Last year, in order to address the growing need for a Muslim voice in the great sea of American literature, Columbia MSA invited renowned novelists, playwrights, journalists and academics to Columbia for a weekend filled with inspiration and wisdom. The symposium, a series of talks, panels, and workshops held during the weekend of November 10th, attracted over 300 attendees from all over the northeast including Boston, Penn, Princeton, Yale and Rutgers. Focusing on writing and art as agents of social change, the event shed light on the importance of the Muslim protagonist in a post-9/11 America, and gave prominent Muslim and non-Muslim writers of this generation the opportunity to discuss their experiences within an emerging American-Muslim literary community. Last year’s symposium—entitled, “The Muslim Protagonist: Write your own story”—received coverage from The Huffington Post to Pakistan’s Express Tribune, and was lauded by speakers and attendees as “groundbreaking.”

muslimprotagonist.com
2012
at a glance

300+ attendees
from across the northeast region, representing universities including

Yale University
Princeton University
University of Pennsylvania
Cornell University
Rutgers University
Boston University
New York University
LAST YEAR’S SPEAKERS

Reza Aslan
Co-Founder of BoomGen Studios and Associate Professor of Creative Writing at the University of California, Riverside, author of No god but God, How to Win a Cosmic War, and Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth

Ibrahim Abdul-Matin
Author of Green Deen: What Islam Teaches Us About the Planet, regular contributor on NPR's The Takeaway

Lila Abu-Lughod
Joseph L. Buttenwieser Professor of Social Science in Columbia University’s Department of Anthropology, author of Veiled Sentiments, Writing Women’s Worlds, and Dramas of Nationhood: The Politics of Television in Egypt

Wajahat Ali
Playwright, journalist, and attorney, author of Domestic Crusaders, the first major play about the American-Muslim experience, and co-editor of 45 American Men on Being Muslim

Naif Al-Mutawa (exclusive video)
Founder and CEO of Teshkeel Media Group, creator of the The 99 comics

Anita Amirrezvani
Adjunct Professor of Writing and Literature at the California College of the Arts, author of The Blood of Flowers and Equal of the Sun

Richard Bulliet
Professor of History at Columbia University, author of The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization, Islam: The View from the Edge, Kicked to Death by a Camel, and The One-Donkey Solution

Mohsin Hamid (exclusive video)
Author of Moth Smoke, How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia: A Novel, and Booker-Prize finalist The Reluctant Fundamentalist

Sahar Ullah
Creative Director, Head Writer and Co-Founder of the Hijabi Monologues international theater project; Co-founder of WAFA (Women’s Allied Forum in Academics); PhD Candidate in Arabic and Comparative Literature at Columbia University

Jacob Kader
Co-author of off-Broadway play Food and Fadwa at the New York Theater Workshop

Nikoo Kafi & Jim McGoldrick
Co-authors of over two-dozen award-winning novels, most recently Omid’s Shadow and The Deadliest Strain

Daniyal Mueenuddin (exclusive video)
Author of Pulitzer Prize finalist In Other Rooms, Other Wonders

Kamran Pasha
Hollywood screenwriter, director, and novelist, co-producer and writer of Emmy-winning show Sleeper Cell, writer and producer of NBC series Kings, and author of Mother of the Believers and Shadow of the Swords

Musa Syeed
New York Foundation for the Arts fellow, writer and director of Valley of Saints, winner of the Audience Award for World Cinema the Alfred P. Sloan Feature Film Production Award at Sundance 2012
**The Columbia Daily Spectator**
Columbia’s daily newspaper featured a front-page article covering The Muslim Protagonist on Nov. 12th, 2013.

**The Express Tribune**
This Pakistani *New York Times* affiliate featured The Muslim Protagonist in “Beyond bombs and beards” on Dec. 16th, 2012.

**The Huffington Post**
The *Huffington Post* covered The Muslim Protagonist in “Muslim Americans: Into the Salad Bowl Or Just the Melting Pot?” on Nov. 12th, 2012.

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Last year, the Columbia MSA received the King’s Crown Award for Excellence for leaving “an indelible mark” on campus, largely due to its efforts in organizing The Muslim Protagonist.

**“A call to words.”**
- Reza Aslan

“To have missed this symposium...is equivalent of losing half of your life. These writers were a treasure island waiting to be discovered by the youth.”

**“Groundbreaking... you’ve all inspired us here at the Rutgers-Newark MSA.”**
- Reza Aslan

“The Black Arts movement captured the moment of the awakening of a people. We need a Muslim Arts movement.”
- Ibrahim Abdul-Matin

“Speak truth to power... perhaps better to speak truth that is powerful.”
- Wajahat Ali

**“You made history.”**
- Anita Amirrezvani

“The speakers were like the lions in the courtyard, firmly urging us to be courageous just like our parents physically were when they left their countries to give us a better life here in America.”

“One of the best orchestrated, timely, innovative, and unique approaches to the study of the American Muslim identity and development I have witnessed.”
- UPenn MSA

“Art has the power to breakthrough every barrier and go straight to the heart.”
- Kamran Pasha

“Columbia MSA’s signature event among the Ivy League.”
This year, The Muslim Protagonist will build on the previous year’s remarkable success and delve deeper into the issue of the minority narrative in a unique and thoughtful way, bringing together writers from diverse minority communities in America, and writers of diverse dimensions, past and future. A new, stellar cast of speakers will help us in asking, what makes a protagonist? Who has she/he been in the past, in classic Muslim literature, and who is she/he re-imagined to be in the distant future or in an alternative present? What can we learn from the diverse immigrant and “indigenous” narratives of today in America, and what do we know from the emergent Muslim narrative already taking form?