

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR PANEL AT ASAA2022
Panel 34

**The Struggle over the *Ummah*:
Race, place and membership in the community of believers**

4th Biennial Conference of the African Studies Association of Africa
Africa and the Human: Old questions, new imaginaries

11-16 April 2022
University of Cape Town, South Africa

This panel examines the racial configuration of the *umma*, often translated as the global community of believers, by centering on the experiences of African Muslims. The idea of the *umma* as a community of believers is in reality, quite a complex construction. Yet much of the discussion has tended to gloss over broader social issues including race, placing greater emphasis on the religious dimension. Additionally, debates on race and Islam in Africa have mainly concentrated on the history of slavery and its legacy in post-abolition societies. This panel makes an anthropological contribution to these debates by analyzing the racialization of contemporary African Muslim communities in relation to both local non-Muslim communities and transnational Muslim communities from the Middle East, South Asia, Europe and America. Moving beyond the primacy of 'Muslim' religious affinities within the *umma*, we agree with Goolam Vahed that the concept of *umma* 'does not erase for a moment racial, class, gender, cultural or other divides' (2021, 11). Following on from this, we ask: What racialized discourses on and about particular Muslim groups exist and how do they play out at the micro-level? In what ways do Muslims themselves reinforce, reconfigure and resist these racialized discourses? How are local racial formations tied to/entangled with global hierarchies of race? And finally, how do we place these within the particular histories, cultures and political economies in which Muslim communities are situated?

We invite contributions that engage with the above-mentioned topics from a range of disciplines, including, but not limited to ethnographic and historical research.

The deadline for abstract submissions is **30th August 2021**. Proposals should be no more than 250 words. Alongside the abstract you will be expected to provide a title, summary of the main question and argument, and a short biography. Abstract proposals must be submitted via the conference online submission system: <https://2022conference.asaa.org/submit-work/call-for-abstracts/>. The conference will take place in a hybrid format.

Organizers:

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