

### Ask Me No Questions

By Marina Budhos



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"You forget. You forget you don't really exist here, that this isn't your home."

Since emigrating from Bangladesh, fourteen-year-old Nadira and her family have been living in New York City on expired visas, hoping to realize their dream of becoming legal U.S. citizens. But after 9/11, everything changes. Suddenly being Muslim means you are dangerous -- a suspected terrorist.

When Nadira's father is arrested and detained at the U.S.-Canadian border, Nadira and her older sister, Aisha, are told to carry on as if everything is the same. The teachers at Flushing High don't ask any questions, but Aisha falls apart. Nothing matters to her anymore -- not even college.

It's up to Nadira to be the strong one and bring her family back together again.



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#### Ask Me No Questions By Marina Budhos Bibliography

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#### **Editorial Review**

From School Library Journal

Grade 7-10-As part of a U.S. government crackdown on illegal immigration after 9/11, Muslim men were required to register with the government and many were arrested because their visas had long-since expired. Families who had lived and worked in this country were suddenly and forcibly reminded of their illegal status without any likelihood of changing it. For 18-year-old Aisha Hossain, this means the end of her dream of going to college to become a doctor. For 14-year-old Nadira, her younger sister and the story's narrator, it means coming out from behind the shadow of her perfect older sister to reveal her own strength and find a way to reunite her nearly shattered family. Immigrants from Bangladesh, the Hossains have lived illegally in New York for years, their visa requests handled by a series of dishonest or incompetent lawyers and mired in the tortuous process of bureaucratic red tape. Following their father's arrest and detention, the teens put together the documentation and make a case that requires the judges to see them as individuals rather than terror suspects. The author explains their situation well, but the effect is more informational than fiction. Nadira and Aisha are clearly drawn characters, but they don't quite come alive, and their Bangladeshi-American background is more a backdrop than a way of life. Still, this is an important facet of the American immigrant experience, worthy of wider attention. \*Kathleen Isaacs, Towson University, MD\* Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

#### From **Booklist**

\*Starred Review\* Gr. 7-10. What is it like to be an illegal alien in New York now? In a moving first-person, present-tense narrative, Nadira, 14, relates how her family left Bangladesh, came to the U. S. on a tourist visa, and stayed long after the visa expired ("Everyone does it. You buy a fake social security number for a few hundred dollars and then you can work."). Their illegal status is discovered, however, following 9/11, when immigration regulations are tightened. When the family hurriedly seeks asylum in Canada, they are turned back, and Nadira's father, Abba, is detained because his passport is no longer valid. The secrets are dramatic ("Go to school. Never let anyone know. Never."), and so are the family dynamics, especially Nadira's furious envy of her gifted older sister, Aisha. But Aisha breaks down, and Nadira must take over the struggle to get Abba out of detention and prevent the family's deportation. The teen voice is wonderfully immediate, revealing Nadira's mixed-up feelings as well as the diversity in her family and in the Muslim community. There's also a real drama that builds to a tense climax: Did Abba give funds to a political organization? Where has the money gone? Will Immigration hear his appeal? The answer is a surprise that grows organically from the family's story. Readers will feel the heartbreak, prejudice, kindness, and fear. Add this to the titles in "New Immigration Materials" his in the August 2005 issue's Spotlight on Immigration. Hazel Rochman

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#### Review

"A thoughtful, riveting tale of post-9/11 America...Beautifully written."

-- Chitra Divakaruni, author of "Queen of Dreams"

#### **Users Review**

#### From reader reviews:

#### **Sharon Self:**

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