



LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

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Librarian of Virginia

Library to Offer Discussion on Religious Diversity and Immigration in Virginia on June 21

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For Immediate Release

Thomas Jefferson, author of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, wrote in his auto-biography that the statute included “within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mohametan, the Hindoo and Infidel of every denomination.” The tension surrounding what constitutes religious freedom resonates today just as it did in Virginia in the late 1700s.

The Library will partner with the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities to host a panel discussion on June 21 at 5:30 PM exploring the intersection of religious freedom and immigration, focusing on how the concept of religious freedom informs or influences an immigrant’s perceptions of citizenship. Aprilfaye Manalang, a sociologist and assistant professor in the Department of History and Interdisciplinary Studies at Norfolk State University, will serve as moderator for a group of panelists representing the Asian Indian, Muslim, and Latino communities in the metro Richmond area. A native of Mumbai, India, Romy Mohta completed graduate studies in chemistry at Virginia Commonwealth University and is CEO of Atlas Branding and Communications. A practicing Zoroastrian, he is married to a Catholic. Dr. Imad Damaj is a pharmacology professor at the Medical College of Virginia. A native of Lebanon and a Muslim, Dr. Damaj is the president and founder of the Virginia Muslim Coalition for Public Affairs and is involved in multiple inter-faith and community organizations in the Greater Richmond area. A native of Guatemala, Oscar Contreras is a program host on Radio Poder WBTK 1380 AM.

This program, which complements the Library’s current exhibition *First Freedom: Virginia’s Statute for Religious Freedom*, is made possible through a grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities or the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* is the media sponsor of this event.

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The Library of Virginia is located at 800 East Broad Street in historic downtown Richmond. There is free parking for this event in the Library's underground deck, which is accessible from either Eighth or Ninth streets. The program is free and open to the public, but registration is required. Please register at <http://tinyurl.com/gvkmkyf>.

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