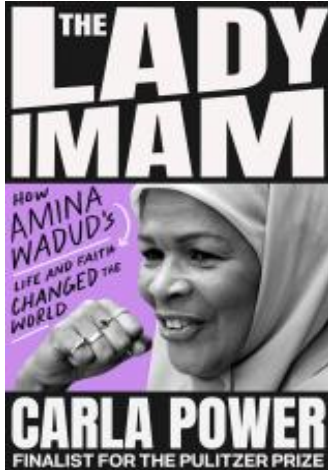


The Lady Imam: How amina wadud's Life and Faith Changed the World

by Carla Power



About the Book

A timely and soul-stirring biography of one of the most influential Islamic woman scholars of today, from the two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist author of IF THE OCEANS WERE INK and HOME, LAND, SECURITY.

A feminist scholar-activist, single mother of five, and queer advocate, amina wadud has led a decades-long struggle against Islam's patriarchal establishment. Like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X before her, wadud has mobilized faith's moral power as an engine for justice and equality. Yet the extraordinary story of this American trailblazer has never been told in book form, until now.

Born Mary Teasley, the daughter of a Methodist preacher, wadud grew up in Maryland with a rare vantage on America's socioeconomic divides, shaped by childhood poverty and the devastating loss of her sister to an illegal abortion. A gifted student, a teenage wadud was sent to live with affluent white families in Weston, Massachusetts. After cross-country hitchhiking and a stint in a Buddhist ashram, she converted to Islam as a 20-year-old Ivy League student --- beginning a lifelong spiritual and intellectual journey.

wadud devoted her life to studying the Qur'an, challenging centuries of patriarchal interpretations and uncovering a vision of radical equality within Islam's sacred text. In Manhattan in 2005, she became the world's most famous --- and infamous --- Islamic scholar when she led a mixed-gender Friday prayer service, becoming the first woman in 1,400 years to publicly lead women and men together in prayer. The historic act ignited global debate and inspired a generation of Muslim reformers.

THE LADY IMAM chronicles the life of a singular figure whose influence reaches beyond Islamic scholarship into feminism, Black history and global movements for gender justice. With unprecedented access through years of interviews and archival research, Carla Power delivers the definitive portrait of wadud's extraordinary life while

illuminating the enduring struggle to reconcile faith, family and the pursuit of justice.

Discussion Guide

Questions for Discussion

1. How did you experience reading *THE LADY IMAM*? Did you go in with any preconceived notions about amina wadud or Islam? Did you feel your expectations challenged when you read the book? If so, how?
2. amina wadud embodies many identities, leading a life that at times feels "paradoxical" (page 156). How do these identities factor into the types of struggles she faces throughout the book?
3. *THE LADY IMAM* is structured into 16 Hijrahs. How does this structure impact your view of wadud's story?
4. The Hijrahs that wadud undertakes are not only physical, but mental, emotional and spiritual. What kind of Hijrahs have you taken in your own life, external or internal? What significance did they hold for you within the larger journey of your life?
5. In *THE LADY IMAM*, wadud names Toni Morrison and the Sufi saint Rabia as women who influenced her worldview. Do you have figures like this in your life? How have they impacted your core values and philosophies?
6. On page 191, the question is posed: "Who speaks for Islam? And what gives them that right?" How would you answer this question?
7. On page 107, Power recounts that since amina's youth, she has "sought to complicate the meaning of being American." What do you think it means to be American?
8. In Hijrah VI, amina confronts the idea of families being made up of two-parent households. Have you seen the idea of a family being reconceived in your own life or community? If so, how did you respond?
9. amina challenges herself, others and the system to confront our beliefs and ways of thinking. Have you ever challenged a belief system before? Why or why not? What brought you to your conclusions?
10. The Islamic calendar operates on a lunar system known as Hijri. This system is named for the first Hijrah of the Prophet Muhammad. At the end of the book, amina sits upon her "terrace every night, watching the moon rise." What is the significance of this ending?
11. In *THE LADY IMAM*, Power and wadud introduce the idea of Barzakh, a theological concept representing a liminal space or purgatory between this life and the eternal. Outside of the theological definition, amina embarks on her own "Barzakh years" (page 64) in Philadelphia. What do you think signifies the end of wadud's Barzakh years? Have you experienced a Barzakh of your own? If so, how did it affect your worldview?

12. wadud's father, the Rev, was a dedicated Christian preacher. How do you think that wadud's upbringing as the daughter of a man so dedicated to his Christian faith affects her worldview and relationship with religion today?

Enhance Your Book Club

1. Visit author Carla Power's Substack for more information about her, her career, on amina, and upcoming events and projects.
2. Highlighting Female Islamic Scholars: In a field that is more often than not male-dominated, women Islamic scholars are often forgotten. Have your group members research a female Islamic scholar and present what you find to the group.
3. amina wadud's interpretations of text are often controversial, yet her exegeses are grounded in standard interpretation methodologies. Do you have a faith tradition? Consider bringing a passage from your own tradition to interpret during your book club. Present your conclusions and how you came to them with the group.
4. One of wadud's many strengths is her experience living in many different faiths. Visit different houses of faith in your area during their visiting hours. Learn about each religion and ask the group: What can we gain from exploring how different communities understand their God(s) and faith?
5. Religious scholars have different interpretations of religious doctrine and texts. Pick two different scholars' interpretations of the same passage. What are the similarities and differences in interpretation? What could have motivated the differing outcomes in their understanding?

Author Bio

Carla Power is the author of *THE LADY IMAM*. Her previous titles include *HOME*, *LAND*, *SECURITY* and *IF THE OCEANS WERE INK*, which was a finalist for both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. She was raised in St. Louis, with years in Iran, India, Afghanistan, Egypt and Italy. Her work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Time*, *The New York Times*, *Foreign Policy*, *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair* and *The Guardian*. She lives with her family in East Sussex, England.

The Lady Imam: How amina wadud's Life and Faith Changed the World

by Carla Power

Publication Date: June 16, 2026

Genres: Biography, Nonfiction

Hardcover: 336 pages

Publisher: One World

ISBN-10: 0593595351

ISBN-13: 9780593595350