Alim also serves as the associate director of the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American studies, where he is faculty director of the UCLA Hip Hop Initiative with Tabia Shawel and Samuel Lamontagne, and editor, with Jeff Chang, of the University of California Press Hip Hop Studies Book Series. Alim has been researching and writing about hip hop culture for over 25 years. His most recent book, Freedom Moves: Hip Hop Knowledges, Pedagogies, and Futures (2023, with Jeff Chang and Casey Wong) travels across generations and beyond borders to understand hip hop’s transformative power as one of the most important cultural movements of our time.

He has written extensively about Black language and hip hop culture globally in his books which include Street Conscious Rap; Tha Global Cipha: Hip Hop Culture and Consciousness; Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures; Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language; and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World.

He has lectured widely across leading universities in the United States, Europe, Africa, and Latin America, written for The New York Times, Rolling Stone, The Philadelphia New Observer and Al-Ahram Weekly (Cairo, Egypt), and appeared on MSNBC, BBC, CNN, NPR, and numerous other news outlets.