

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Maryam Mostoufi

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
People of Faith-Mosaic of Faiths Oral History project

Interview # PFM-A-L-2018-077

Maryam Mostoufi, a prominent leader of the Muslim community in Springfield, Illinois since the early 1980s, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *People of Faith-Mosaic of Faiths* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: Dec 11 & Dec 18, 2018, Jan 16 & Feb 5, 2019

Location: Mostoufi residence, Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:40 + 1:48 + 1:55 + 2:34 / 1.67 + 1.8 + 1.92 + 2.57 = 7.96 hrs.

Session 1: Early years in Iowa, spiritual search and meeting Siavash Mostoufi

Session 2: Overview of the tenets of Islam

Session 3: Life in Iran from 1972 through 1979, and Iranian Revolution

Session 4: Return to the U.S., and life and religious experiences since the early 1980s

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on July 24, 2019.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Maryam Mostoufi, *Mosaic of Faiths*, PFM-A-L-2018-077

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Maryam Mostoufi was born in August 1948 in Princeton, Indiana to John and Dorothy Hallam. (Her birth name was Janice Hallam). She was raised in a strong Disciples of Christ home and attended public schools in Marshalltown, Iowa. While in high school, Maryam wanted to go to the seminary, but her application was rejected after she wrote that she did not believe in the Trinity, believing instead that Jesus was a great prophet but not the son of God. She attended Marshalltown Community College, then transferred to Iowa State University, earning her degree in 1970. While there, she attended classes on Islam, and decided to convert to that religion. Subsequently, she began dating the young Iranian student who had been her instructor, Siavash Mostoufi, who was majoring in soil science at the University. They married in September 1971. In 1972, after Siavash earned his master's degree, they moved to the province of Khuzestan in Iran where he worked on water resource projects. Maryam thoroughly enjoyed her years in Iran, where their two children were born. However, in 1979, as Iran was roiled in revolution, they fled the country and returned to the United States.

The family settled in Springfield, Illinois in 1980, where Siavash found work with the Department of Transportation. Maryam worked in a variety of positions, the longest being the Illinois Department of Mental Health, later reorganized and renamed the Department of Human Services. The family became very active in Springfield's Islamic community, helping to establish the Islamic Society of Springfield in 1988 and opening a mosque for the city's growing Muslim population. The mosque burned down in 1995 under very suspicious circumstances, but they opened a new mosque in 1998. Maryam also had a long-time affiliation with the Greater Springfield Area Interfaith Association and served two terms as its president. She received religious training and her master's degree from the Ecumenical Theological School in Detroit, the first Muslim to attend the school, and became a chaplain in 1999 for Saint John's Hospital, the first Muslim woman in the world to hold such a position.

Maryam talked extensively about her Islamic faith, about the impact the Iranian Revolution had on her family, about her pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca in 1991, and how the world has changed because of 9-11 and the Global War on Terror.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Islamic religion; Siavash Mostoufi; Islamic Society of Springfield; Greater Springfield Area Interfaith Association; Shia Islam; Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia; experiencing the *Hajj* to Mecca; Iranian Revolution of 1979; burning of Springfield's mosque in 1995; Iowa State University; life in Marshalltown, Iowa in the 1950s & '60s; Muslim chaplains; Illinois Department of Human Services; Illinois Department of Mental Health; impact of 9-11 on Islamic community;

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