Purpose
Assess the various dynamics between African and Indian Guyanese Muslim communities in the region of Georgetown, Guyana and compare our findings to our current research on racial divides amongst Muslim communities in the Greater Baltimore region.

History
Guyana is comprised of six races (Amerindians, Africans, East Indians, Portuguese, Chinese, and Europeans). The largest group is East Indians followed by Black Africans who have been interacting with one another for over 100 years. The majority of Africans were brought as slaves and were later joined by East Indians who were brought over as indentured slaves after slavery was abolished.

Politics
There are two main parties that exist in Guyana: the People’s Progressive Party (PPP) and the People’s National Convention (PNC). Historically, although both parties claim otherwise, the PPP is perceived as an Indian party whereas the PNC is perceived as an African party. Every five years an election is held where politicians use race as a way to gain numbers. Interviewees relate to us a complete shift in behavior and interaction between the Indian and African races in Guyana during election time.

Guyanese Muslim Community

Strong Muslim Guyanese Identity
Gujanese cuisine is influenced by all six races.

Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese students studying at Guyana Islamic Institute

Guyanese cuisine is influenced by all six races.

Communities are well connected

Guyana Islamic Trust – a community outreach center

Indo-Guyanese and Afro-Guyanese meet at GIT to discuss an upcoming project

Involved in the media and politically

Abu Ahad talking about Alliance for Change, a multiracial political party

Local activists on a local TV program

Juxtaposition of Guyana and Baltimore

The Guyana Islamic Trust serves as a hub for Muslims of various races to collaborate. Activists are involved both in the media and politically. In Baltimore, there is no framework setup to facilitate cross cultural interaction and involvement in politics is minimal. In both communities, underlying racial discrimination exists, more so among the elders. The newer generation is more focused on the issues plaguing their society rather than race.

Perception of the community

Muslims in Guyana and Baltimore both agree that Islam should be the defining factor of their identity; however, racial undertones are strong factors in shaping social interactions between African Americans and Immigrants in Baltimore. Although some degree of polarization exists in Guyanese Muslim communities, there is less emphasis on their African and Indian identity. Their Islamic identity takes precedence and is fundamental to relating to one another which allows for an appreciation of their strong mixed Guyanese culture. This was not always the case and developed over 100 years of interaction. Our hope is that through increasing interaction between African American and Immigrant Muslims in Baltimore, it will allow for greater social consciousness thus evoking a sense of camaraderie among people of different cultural values.

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