



# Community engagement

And the building and burning of bridges

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# Rare Book Department, Free Library of Philadelphia


William B. Dietrich Gallery

2

# background

Free Library blog, January 2018

## Rare Book Department Awarded Digitization Grant for Muslim-World Artifacts

By [Julie B.](#)  Thu, January 11, 2018

The Free Library's **Rare Book Department** prides itself on making historical and beautiful artifacts available to the general public. An award of \$500,000 from the **Council on Library and Information Resources** (CLIR), which is made possible by funding from The **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, will make some of its collection more accessible to more viewers than ever, through a project to digitize—and provide free, open access—to hundreds of Islamic manuscripts and paintings that have previously been largely invisible to scholars.

In partnership with Columbia University, the University of Pennsylvania, Haverford College, and Bryn Mawr College, the Free Library will lead the three-year project *Manuscripts of the Muslim World*, making a hidden portion of the Islamic manuscript tradition available worldwide. It will provide digital access to a total of 576 Islamic manuscripts and 827 paintings dating from 1000 to 1900. The Free Library's own Caitlin Goodman, curator of the Rare Book Department, is serving as the project's primary investigator.



Zodiacal detail from Lewis O 41, *Marvels of Things Created*



# timeline: CLIR and after

2017: CLIR award

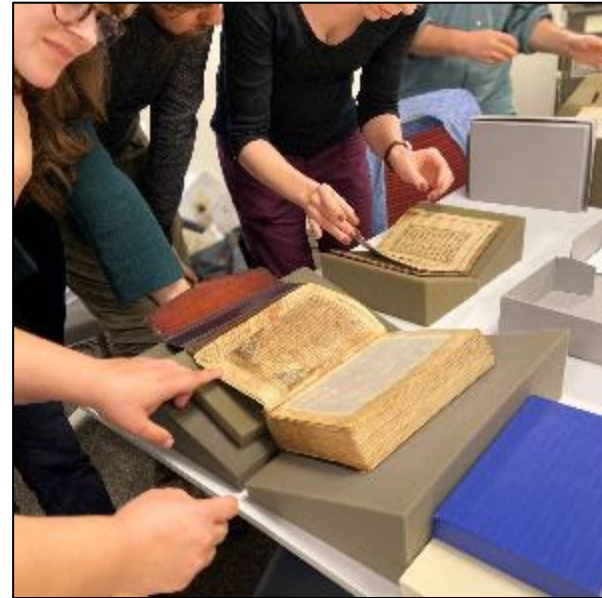
2018: Digitization and cataloging begins

2019: IMLS Save America's Treasures

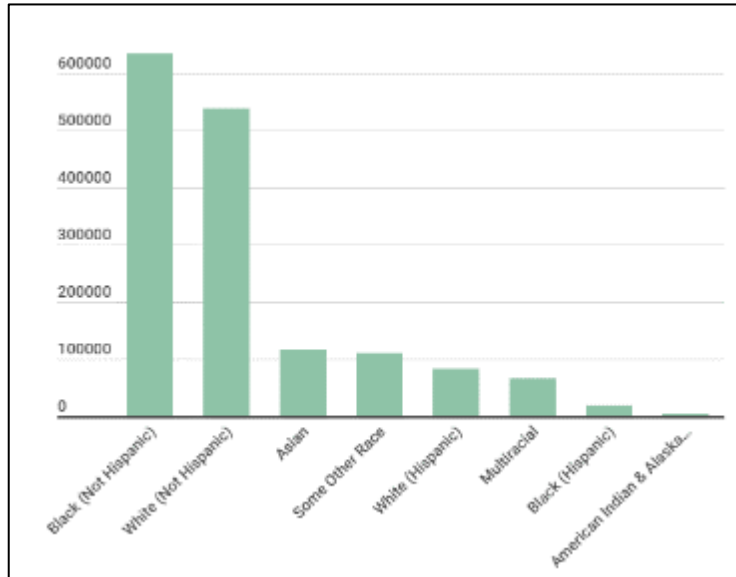
2020: Doris Duke FIA award

2021: engagement phase

2022: exhibition opens



# Philadelphia, and its libraries



Sources: DATAUSA (visualization via Infogram); Free Library FY21 Annual Report



# “Muslim Town”

Cover of the September 7, 2010 issue of the *Philadelphia Daily News*, courtesy Imam Suetwedien Muhammad





# Project team

(clockwise from top left)

Joseph Shemtov, Project Manager

Shahadah Abdul-Rashid, Community Initiatives Specialist

Hudhaifah AbdulHayy, Islamic Community Consultant

Yaroub Al Obaidi, Museum Educator Consultant

Caitlin Goodman, Collections Liaison





Then we  
needed some  
money

Ultimately, the  
“engagement” was  
largely funded by the  
Doris Duke Foundation  
for Islamic Art’s Building  
Bridges program.

Additional support (post-CLIR): the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, the Independence Foundation, and John McFadden and Lisa Kabnick







# Hudhaifah AbdulHayy



Hudhaifah, seated, working the phone



Hudhaifah at Masjidullah



# Majlis ash Shura of the Delaware Valley



Five imams from the Majlis Ash Shura visiting the Free Library in 2019 (back in this project's toddler days)



## Masjid Mujahideen, 1971

Courtesy of Sayed Abdul-Hadi



[Browse the Calendar of Events»](#)

For information about the *In the Path of Islam* project, please contact [mmw@freelibrary.org](mailto:mmw@freelibrary.org)

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Who are indigenous Muslims? You may have noticed this term; here's the perspective of Shahadah Abdul-Rashid, an indigenous Muslimah and member of the project team: "'Indigenous Muslim' is a descriptive term used by many American Muslims to describe their cultural roots. The adjective indigenous, spelled with a lowercase i, denotes being born and raised in the United States as distinct from having another native culture and country of birth. While not exclusive to African-American Black Muslims, "indigenous Muslim" is a term of self-identification for a community who celebrates its diversity but also recognizes itself as American as apple pie."

The project team for *In the Path of Islam* is Shahadah Abdul-Rashid, Hudhaifah Abdulharry, Yaroub Al Obaidi, Caitlin Goodman, and Joseph Chertow, but the project would not have been possible without the work of many Free Library divisions, including

Clipped from the project website

The institutional solution





# Can white institutions center communities of color?



(L) Author Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow with Shahadah  
(R) Chef Jamela Bilal cooking demo “No More Boring Dates”





# Scenes from an exhibition

KHALIL BROWN WITH HIS QUR'AN STAND



A FAN LENT BY SHAFEEQAH MUHAMMAD





# Sistah Aisamah Muhammad-Muneer





## Traveling exhibit at Logan Library branch

Some Free Library patrons excited to find centuries-old Muslim artifacts at their local branch!





# Exhibit at Masjid Al-Wasatiyah











## Mr. Ali and Mr. Karim, calligraphers

One of dozens of "Art on the Road" programs sharing the art of Arabic calligraphy