

# *Macalester Civic Forum*

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RELIGION IN THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SQUARE

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## Contributors

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Liza Baer**, a Stillwater, Minnesota, native, graduated from Macalester in 2009 with majors in Religious Studies and International Studies. Interested in many religious traditions, it was during a 2008 internship with the Institute for the Study of Islam and the Societies of the Muslim World, in Paris, France, that Islam and its diverse manifestations worldwide became her primary focus. While a senior at Macalester College, she worked at a school attended primarily by Somali Muslims, the setting for her Civic Forum essay. She will join the AmeriCorps Multi-Cultural Communities in Action program in the fall of 2009, working as an assistant in a Saint Paul kindergarten classroom.

**Linell Cady** is Franca G. Oreffice Dean's Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies and founding Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict at Arizona State University. She received her B.A. from Newton College and her M.T.S. and Th.D. from Harvard Divinity School. In 1983, she joined the faculty at ASU where she has served as departmental chair as well as associate and interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Dr. Cady's research has focused primarily on the intersections of religion and the public/private boundary in the United States. Topics of particular interest include the construction of the modern category of religion and its interface with understandings of the secular, and the contested role of religion in public life. She is the author of *Religion, Theology, and American Public Life* and co-editor of *Religious Studies, Theology, and the University: Conflicting Maps, Changing Terrain* and *Religion and Conflict in South and Southeast Asia*. Her articles have appeared in anthologies and such journals as *Harvard Theological Review*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy*, *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, and *Journal of Religious Ethics*.

Linell Cady currently serves as co-editor of *Religion Dispatches*, an online magazine that explores the intersections of religion and public life. She is also directing two projects funded by the Ford Foundation. The first, "Religion, Secularism, and Democracy: A Cross-Disciplinary International Project," is a comparative study of secularism and the public role of religion in four democracies: France, India, Turkey, and the United States. The second, "Teaching and Talking about Religion in Public," part of Ford's "Difficult Dialogues" initiative, is supporting

the development of an undergraduate certificate program in religion and conflict at ASU.

**James W. Laine** is Arnold Lowe Professor and Chair of the Religious Studies Department at Macalester College. He has been at Macalester since 1985, where he has taught a wide variety of courses in the comparative study of religion, but he has done his primary research in the study of South Asian religions. Dr Laine has written three books, a study of Indian epic literature entitled *Visions of God: Narratives of Theophany in the Mahabharata* (1989); *The Epic of Shivaji* (2001); and *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (2003).

**Aurora Sekine** graduated from Macalester College in May 2009 with a double major in Religious Studies and Japanese. She is currently teaching high school math in the Kansas City, Missouri, School District as a part of Teach For America, and pursuing her Masters of Education in Secondary Education at Rockhurst University. One day, she hopes to be a part of developing Religious Studies programs in public secondary schools across the United States.

**Sher Afgan Tareen '11** is a double major in Religious Studies and Anthropology. He loves to play tennis and cricket, and he follows the NBA draft every year with nail-biting tension. At Macalester, he is a member of the MAC Republicans and President of the Macalester Muslim Student Association. He also enjoys singing in the Macalester Chamber Choir.

**Andy Ver Steegh '09** is a double major in Political Science and Classics. His honors thesis examined the history of cosmopolitan philosophy. As a Chuck Green Fellow in 2007, he worked with Minnesota 2020, a non-partisan public policy think tank. He studied at the American University in Cairo in the spring of 2008, followed by time at the Kenchreai Cemetery Excavations in Corinth, Greece, and an internship at the Hellenic Center for European Studies, a public policy think tank in Athens. He is currently in Egypt studying Arabic on a Critical Language Scholarship from the U.S. State Department and the Council of American Overseas Research Centers.