

BIOGRAPHY

Asra Q. Nomani, a former *Wall Street Journal* correspondent, has also written for the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Slate* magazine, and *Time* magazine on Islam, and has covered the war in Afghanistan for Salon.com. She has spoken about women's rights in Islam on CNN, PBS, NPR, and the BBC. A Muslim born in Bombay, India, Nomani lived in Piscataway, New Jersey, before being raised in the foothills of West Virginia. Her first book was *Tantrika: Traveling the Road of Divine Love* (HarperSanFrancisco Publishers), the compelling story of her journey through the geography of her spiritual conflict as she travels from the feet of the Dalai Lama to caves outside Khajuraho, realizing the inner power of women. She has posted an Islamic Bill of Rights for Women in the Mosque and in the Bedroom on her website, www.asranomani.com.

PRESENTATION

'Bad Girls' of Islam: Gender Jihad for Islam's Future in the 21st Century

[abstract]

Through writing, activism and leadership, courageous and pioneering South Asian women have played a pivotal role in the birth and growth of Islamic feminism as an answer to Islamic extremism. In exploring this issue, the presenter discusses the historical contributions of South Asian Muslim women from the 19th century's Begum of Bhopal to 21st century scholars toward reclaiming rights Islam gave women at its birth in the 7th century. To bring the point home, the presenter chronicles her personal narrative from her childhood as an immigrant girl on the campus of Rutgers University in the late 1960s and early 1970s to her adulthood as a writer-activist, spurred by the murder of her friend and colleague, *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, to stand up for tolerance in the Muslim world and the rights of women to the front doors, main halls and pulpits of mosques.