

Mayor Mamdani's Interfaith Breakfast Speakers

Tony Marx — Jewish — President of the New York Public Library (NYPL)

Marx is a longtime cultural executive who has led the New York Public Library since 2011 and has increasingly positioned the institution as a player in political debates. He has repeatedly framed the NYPL as an explicitly political institution, saying libraries must be “active defenders of democracy” rather than neutral civic spaces.

Aliya Latif — Muslim — Executive Director, NYC Office of Faith-Based & Community Partnerships

Latif is a former interfaith organizer who now serves as City Hall’s chief liaison to religious communities across New York. She centers “equity and social justice” in government–faith relations, a framing critics argue risks politicizing what should be neutral interfaith engagement. Her office controls which religious leaders gain access to City Hall, giving her significant gatekeeping power.

Faiyez Jaffar — Muslim — Leader at the NYU Islamic Center

Jaffer is a campus activist affiliated with the NYU Islamic Center who has been prominent in student politics around Gaza and immigration. He has been active in protests over U.S. foreign policy and policing and has criticized ICE as “inhumane.” He tends to represent activist student movements rather than established mosque leadership.

Jennifer Jones Austin — Christian — Daughter of Bishop Bill Jones; Community Leader

Austin, daughter of William Augustus Jones Jr. is a well-known New York nonprofit leader whose pushes the intersection of faith, race, and politics. She has argued that churches should be “engines of social change,” explicitly linking Christian ministry to progressive policy agendas. She has supported reduced policing and expanded social services, positions that mirror Mamdani’s platform.

Gegye Yongyal Tulku Rinpoche — Buddhist — Community Representative

Yida Yongchung is a Brooklyn-based Buddhist teacher who founded the Zero Point Meditation Center, which blends mindfulness practice with “socially engaged” Buddhism. He is active in interfaith and immigrant-rights circles and has aligned himself with anti-ICE coalitions, highlighting the mayor’s preference for activist Buddhist voices over traditional temple leadership.

Uddhav Shastri — Hindu — Community Religious Leader

Uddhav Shastri is a Hindu priest and interfaith participant based in New York City who performs traditional rituals and represents Hindu perspectives in civic and religious forums. He publicly promotes pluralism and dialogue among faith communities, often avoiding overt political positions.

Rabbi Emily Cohen — Jewish — Congregational Rabbi

Cohen is a progressive congregational rabbi known for publicly linking Jewish ethics to contemporary political causes. She connects Jewish teaching to LGBTQ advocacy and abortion rights, stating that “reproductive freedom is a religious value.” She has criticized conservative religious views on gender and sexuality.

Rev. Juan Carlo Ruiz — Lutheran — Pastor

Ruiz is a Lutheran pastor active in immigrant advocacy and sanctuary-church movements in New York. He has called ICE enforcement “a moral crisis” and defended sanctuary churches as fulfilling a biblical duty to “welcome the stranger.” His liberation-theology approach aligns closely with Mamdani’s skepticism toward policing. He spoke the majority of his speech in Spanish.

Ammar Abdul-Rahman — Muslim — Director of Muslim Life, Fordham University

Abdul-Rahman is a campus religious leader who oversees Muslim student life at a Catholic university. At Fordham, he has pushed for expanded Muslim accommodations and formal recognition of Muslim holidays. He has warned about Islamophobia on campus and urged universities to “take political positions when students are harmed,” placing him at the intersection of Catholic institutional culture and progressive advocacy.