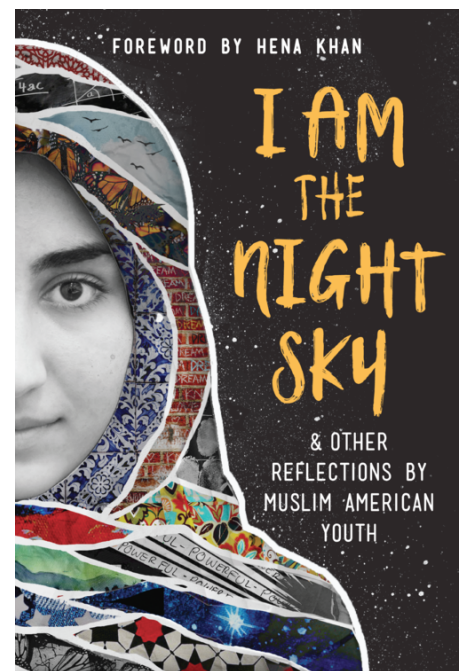


# *I Am The Night Sky* & other reflections by Muslim American Youth

by the teen artists and writers of  
Next Wave Muslim Initiative

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During an era characterized by both hijabi fashion models and enduring post-9/11 stereotypes, ten Muslim American teenagers came together to explore what it means to be young and Muslim in America today. These teens represent the tremendous diversity within the American Muslim community, and their book, like them, contains multitudes. Bilal writes about being a Muslim rocker. Noor reflects about speaking in multiple tongues. Samaa creates her own cartoon Kabob Squad. Ayah responds to online hate. Through poems, essays, artwork, and stories, these young people aim to show their true selves, to build connection, and to create more inclusive and welcoming communities for all.



## ***I Am The Night Sky* WRITING PROMPTS:**

- Begin with character. Brainstorm: age, gender, race, background, religion (and relationship to religion), what they look like, what they wear, where they live, who they admire, who they dislike, who dislikes them, what are their talents, what are their flaws, what they wish for, what they're afraid of, something no one knows about them, what their life will look like 10 years from now, what their life looked like 10 years ago... Something in there will be present the knot you want to unravel. Pull the threads.
- Tell the story of "The First Time..."
  - ... you realized what it meant to be Muslim
  - ... you experienced racism / Islamophobia / bias
  - ... you felt a real disconnect with your parents
  - ... you felt a real disconnect with your friends
  - ... [whatever first you want to explore]
- Write an "Ode to \_\_\_\_\_." This could be something you love, something you don't love, something most people would not think to value....

- Make a list of all your identities, i.e. all the ways someone might describe or label you: race, gender, religion, ancestry, socioeconomic status, where you live, where you were born, categories you fit into at school (athlete, academic star, outcast, etc.), words others would use to describe you, words you would use to describe yourself... Then choose two identities that have some tension between them. Write about a time those two identities came into conflict.
- Structure a story around the five daily prayers by writing five vignettes. What is the character hoping to resolve/absolve/pray for/escape from each time?
- Write an instruction manual: "How to Grow Up Like Me," "How To Become a Muslim Rockstar," "How to Lose Your Friends But Keep Your Pride." (Anything goes!) Begin each numbered section with a direction, like: "Hide your guitar in the trunk in your attic."
- Write about a time you felt most powerful AND / OR Write about a time you felt most vulnerable.
- Write your own "Origin Story," beginning with: "This is true: I was born ..."
- Explore your own memories for story seeds: Create a list, beginning each line with "I remember..." and focus on specific images or moments. (Example: "I remember red flashing lights on our living room walls when the police car brought my brother home.") When you find something that interests you, write a piece inspired by that memory.



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