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ABSTRACT ONLY – WORK IN PROGRESS

“Empire, Subalternity, and Ijtihad: Two Muslim Women’s
Leadership Models in Post 9/11 America”

Fauzia Erfan Ahmed, Ph.D
(Miami University of Ohio, Oxford, OH)

Binary stereotypes silence Muslim women in post 9/11 America, but little has been written about how Muslim women’s leadership can enable voice. This presentation highlights two leadership models. One is based on the philosophy of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) which facilitates self-worth and solidarity, key elements of voice. This is the less visible spiritual colleague model, whose followers are practicing Muslim women. It facilitates self-worth through *ijtihad* by allowing women to seek self-definition through their own interpretation of the Qur’an. The leader converts her home into a space which is simultaneously sacred and political where such informal discussions take place around religious rituals. The public bridge builder is the second model; it creates solidarity among its Muslim and non-Muslim followers, both practicing and non-practicing. This model focuses on effective dialogue among different groups. Utilizing *ijtihad* as a discourse in pursuit of knowledge (*ilm*), it creates equality and respect, the basis of sustainable alliances.