

Dr. Omar Khalidi of MIT's Department of Architecture presents his photo exhibition

"Mosques in America." December 2-4, 2006.

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(Words that could not be identified are marked "???")

Dr. Omar Khalidi: As a child I've been fascinated with the, uh, with the, uh, with Germany, with its great culture, and its great castles and so forth, so it is a dream come true.

If they comment that despite all the political issues uh, of uh, the two countries, I see the people are, as--people still remain friends, and the population and cultural exchange continues to happen.

Uh...There it's...there is a ??? to what I was going to say about, uh, the ... America's foundation is based on the twin principles of, um, religious freedom for all. After all the first American—the European Americans who first arrived in the US were fleeing religious persecution in England. And the second one has to do with, uh, the fact that America, uh, is founded on immigration. Everybody has been an immigrant there at one point or the other. Um, except perhaps, uh, Native Americans everybody is an immigrant. So, uh, I think that ... it's not just a principle, uh, of some ancient time, but it is ???, in other words, uh, that, uh, people, the government, society is alive, and at large respect this principle. And that's why America continues to attract the uh, people from around the globe. It is a... still a magnet. So today it is very appropriate for ???, the Mayor of New York, who once said: 'America is the only international Nation. It has people from around the globe.' And the same is true of Muslims. So that uh...you know, in popular imaginations Muslims are ???. But wait until you get to the US. At the time of hajj, you see the greatest diversity of Muslims from around the globe in Mecca. For just three days. But in America, the same diversity is available all 365 days of the year. So that today Muslims in America, uh, consist of the following three major, uh...national and ethnic groups. Primarily first group I would say, are the African Americans, fully 30 percent of American Muslims are people of African descent who have become Muslim. ??? 30 percent of all American Muslims are African Americans, born and raised within America, and there are a number of people from , uh, white, caucasian, any other ethnic group who are embracing Islam. So the ...uh, to the extent of the president of the Islamic society of North America, the largest organizations of Muslims is a US-born American Muslim woman. Secondly, uh, the other group of Muslims for the Middle East, from various countries like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria...uh, Iran, Turkey and so forth. They consist of about 35 % of...Muslims come from Middle east. Then there is a huge group of Muslims from the, uh, India subcontinent. Pakistan, India, Bangladesh. So you have...fully...close to 35 % of Muslims in America are from these three countries, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. So you have this great cultural backg...uh, uh, diversity. And these people are, uh...there as, uh...

highly...skilled professionals. Very upwardly mobile. Self-confident. Who...uh...fit into America's economy as highly trained professionals, who do...teach at...the most prestigious universities from Harvard down to the smallest colleges in America will have one or two professors almost. You will see them, uh, in, uh, about every hospital in America will have a Muslim doctor. Then you will see in IT industry numerous Muslims. So you see Muslims as people who contribute to American economy as productive citizens, who are fluent in English...who are ... able to...live in harmony with the rest of the society. Who are...not handicapped by...not knowing English or any other...uh, issues. But within this diversity of Muslims...this ethnic and national diversity of Muslims, it is, there is also a great diversity of opinion about Islam. Not all Muslims have the same vision of Islam. It differs not simply by ethnicity or uh, nationality, but generation, whether you're a female or a male, how educated you are, how religious your family was, all of these come into play