

## **Simon Says**

Transcript Export

<https://simonsays.ai>

## **Meriam Salem: Artist Reflection for American Muslim Futures**

FULL TRANSCRIPT (without timecode)

Asalaam walaikum.

Thank you for taking the time to find pieces of yourself in my work. I'm Meriam Salem Baaghil originally from the Bay Area and I've learned that my home is wherever people find a home in me.

A just future is one that synthesizes our needs as spiritual beings that are met in tandem with actualizing societies in which those needs can be met. I believe that the core of every human experience is to be at a place in which we feel like we belong.

Where our purpose without comparison is valued and our connection with what our heart yearns most provides clarity. Allah subhana wa tallah fulfills all three of those needs and I don't say that lightly. Who else created me to belong? Who told me that I had a purpose? And that a focused heart would provide clarity? As Allah is closer to us than a set of veins that connect our minds to our hearts.

This work envisions of just future by a combination of synthesizing the historic with the contemporary and future. Through the expiration of expression of faith recognizing that all women in our communities have always been and continue to be the bedrock of culture, societies, and spiritualities. As part of a larger photo series, the focus on all Muslim women is to illuminate a forgotten history of feminine spiritual expression in Muslim communities.

This photo project means to inspire, root and celebrate the shared power among Muslim women within various cultures. The inspiration of this work comes from dispelling patronizing messages towards Muslim women around the world, that refuses to give any agency to women for exploring their faith practice. This is perpetuated by both non-Muslims and Muslims alike, who are trying to create an oppressive homogenous ideal woman that does not exist nor acknowledges our humanity.

The American Muslim Futures exhibit is important because for generations in US history Muslim bodies were seen as a threat that needed to be managed and controlled. These policies have led to Muslims forming a reactionary relationship to our human, civil, and divine rights. As well as the areas that we live in, forever to be strangers in a place we call home.

I grew up with an understanding that despite being American, my right to exercise what that meant, had many different consequences that my peers who were more American (or considered more American than I) did not have to face. This exhibit dispels the belief that we should disassociate as a way of coping with the idea of what our futures will look like in this country.

On the contrary we are asked to be creative and find comfort in destinies that are just in their divine decree.