

John L. Esposito, Georgetown University
Presidential Address — Public Understanding of Religion and Islam



John L. Esposito is the founding director of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and

Diana L. Eck, Harvard University
A Lifetime of Learning



Diana L. Eck is professor of Comparative Religion (and PhD in 1982) studies at Harvard University and Director of

Karen Armstrong, Charter for Compassion
The Science of Compassion



Karen Armstrong is the author of *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest for Divine Purity and Power*, *Islam: A Journey into the Heart of the Faith*, and *God in the Age of Science*. She is also the author of *The Christian God* and *The Christian God: A Journey into the Heart of the Faith*. Her website is www.charterforcompassion.org

Plenary Abstract:

"The Science of Compassion" found this phrase in a footnote and it has changed the way I think and write about

Plenary Panel: *Public Understanding of Religion and Issues of Religious Pluralism*

Shaun Casey, Wesley Theological Seminary



Shaun Casey is professor of Christian ethics and director of the National Capital Semester for Seminarians (NCSS) at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. He served as senior advisor for religious affairs for the Obama campaign and was a member of the Faith Outreach staff for the 2008 presidential campaign. His research interests include ethics and international affairs, the public implications of religious belief, and the intersection of religion and politics. Casey has written on the ethics of the war in Iraq as well the role of religion in American presidential politics. His book, *The Making of a Catholic President: Kennedy vs. Nixon 1960*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2009. He is currently working on two writing projects. He is coediting the *Oxford Handbook of Political Theology* with Michael Kessler of Georgetown University and writing a book on ethics and international politics tentatively titled *Niebuhr's Children*.

. Casey is a graduate of Harvard Divinity School with a Master of Divinity degree and a Doctor of Theology in religion and society. He also earned a Master of Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University with a concentration in international security. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Abilene Christian University. Casey is a member of the American Academy of Religion and serves as chair of its Public Understanding of Religion Committee. He was a visiting scholar at the Center for American Progress and a subject matter expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Ingrid Mattson, University of Western Ontario



Ingrid Mattson is the London and Windsor Community Chair of Islamic Studies at Huron University College at the University of Western Ontario in Canada. She earned her PhD in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago in 1999 and a BA in philosophy and fine arts from the University of Waterloo, Ontario, in 1987. Before coming to Huron University, she founded the Islamic Chaplaincy program and was Director of the Macdonald Center for Islamic Studies and Christian–Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. She is the author of *The Story of the Qur'an: Its History and Place in Muslim Life* (Wiley Blackwell, 2007) as well as numerous articles exploring Islamic ethics in contemporary Muslim communities. Mattson is an internationally recognized Islamic scholar. From 2006–2010, she served as president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and had previously served two terms as Vice President. She is frequently consulted by media, government, and civic organizations and has served as an expert witness.

Josef Sorett, Columbia University



Josef Sorett is an assistant professor of Religion and African-American Studies at Columbia University. As an interdisciplinary scholar of religion and race in the Americas, Sorett employs primarily historical and literary approaches to the study of black communities and cultures in the United States. He has a special interest in how ideas about religion inform broader conversations about culture and society and how such ideas emerge and take shape in (discursive and physical) spaces typically assumed to be outside the provenance of "religion." His current research addresses two central questions: 1) How has religion been imagined in literature, the arts, and popular culture?; and 2) What is the relationship between the cultures of religious institutions (especially churches) and American public life? He has published essays and reviews in *Culture and Religion*, *Callaloo*, the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, and *PNEUMA: Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*; and his writing and commentary have appeared in such popular media outlets *ABC News*, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*, as well as on the BBC and NPR. He is currently working on two book projects: a monograph, *Spirit in the Dark: A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics*

(Oxford University Press, forthcoming); and an anthology, which is tentatively titled *The Sexual Politics of Black Churches*

. Sorett received his PhD from Harvard University and he holds a BS from Oral Roberts University and an MDiv from Boston University. Alongside his academic pursuits, Sorett maintains a commitment to public service and has over a decade of experience serving in research and advisory capacities with nonprofit and policy organizations. He is currently a member of AAR's Public Understanding of Religion Committee.