian American Cultural Association and based in suburban Northbrook. The early Bosniak organization helped sustain Bosniak or Bosnian language, culture, and religion, helping make the city the American Medina, a place where Muslims established themselves.



Courtesy of the Islamic Cultural Center of Greater Chicago

## Foundational Moment: Ahmadiyya Movement of Islam

In the 1920s, the Ahmadiyya Movement of Islam blossomed in Chicago and the United States. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, an Ahmadiyya missionary from India, came to the city to preach and emphasized the inclusive, multiracial nature of this branch of Islam.

He worked with many African Americans who converted and were living on the South Side in Bronzeville, and together they established the first Ahmadi mission house in the country in a modest graystone building at 4448 South Wabash Avenue.

A subsequent building at that address eventually became the Ahmadi community's Al-Sadiq Mosque. The Ahmadiyya's US headquarters were in Chicago until 1950 (when it shifted to Washington DC), and its magazine, *Muslim Sunrise*, was also published in Chicago. Based in the city for decades, the Ahmadiyya Movement helped make Chicago the American Medina, a leading city for American Muslims.



Courtesy of the Al-Sadiq Mosque

## Foundational Moment: Nation of Islam Makes Chicago Home

During the 1920s, white nationalist and racist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, strengthened in cities such as Chicago, and African American groups rallied in response.

Around 1930, Wallace Fard Muhammad founded the Nation of Islam (NOI) in Detroit, a city that its followers regard as the American Mecca, named for Islam's holiest city in modern-day Saudi Arabia. Elijah Muhammad (pictured below) took leadership later in the 1930s, and with teachings based on the Quran, Bible, and Black nationalism, he built the NOI into a major religious, cultural, business, and political force, challenging discrimination and promoting Islam to African Americans as an alternative religion.

In the mid-1930s the NOI moved to Chicago, thus making it the American Medina for NOI followers, since Medina is the second holiest place for Muslims. Elijah Muhammad's most vocal minister, Malcolm X, became the NOI's spokesman in the 1950s and founded the *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper. Boxer Muhammad Ali joined in 1964 and lived in Chicago during the 1960s and 1970s. During this time period, the NOI and its members played significant roles in the civil rights movement.

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**Quran:** The holy book of Islam.



Elijah Muhammad, ICHI-177190a, CHM

## Foundational Moment: W. D. Mohammed Transforms Islam

On February 24, 1975, Nation of Islam (NOI) leader Elijah Muhammad died, and his son W. D. Mohammed (pictured below) succeeded him. Throughout his life, Mohammed was a transformational force for Muslims across the country.

He moved the NOI away from his father's teachings and more in line with traditional Islam, no longer relying on texts beyond the Islamic ones. Mohammed started using Arabic vocabulary, for example, temples became mosques, and his title went from minister to imam (leader). He changed his name from Wallace Delaney to Warith Deen, meaning "Inheritor of the Religion of Muhammad," and eventually simply W.D. He also altered the spelling of his last name to differentiate himself from his father.

In 1976, the NOI became the World Community of Al-Islam in the West, changing names again later. Following these developments, the NOI led by Louis Farrakhan was reestablished as a separate group in 1978 and revived the teachings of Elijah Muhammad with NOI theology.



Chicago History Museum

\* A Closer Look

## A CLOSER LOOK ACTIVITY: CHICAGO'S MUSLIM COMMUNITIES THROUGH ORAL HISTORIES



TIME: 1 class period/45 minutes

Using excerpts from the *American Medina: Stories of Muslim Chicago* oral history project, students will examine the themes of the exhibition. This activity will also help them to understand how the exhibition is organized where much of the content is delivered via story booths.

### SUPPLIES:

- \* Oral Histories (one person per group; the oral history narrators are: Obaidillah Kohlwadi, Andrea Ortez, Talat Othman, Zerina Zvizdich, Imani Muhammad, Hysni Selenica)
- \* Analyzing an Oral History worksheet
- \* Pen/pencil

### SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Introduce the idea of *oral history*.

Oral history is a type of storytelling, a research method, and a documentary art form. It provides a link to the past and gives opportunities for an exchange of ideas, emotions, ethics, and values across generational, economic, ethnic, racial, and social barriers.

2. Ask students to work in groups of two or three and give them one of the excerpts to analyze. (Note: it may be helpful to have world maps available.)
3. Complete the analysis sheet.
4. Jigsaw groups or have a whole class discussion about the people they “met” through this activity. Possible questions for final discussion could include:
  - What similarities and differences do you see between the stories?
  - What stood out to you about these stories?

For full transcripts of additional oral histories visit: <http://digitalcollection.chicagohistory.org/>



## Oral History



Photograph by Sadaf Syed Photography

### Obaidillah Kholwadia

**A recent graduate of Elmhurst College in the western suburbs, Obaidillah Kohlwadia is a co-manager of Hijab Vault, a hijab business located in Lombard, Illinois.**

My faith is the biggest part of my identity. But I think being a male it's a lot harder to show that outwardly. If someone looked at me, they'd say, "Okay, he's brown. He's either Mexican or he's Indian or something like that." But they don't just assume Muslim until they hear my name or I tell them. I don't think it's anything I've ever shied away from. If that means I have to pray outside because it's time to pray and there's nowhere else to pray, it's not like something I'll shy away from. If someone asked me, like, "How would you describe yourself?" I think Muslim would be the first thing that comes out of my mouth.

## Oral History



Photograph by Sadaf Syed Photography

### Andrea Ortez

**Originally from Los Angeles, Andrea Ortez moved to Chicago to attend Loyola University, from which she graduated in 2012. She converted to Islam in 2009 with the guidance and support of her close friends.**

I never wanted my religion to be in contradiction to how I was raised or what my parents believed in, what it meant to be Latina. There wasn't this tension, really, between those two spaces, because in some ways it was relatively easy. I was really big on sustaining my culture. I chose not to change my name when I converted. To this day I don't wear the *hijab*, and in large part, it has to do with, I feel like I can operate out of a strong sense of modesty without covering my hair. But, at the same time, I have curly hair, and it speaks to the blood that runs through my veins. It's a strong part of my identity that I am proud of, and so this has been the way in which I balance kind of those two worlds.

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***hijab***: the traditional covering for the hair and neck that is worn by Muslim women

## Oral History



Photograph by Sadaf Syed Photography

### Talat Othman

**Talat M. Othman came to Chicago with his father in 1947 from Beitunia, Palestine, and lived in the South Loop. He is a seasoned banking and financial services executive.**

Well, we came to New York [in 1947], actually, we came by boat, and we took the boat from Beirut (Lebanon). So, we drove from Beitunia (Palestine) through Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, to Beirut. Of course, it was all at that time all under *British Mandate*. So, it was open; I mean, there was no restriction. And so then we took the boat from Beirut. It [the boat] was called *Marine Carp*, and it was a converted Navy ship. So, we landed—we stopped in Alexandria (Egypt) for about eight hours, and then Athens (Greece) for about three days. There was some commotion in Athens, not threatening, but something had happened, maybe a funeral of a dignitary or something. But anyway, we stopped for three days and then another fourteen days through the Atlantic to New York. And I have to say that it was probably the coldest day that I ever experienced. It was in early April, and it was cold, so there was nobody on deck, everybody was indoors. It was fascinating. It was very different for us. As we passed by the Statue of Liberty, it had real significance, real meaning to us. So, as we passed it, and I guess we came through Ellis Island although I didn't—at that point I didn't know what we went through, but it must have been Ellis Island. And we stayed in New York for maybe a week or two weeks, and then we took a train to Chicago.

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**British Mandate:** Following WWI, the League of Nations split up former German and Ottoman Turkish colonies into territories called mandates. These mandates were then distributed amongst members of the Allied powers. Iraq and Palestine (which included modern day Jordan and Israel) were controlled by the British government. (Adapted from Britannica on-line; <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mandate-League-of-Nations>)

## Oral History



Photograph by Sadaf Syed Photography

### Zerina Zvizdich

**Chicago born Zerina Zvizdich is a retired Chicago Public Schools teacher. Her father, Mustafa Sarich, came to Chicago from Bosnia in 1907 and was a leader in the Bosniak community.**

My dad himself began to open up several businesses and what have you. He wasn't a religious man, but he was a Muslim and that was what it was. And he refused to marry, so he didn't marry for almost 20 years. He went back to Bosnia in 1928; now, he came in 1907, so, you see, he waited 20 years. And in those days you had to go by ship, so he went by ship. And he was already pretty well-established and really good here. He owned the building at 1637 Clybourn, which he had a coffee shop and many of the Bosnians and all Yugoslavs patronized. And he had a rooming house in which there were mainly Bosnians that lived there. That rooming house was rather interesting, because he married in '29, they came here in '30—they came in October of '29, I was born in '30. But they came right away to this house. He had two houses here; he had a two-flat and this other one, so they went to live in the two-flat, he and my mom. It was the *Depression* was coming on, but he was fortunate because the house he had no mortgage on it. I mean, and he always hustled, there was always a few pennies that came in. He housed all these Bosnians, I think there were 7 or 8 of them, in his rooming house. He never asked them for a dime through the whole Depression—both room and board, because there was no work. I often asked him, "I mean, why did you do it?" It just didn't make sense to me. He always said, "They all paid me back," and he refused to discuss it. It just was what it was, and that was the end of it.

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**Depression:** The Great Depression worst US economic downturn between 1929 and 1939.

## Oral History



Photograph by Sadaf Syed Photography

### Imani Muhammad

**Chicagoan Imani Muhammad started her business, Imani's Original Bean Pies, based on a class project from her home daycare around 2005.**

With Islam, it was a desire to do for self. There's a desire to better our community by growing. We know that if we begin to build businesses that's a big help in our community, so that was always a desire. I had a home daycare, and the bean pie started as a project in the daycare. I have grown up on eating bean pies. Actually, my friend's grandmother used to make them for me. So any time she knew—she would ask if I am coming over. She would cook for everybody in the neighborhood, but she would specifically make those bean pies if she knew I was coming. So fast forward to the daycare—it was a home school project. My 19 year old, at the time, was younger—maybe about, I want to say about 7 or 8. We were studying the navy bean, how it got its name from the United States Navy because it's a staple food, what type of nourishment you get from the navy bean—that type of thing. With that, you always make the food. That's the project side of it. We did navy bean soup, bean pie, and a salad. So, two out of three wasn't bad. The salad was awful. [Interviewer laughs] The soup and the pie was good. They were used to me making the soup. The pie was like a newer thing for us in terms of making it. Pretty much all the parents and everyone liked it. My husband was saying, "We could do this. This could be a family business." I was like, "I don't know." We used the pies as a fundraiser for the daycare. People kept coming back. So, I decided this is a way to show our youth that we can make and manufacture our own products.

## Oral History



Photograph by Sadaf Syed Photography

### Hysni Selenica

**Hysni Selenica, the first and current Muslim chaplain for the Chicago Police Department, was born and raised on the city's Southwest Side. Here he discusses his family's resistance to the Communist dictatorship in Albania in the 1950s.**

My father was pretty connected with the broader Albanian community. He got a lot of respect from the elders because of him standing up against the Communists and my family stood up against the Communists. We lost everything for what we thought was right. Even though I did not struggle like my father or my family, I understand their struggle. I appreciate the blessing I got being here in this country. Me, being a practicing Muslim, the First Amendment rights that the founding fathers brought is quite fascinating. The Communist government announced atheism as their religion. They destroyed mosques that were over five hundred years old, churches that were even older. Perhaps even synagogues because religion was not key in their philosophy. If you were to wear a cross around your neck, you would either be killed or go to jail. If you had a Quranic verse on your wall and if you were found out, same thing. I understand what I have. I am going to practice my religion to the best of my ability because of this freedom and because of what my father has gone through and what my grandfather has gone through.

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**Communism:** In this context, a system of government where power is centralized in one political party and one national legislative body with no distinct branches of government. Albania had a Communist government from 1946 to 1992 and declared itself the first atheist state in 1967.

**Quran:** The holy book of Islam.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**ANALYZING AN ORAL HISTORY**

Name of narrator: \_\_\_\_\_

About when is this story taking place (examples: recently, past, when the narrator was 10 years old, etc.)?

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What locations are discussed in the story (countries, cities, homes, etc.)?

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Write a brief summary of the narrative. Look for key details or descriptions.

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Which theme (journey, identity, or faith) would you put this story in? Why?

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What are two or three questions you would ask the narrator if you were interviewing them?

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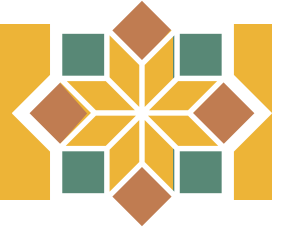
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## VISITING THE EXHIBITION (OPTIONAL)



### FOR INFORMATION ABOUT A FIELD TRIP VISIT:

[www.chicagohistory.org/fieldtrip](http://www.chicagohistory.org/fieldtrip)

### TO REQUEST A FIELD TRIP:

[www.chicagohistory.org/make-a-field-trip-reservation](http://www.chicagohistory.org/make-a-field-trip-reservation)

### ABOUT THE EXHIBITION:

- The exhibition combines excerpts from first person oral histories, which can be heard in individual story booths (the octagonal structures on the map).
- Many of the artifacts surrounding the booth are loans from the oral history narrators or local Muslim organizations.
- The exhibition is split into three main sections: Identity, Journey, and Faith.
- There is an intro video created by Teen Historians who worked at the Museum over the summer of 2019. They helped with aspects of the exhibition and conducted oral histories.
- The tan section contains interactives about art, architecture, and faith. It also features a mural and map of Chicago area mosques.
- Some oral history narrators discussed their experiences with anti-Muslim racism, these stories are combined with news footage of anti-Muslim racism in Chicago, around the country, and in Canada. Some images and language may not be suitable for younger or more sensitive audiences.
- The gallery guide on the following pages will help students as they move about the exhibition. See also our Understanding a Museum Label guide on page 37.
- Students could be assigned sections of the gallery, then jig sawed to discuss back in the classroom.

### IL STATE STANDARDS Middle School

- SS.IS.4.6-8.MC
- SS.IS.6.6-8.MC
- SS.H.2.6-8.MC

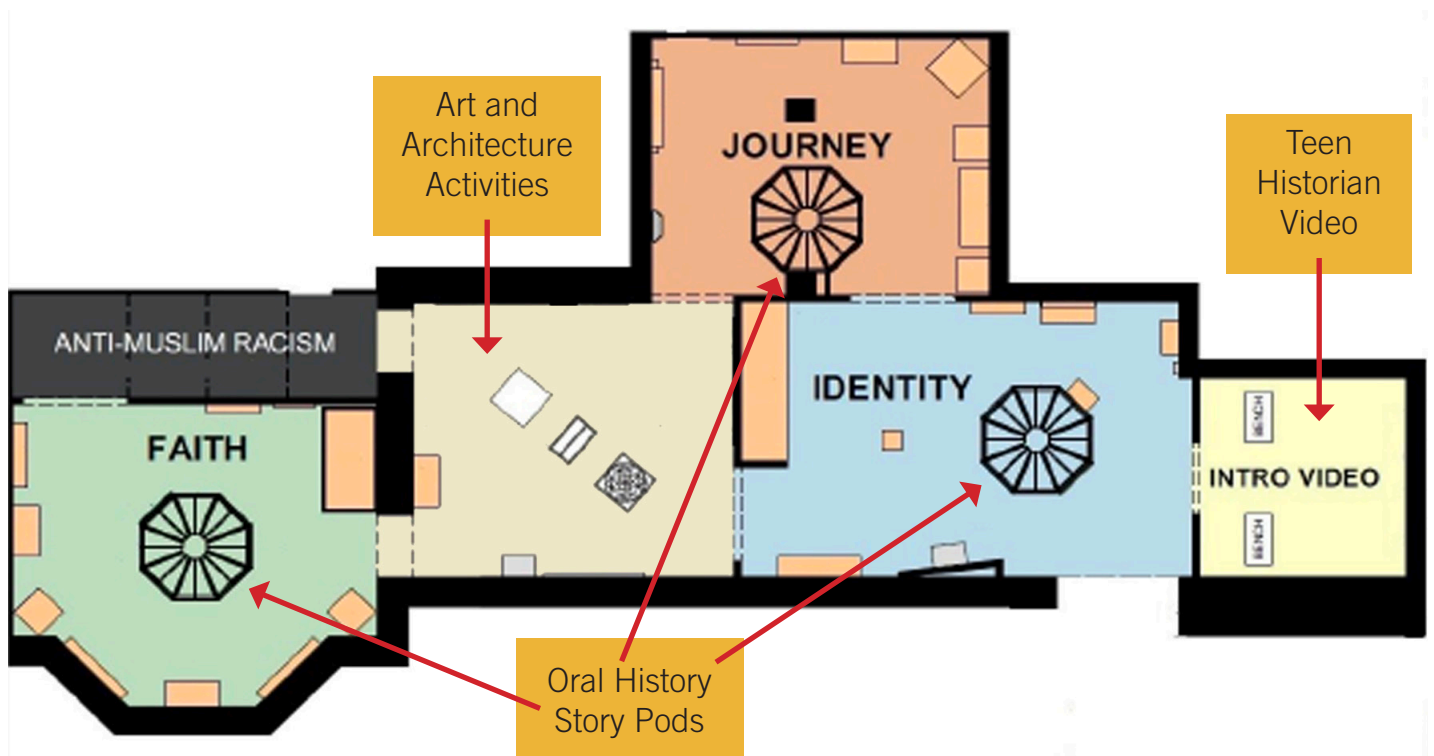
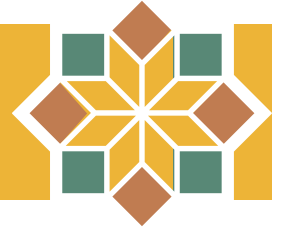
### IL STATE STANDARDS High School

- SS.IS.4.9-12
- SS.IS.6.9-12
- SS.H.6.9-12
- SS.H.7.9-12

### COMMON CORE State Standards (Anchor)

- Reading 1
- Reading 4
- Reading 9
- Writing 2
- Writing 7

# EXHIBITION FLOOR PLAN



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**AMERICAN MEDINA — GALLERY REFLECTION GUIDE**

**What three oral histories did you find most interesting? Why?**

**What three artifacts did you find most interesting? Why?**

**What are two new things you have learned?  
What questions do you still have?**

**Summarize each or your assigned section  
in one sentence.**

How has this exhibition challenged your assumptions about Muslims in Chicago?

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In the exhibition is this quote:

**“Never accept images that have been created for you by someone else. It is always better to form the habit of learning how to see things for yourself, to listen to things for yourself, and think for yourself.”** — Malcom X, Speech to Peace Corps Workers, December 12, 1964

What does this quote mean to us today?

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What steps can you take to see, listen, and think for yourself?

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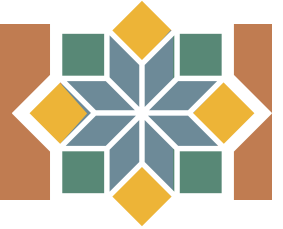
What questions do you still have?

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## MAKING CONNECTIONS



### ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How are cities and towns influenced by the communities within them?

### SUPPORTING QUESTION:

How do our own journeys, identities, and faiths play a role in our community?

**Use these activities to consider how the themes of journey, identity, and faith play out in the lives of all Chicagoans.**

- **Warm Up:** Identity Hexagons
- **Activity:** Journey Oral History Project
- **Activity:** Creating a Journey Exhibition

### IL STATE STANDARDS Middle School

- SS.IS.1.6-8.MC
- SS.IS.3.6-8.MC
- SS.IS.4.6-8.MC
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- SS.H.7.9-12

### COMMON CORE State Standards (Anchor)

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\* Making Connections

## WARM UP ACTIVITY: IDENTITY HEXAGONS

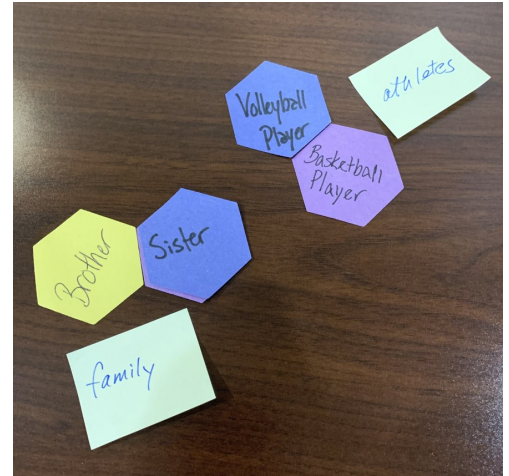


TIME: 20 minutes

Using a strategy called hexagonal thinking, students will brainstorm aspects of their own identity and then consider how they are similar and different to those of their classmates.

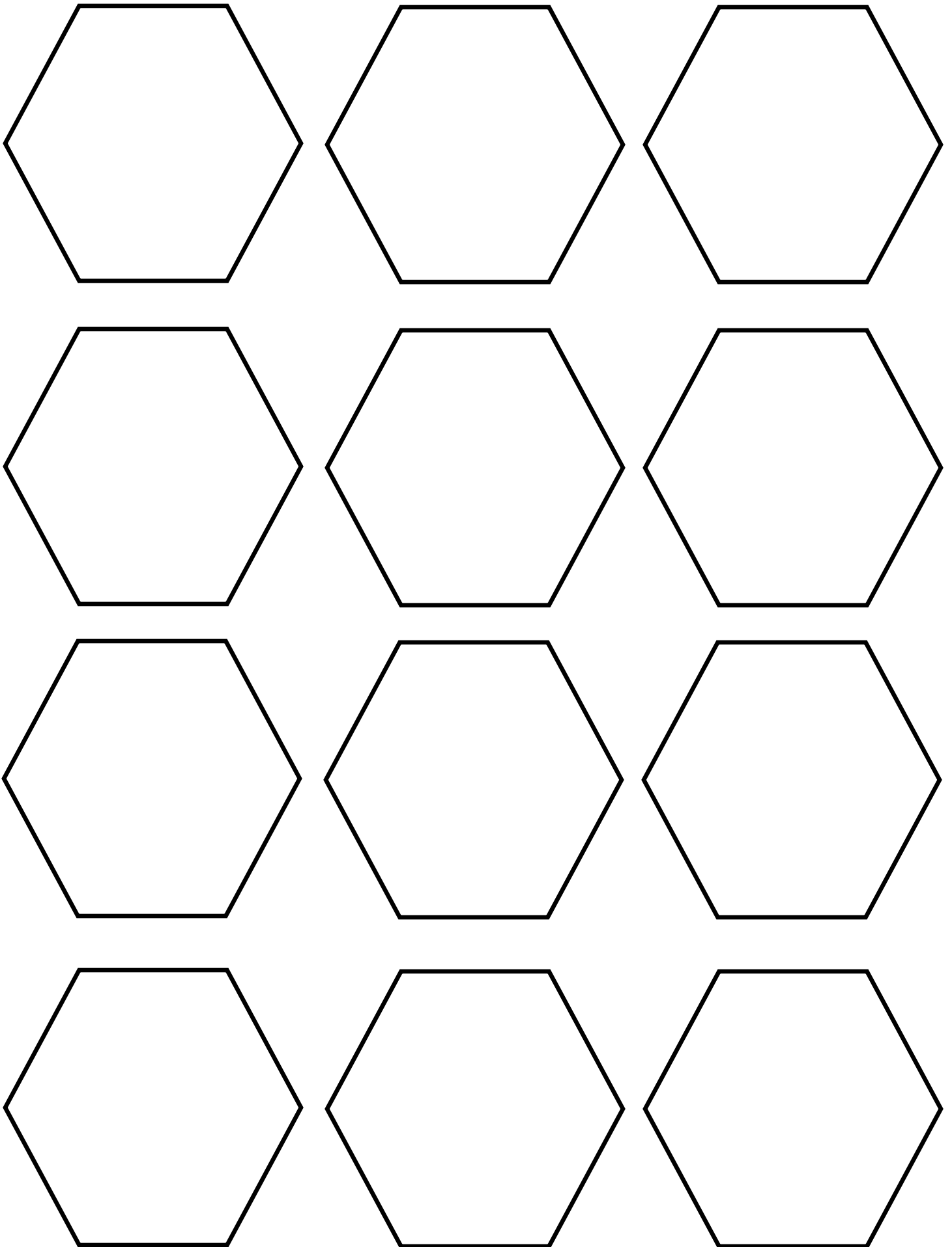
### SUPPLIES:

- \* Hexagons (see template on next page or buy a punch online)
- \* Post-its
- \* Pencil/pen
- \* Oversized paper, glue/tape to affix hexagons to paper, scissors (optional)



### SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Hand out 5–6 (though you can use as many as you want) hexagon shapes or sheet of paper with hexagons on it.
2. Ask students to write one part of their identity on each individual hexagon. Students can fill in a set number or fill the sheet.  
*Examples: familial relationships, hobbies, interests, personality traits, etc.*
3. Assemble students in small groups and ask them to arrange their hexagons into hives; like hexagons can be stacked on each other; similar hexagons can be touching.  
*Example: One student wrote sister and basketball player while another wrote sister and volleyball player. The two hexagons that say sister can be stacked, while the sports related ones could be in a separate hive next to each other.*
4. When students are finished with their hives, have them walk around and look those created by other groups. Using Post-its, they can annotate/label “hives,” make connections back to their own hives, and ask questions.  
*Example: the hexagons with brother and sister are labeled family, and the “hive” with volleyball and basketball players is labeled “athletes.”*
5. Discuss how our identities overlap and can be similar.
  - What surprised you about this activity?
  - What was it like to consider your own identity?
  - What understandings do you take away from this activity?



\* Making Connections

**MAKING CONNECTIONS ACTIVITY: JOURNEY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**



**TIME:** 1 class period/45 minutes

The majority of the content for this exhibition came through the *American Medina: Stories of Muslim Chicago* Oral History project led by our Studs Terkel Center for Oral History. Oral history allows students to guide their own learning and teaches them to tell the difference between memories and historical events. It reveals the inconsistencies and contradictions in history and broadens students' historical consciousness. By studying and practicing oral history techniques, students enhance their conversation and listening skills and come to realize that they are participants in history.

**SUPPLIES:**

- \* Interview Response Sheets
- \* Interview Summary Sheets
- \* Recording equipment (optional)

**SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Introduce oral history.  
Oral history is a type of storytelling, a research method, and a documentary art form. It provides a link to the past and gives opportunities for an exchange of ideas, emotions, ethics, and values across generational, economic, ethnic, racial, and social barriers.
2. If you did the definitions warm up activity, you could refer back to the class definition for journey or refer to the definition below.
3. Have students journal about the journeys they have taken.
4. Students will conduct oral histories of each other or a family member and then write a summary of that person's experience. The interview sheets on the following pages can help with this process. These interviews could be recorded if the technology is available.
5. Interviewee should review the summary for accuracy and to help clarify the story.
6. Create an anthology of stories to be "published" by the class.

Parts of this lesson were derived from the *Teen Chicago* curriculum guide developed in 2006.

**Definition of Journey** (from Merriam-Webster)

1. something suggesting travel or passage from one state of being to another *ex: the journey from youth to maturity, the journey through time*
2. an act or instance of traveling from one place to another *ex: a three day journey, going on a long journey*



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**INTERVIEW RESPONSE SHEET**

With your partner or interview subject discuss a journey they have undertaken.

Remember the following as you interview your partner:

- Use open-ended questions so the interviewee can tell their story: “Tell me about a time when...”
- Develop and use on the spot follow up questions: “Why do you think that happened?”
- Avoid leading questions: “Don’t you just hate...”
- Get physical descriptions of people and places as often as possible.
- Work from prepared questions, but allow for flexibility.

**Interview (sample questions):**

What is your full name? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your favorite time of year? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some physical journeys you have taken?

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What personal journeys have you taken?

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Tell me more about one of these journeys.

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Who was with you on this journey?

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Where and when did it take place?

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Why is this journey a significant one in your life? Or, how has it played a role in shaping your identity?

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What object or personal belonging would help tell this story?

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Other Questions/Notes:



\* Making Connections

## MAKING CONNECTIONS ACTIVITY: CREATING A JOURNEY EXHIBITION



TIME: 1 class period/45 minutes

**In addition to telling their story, many narrators also loaned the museum objects that were important to their story. For example, Aminatu El-Mohammed-Toheeb Lawal lent CHM one of her dress ensembles. This object helps viewers make a connection to her journey story.**

### SUPPLIES:

- \* Object or photograph of object
- \* Understanding A Museum Label Worksheet
- \* Pencil/pen
- \* Writing a Museum Label worksheet

### SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONS:

1. During their oral history interview, students identified an object that could represent their story. Invite students to think about that object or a similar one.
2. Look at the example label from the exhibition.
  - Name of the object
  - Approximate date for the object
  - Country/region of origin for the object
  - Owner of the object
  - Short explanation/description of the object
3. Have students create labels for their objects using the sheet. This could be done at home or the classroom.
4. If possible, have students bring in pictures of the object or the object itself to share with each other and create a pop-up exhibit to share with your school community.

**Extension:** Upload stories/photographs to “Your Story, Our Story.”  
<https://yourstory.tenement.org/partners/chicago-history-museum>

The Tenement Museum in New York City has created an online story sharing platform in which people around the country can share their stories of immigration, migration, and cultural identity. For the past few years, the Chicago History Museum has been a partner in this story collection initiative.

## UNDERSTANDING A MUSEUM LABEL

Object name, date

**Woman's ensemble, 2019**

Place of origin

Nigeria

Name of owner

Courtesy of Aminatu El-Mohammed-Toheeb Lawal

Quote about the  
object from the owner  
(if applicable)

**“My mother and father are both from Accra, Ghana. My mother descended from Nigeria as well as Egypt. My father descended from Mali also. He is the first generation in Ghana.”**

—Aminatu El-Mohammed-Toheeb Lawal

Description including  
more of the story  
and the object.

Native Chicagoan Aminatu El-Mohammed-Toheeb Lawal likes to display her Nigerian heritage through clothing such as this ensemble, which she wears on special occasions. Her parents came to Chicago in the 1970s. Lawal grew up on the South Side, then moved to the North Side in the 1980s. Her parents instilled in her a strong belief in Islam and a deep understanding of her ties to West Africa. Today, Lawal drives for the Pace Suburban Bus Service and lives in south suburban Homewood.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

**WRITING A MUSEUM LABEL**

Oral history name: \_\_\_\_\_

Object name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of origin: \_\_\_\_\_

Who owned this object: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I chose this object because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



### CURRICULAR RESOURCES:

- CHM Digital Collection — <http://digitalcollection.chicagohistory.org/>
  - Scroll to Oral History Collection to find full recordings and transcripts from the American Medina: Stories of Muslim Chicago Oral History project.
  - Or, listen to the full audio of additional oral histories on the Chicago History Museum’s Sound Cloud page: <https://soundcloud.com/chicagomuseum/sets/american-medina>
- Creating Cultural Competencies — <https://www.creatingculturalcompetencies.org/>
  - Initiative by UIC College of Education and the American Friends Service Committee to create a curriculum “Countering Anti-Muslim Racism in Schools.” Workshops/ trainings are also available.
- “Teaching about Islam in Public Schools” by Susan Douglass in *Teaching About Religion in the Social Studies Classroom*, NCSS Bulletin 117, 2019. (This chapter features lesson plans as well.)
- Visit <https://www.chicagohistory.org/education/field-trips/middle-school-and-high-school-field-trips/> for resources related to the *American Medina: Stories of Muslim Chicago* exhibition

### BOOKS:

- Khaled A. Beydoun, *American Islamophobia: Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear* (University of California Press, 2018)
- C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Wm. B. Eardmans Publishing Co., 1994; reprinted with forward by Gordon Allport and epilogue by Aminah Beverly McCloud)
- Garbi Schmidt, *Islam in Urban America: Sunni Muslims in Chicago* (Temple University Press, 2004)
- The Middle East Outreach Council gives out annual children/young adult book awards to books that “contribute meaningfully to greater understanding of the Middle East.” This year’s award winners will be announced soon. <http://www.meoc.us/>

**Please give us your feedback!** After reviewing and using this Learning Guide, please send us your feedback. Your ideas and honest assessment will ensure that this guide keeps improving and will provide us with useful insight for future Learning Guides.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade taught: \_\_\_\_\_

Check all that you used:

**A Closer Look**

- Warm Up: Defining Community, Journey, Identity, and Faith
- Activity 1: Foundational Moments for Chicago’s Muslim Communities
- Activity 2: Chicago’s Muslim Communities through Oral Histories

- Field Trip Gallery Reflection Guide

**Making Connections**

- Warm Up: Identity Hexagons
- Activity 1: Journey Oral History Project
- Activity 2: Creating a Journey Exhibition

On a scale of one to five (with five being the best) rate this Learning Guide in terms of quality of student learning experience it provides (circle one):    **1**    **2**    **3**    **4**    **5**

What were the strengths of this lesson? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What advice, tips, or suggestions would you give to future users of this guide? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you fit this guide into your course of study (sequence, scope, unit)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did the use of oral history impact student learning? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What aspects of this lesson would you change? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your time!**

Please send the completed form to: [clark@chicagohistory.org](mailto:clark@chicagohistory.org) or by fax: 312-799-2457

Or submit online at: <https://www.chicagohistory.org/american-medina-educator-learning-guide/>