To Be *Muslim* in Bloomington

With hate crimes on the rise, the threat of mass deportations, and the federal government's attempts to restrict immigration from predominately Islamic countries, these are anxious times for Muslims in America.

Many people contacted for this article demurred—reluctant to have their names published, their pictures taken, or even their countries of origin revealed. Others, however, felt it was important to share their experiences of living, working, attending school, and raising their families here. These are their stories.

By Carmen Siering

Photography by
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Sunday, February 19, 2017, is unusually warm and sunny, a welcome respite from normal winter weather. It's especially fortuitous for Anna Maidi, founder of the Openhearted Campaign. Today the campaign is co-hosting an open house with the local mosque, officially known as the Islamic Center of Bloomington (ICOB). According to Anna, the goal of the Openhearted Campaign is to increase understanding and trust between non-Muslims and the Muslim community. The open house is taking place less than a month after President Donald Trump signed an executive order that placed limits on travel to the United States from seven majority Muslim countries, and suspended travel to the U.S. by all refugees.

When we first spoke in December, before Trump took office, Anna had been cautiously optimistic. She suggested it was possible Trump's campaign rhetoric was merely bluster for his followers and that he didn't intend to follow through on most of what he promised. By January, it was clear to her, and to everyone else, that he meant what he said in the lead up to the election.

"He hadn't even been in office a full week when he issued that executive order," Anna says in February. "That means he isn't just showboating." But she sees some hope in the reaction the order stirred in people around the country and in Bloomington.

"It was really devastating for some people (at the mosque) when he was elected. That's not how I felt, though I was apprehensive," she says. "But now that they've seen how much backlash he's getting, when they see the support for minority communities to fight this kind of discriminatory legislation, it's actually making people feel better."

And the support is there. More than 500 people attend the open house. They spill out of the mosque and into the yard. Large tarps are brought out to accommodate everyone who stays to share a meal, far too many people for the tables and chairs set up earlier in the day. Hosting an open house like this is just one way the mosque is reaching out to the larger community, opening its doors, and talking to anyone who is curious about what it means to be Muslim in Bloomington.

Not everyone is openhearted

The ICOB has seen an increase in support since the executive order was announced in January. Cards, letters, even flowers have been delivered to the mosque, all from individuals and groups who simply want to say that the Muslim members of this community are welcome here. Those attending the January 29 "No Ban No Wall" rally at the Monroe County Courthouse were asked to sign a large banner with words of encouragement. After the rally, the banner was delivered to the mosque.

But not everyone is as welcoming. In fact, the Openhearted Campaign was born out of crisis. In October 2015, an intoxicated Indiana University student assaulted a Muslim woman outside Sofra Café, grabbing her by her headscarf, strangling her, and shouting threats and expletives. The man charged in the attack was recently sentenced to one year on probation. An investigation by the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice determined the attack was not a hate crime. Still, the attack shook the Muslim community, especially the women.

Anna Maidi is the women's committee president at the ICOB. When the attack happened, she was as horrified as everyone else and realized something needed to be done.

"It could have been me"

"I bring this up in every interview, because I don't want people to forget that this happened right here, in downtown Bloomington," Anna says of the attack. "But it's hard to remain horrified, you have to process it somehow, and you have to put it behind you."

Anna knew many of her Muslim sisters were thinking, "It could have been me." With that in mind, she began to focus on a solution. "My thoughts were: How can I solve this problem, how can I make them feel safer, how can I help them feel accepted in their community, and how can I ease their doubts about their children at school?" she says.

Realizing there was no quick fix, Anna says she reflected and prayed and was "ultimately led by God" to develop the Openhearted Campaign.

"The main purpose of the Openhearted Campaign is to increase mutual understanding and trust between Muslim Americans and all Americans," she says. "The way we try to do that is through sharing the stories of ordinary Muslim Americans, whether through the media or through interfaith events, so people can actually go to the mosque, meet a Muslim, and have a conversation. Because, if you look at polls, they show that if you've never met a Muslim and you've never been to a mosque and you've never interacted with anyone from the Muslim faith, then you're a lot more likely to have a negative opinion of Islam. That's kind of our main goal—to get everybody acquainted. It's kind of like: Let's be friends!"

Anna's story

Anna Maidi wasn't born Muslim. The 29-year-old mother of three says growing up on the south side of Indianapolis, her parents believed in God, but the family didn't belong to one religion or attend faith services.

"It was certainly a somewhat Christian perspective on God just because in America that's generally what you have," Anna says. "But even within that, we never talked about Jesus and we never really talked about heaven and hell. It was never specific, it was just that obviously God exists."

Although she spent some time visiting different churches with her friends while she was in high school, it wasn't until she was an 18-year-old freshman at Indiana University that Anna started really thinking about religion. She says her mother had been open to reading about other religions, from Buddhism to Hinduism to Islam. "So I kind of had this goal to do that, too, but with no real plan," she says. Just two weeks after the start of her freshman year at IU, Anna says she met the man who would set her undefined plan into motion.

"I was living in Read [Residence Hall] and I went downstairs to get lunch and this guy came up to me and asked if he could sit with me," she says, laughing at the memory. "And it turned out to be my (future) husband."

Her husband, Chabane Maidi, is a Bloomington native who was born into a Muslim family. Admitting her lack of knowledge at the time of their meeting, Anna says that one of the first things she asked Chabane was how one could read the Quran and believe it was okay to kill people. "And Chabane immediately said, 'No, no, no. That's not it.' He said I had it all wrong,

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1. Anna Maidi with the banner from the "No Ban No Wall" rally.

2. Women serving food at the February 19 Openhearted Campaign open house at the Islamic Center of Bloomington.

3. At the open house, Amanda Adhami (left) talks to Bloomington activist and icon Charlotte Zietlow (right) while another woman from the mosque is all smiles.

4. Yusuf Ahmed Nur (standing, right, with hand on podium) teaching a class on Islam at the open house.


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Amr and Amanda's family


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that this is a misconception. And basically, what he said, and I think it is pretty clear to anyone who has read the Quran, is that it is a book of peace and tolerance and love."

Hate groups on the rise

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), the number of hate groups in the United States rose in 2016 for the second year in a row, and the most dramatic rise was among anti-Muslim organizations. Their numbers nearly tripled, from 34 in 2015 to 101 in 2016. The SPLC, which monitors and exposes hate groups, teaches tolerance, and seeks justice through the court system, has associated the rise in hate groups and crimes targeting Muslims to the candidacy and election of Donald Trump. Additionally, the latest FBI statistics show that hate crimes against Muslims grew by 67 percent in 2015, the year Trump launched his presidential campaign.

In spring 2016, the Bloomington Refugee Support Network (BRSN), a coalition of more than 350 individuals and 80 agencies, formed with the goal of bringing refugees to the city and helping them start new lives. Before long, it became clear there are people in the community who are fearful of and feel hatred toward immigrants, refugees, and, in particular, Muslims.

Diane Legomsky chairs the BRSN and she has heard from some of the more radical people who don't want refugees here. "I don't want to repeat the threats I've received just from trying to help," Legomsky says. "The thing is, there's just such ignorance about Islam. The two big fears about having Muslim refugees are that it just takes one to be a terrorist. The other is this idea that Sharia law will take over. That's absurd, but it's all over the internet. It's people speaking on emotion, not on logic."

City officials are also concerned by the emotionally charged rhetoric surrounding the bringing of refugees to Bloomington and by Trump's executive order. (After the original order was blocked by a federal appeals court, Trump signed a revised order on March 6 hoping to blunt legal opposition. As this story went to press, this new executive order had also been blocked by a federal court.) Mayor John Hamilton says the message the City of Bloomington sends to the Muslim community is simple: You are welcome here.

"The national message is disheartening, so it's important that we continue to be the warm, welcoming, embracing community we are," Hamilton says. "That's important for everyone, but particularly for young people and kids. I've had some young Muslims say they've had some disturbing episodes. We want young people to feel welcome in our community."

1. (l-r) Big sister Huda, mom Amanda, and baby brother Yusuf.

2. Zakaria and Mohammed Dabdoub.

3. The blended family (clockwise from top left): Mohammed Dabdoub, Amanda Adhami, Zakaria Dabdoub, Amr Sabry with Yusuf Sabry, and Huda Sabry.

4. Amr and Huda share a close moment.

Amr and Amanda's family

Amr Sabry and Amanda Adhami oversee a typically busy American family. Amr, 52 and originally from Egypt, is a professor of computer science at Indiana University. He became a U.S. citizen in 2011. Amanda, 39, has dual Canadian/U.S. citizenship and works at Amethyst House providing services to people with addictions.

They have two teenage sons—Mohammed Dabdoub, 17, and his brother, Zakaria Dabdoub, 15—from Amanda's previous marriage. Both boys attend Bloomington High School South where Mohammed plays tennis and Zakaria is on the varsity soccer team. Six-year-old sister Huda Sabry is in the first grade, and little brother Yusuf Sabry was just born in August. Amr has four children from a previous marriage. They married in 2009 and combined their two families into what Amanda smilingly refers to as a "his, mine, and ours situation."

If you were to ask teenagers Mohammed and Zakaria to respond to Mayor Hamilton's concerns, they would initially say they do feel welcome in Bloomington. And having lived in Ohio, Michigan, even Canada, they feel qualified to make comparisons.

"Bloomington is one of the more diverse places I've ever been," Mohammed says. "It helps prevent discrimination against Muslims because it isn't strange to see someone different."

But there have been incidents. Before moving to Bloomington, the boys attended Islamic schools. Here they attend public school. And while Zakaria says his religion has never really been an issue, he adds, "People just make jokes. Like being called a terrorist."

Amanda prompts him to elaborate, asks him to talk about a friend whose nickname is Susu. "My friend, they call her Susu. And they asked her if she was a suicide bomber," he says. "It wasn't like they were bullying us, but there were a lot of jokes that were made."

He says he also notices people looking at Amanda, who wears the *hijab*, a headscarf worn by some Muslim women. "People stare at her," he says. "They don't give her nasty looks, but they look at her longer."

Amanda says she doesn't really notice the looks, but she's had people make comments to her. "I did have someone say something to me in Bedford," she recalls. "A friend and I were in Walmart and a woman told me to go home. My friend was like, 'She was born here.' Another time we were at Bruster's [ice cream shop] and someone yelled out 'terrorist.' And we were just eating ice cream."

"Life always has struggles"

Amr says his encounters at IU have been positive. "I find that when I'm at work, talking to students, colleagues, deans, they don't care if I'm Muslim, they care if I'm doing my job," he says. He's the chair of his department, and feels that alone says something about how people, at least the people he works with at IU, feel about him. "To become chair, you have to get the vote from faculty, so I think they have shown I have their respect and confidence and trust," he says.

On the other hand, he's aware there can be prejudice in the larger community. "I find that when you put people in a position where they have to make a judgment about you, someone like a judge or a police officer, there may be something inside them that is not at ease with you being Muslim or black or something else," he says. "People don't even recognize that kind of institutionalized bias, and when you point it out, they're shocked. They didn't even see it."

Considering it all, Amr waxes a bit philosophic. "Day-to-day life everywhere is a mess. It wouldn't be better if we went to Egypt or Saudi Arabia or Canada," he says. "Bloomington does have a positive environment, but it has its issues, too. Life always has struggles, depending on the circumstances. There is always something you have to deal with."

He also tries to put Trump's election and its impact into perspective. "It's not like being a Muslim in the U.S. or worldwide was easy before Trump," he says. "If you live in the Middle East, the only thing you know about American foreign policy is

they are usually bombing you. Hundreds of thousands in Iraq were killed. Drones were killing people. There are a lot of conflicts, and it's not like it was ever very peaceful or nice."

Keeping the peace

On the surface, it seems things have been peaceful for the Muslim community in Bloomington, at least there have been no reported incidents. Of course, that doesn't mean harassment isn't happening.

"I'm guessing it's occurring but we're not getting reports from people," says Bloomington Police Chief Michael Diekhoff. He compares the lack of reports to other situations where people are reluctant to come forward. "It's a common concern with other things, like sexual assault. So we try to reach out and make contact and talk about what resources are available to help people."

Diekhoff says the department did see an increase in incidents after Trump was elected, but those occurrences weren't directed toward the Muslim community. "The spike in complaints was from the Hispanic community," he says. But he didn't initially hear about those incidents directly. "Most of the time when I hear about something, it's usually from another agency in the city, like a social service agency saying someone has reported something. And I encourage them to report it to the police."

Anna Maidi says she, too, has encouraged the women at the mosque to report incidents of harassment. "I've expressed very clearly that I will fill out a complaint for people, even if nothing can be done," she says. "But it can be scary for people to report, especially if they are an immigrant or not a citizen. But I've let them know it's important to report it, even if it's just to create a paper trail. The City can't help if it doesn't know what's happening."

"You wonder if it happened at all"

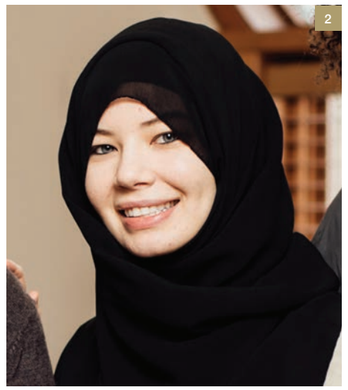
The thing is, most of what is happening doesn't often seem worth reporting. Anna says that while there may be incidents of overt harassment, more often the slights are so brief or subtle that one might easily wonder if they happened at all.

"Sometimes it's just a glare on the bus and you can't be sure," Anna says. "And even the things that are reportable, I think the sisters are like, well, what is really going to be achieved, can they really do anything, and, even if they can, is it the right thing to do? So it becomes a moral issue. I honestly think it is happening frequently enough that a lot of the sisters are just used to it. They don't even think about reporting incidents because they are just part of their daily life."

Anna mentions the Sofra Café attack again, noting that big incidents get media attention and everyday harassment simply flies under the radar of the media and most everyone else. "But these small things are just as heavy, they weigh just as much. The sisters still have to carry them around," she says. "So while they may be less frightening, because they aren't scared for their lives, they're certainly still very distressing, and the more it happens, the more you have to carry it around."

Katherine's story

Katherine Barrus, 27, carries that kind of burden, though she, like most Muslim women, has never filed an official report. Born in Marion, Indiana, Barrus moved to Bloomington in 2008 to attend Indiana University. She says she was probably agnostic at the time, but started exploring religion while a student, and ended up earning a minor in religious studies. She converted to Islam in 2011. She's married now, to Hasan Yusuf Ahmed, but she lived as a single Muslim woman for four years, and says it can be frightening to be a Muslim woman alone in the larger community.



"Even if people don't have the intent to physically harm you, it can be scary because you don't know what they are going to do," she says. She gives an example of one such frightening encounter: "A guy followed me in a truck, tailing me, down Highway 37, and then flipped me off at the stoplight," she says. "I was really scared because I thought he might have a gun. Another time, a friend and I had someone follow us around Kroger. We had had an exchange with him earlier and he kept telling us we were stupid to believe in such an oppressive religion, and when we left, he told us not to go bomb anyone."

Katherine says she feels that as a single woman, or even as a married woman alone in public, she is an easy target. But as an American-born Muslim, she has an advantage others don't. "I feel lucky because at least I can say something like, 'I was born here.'"

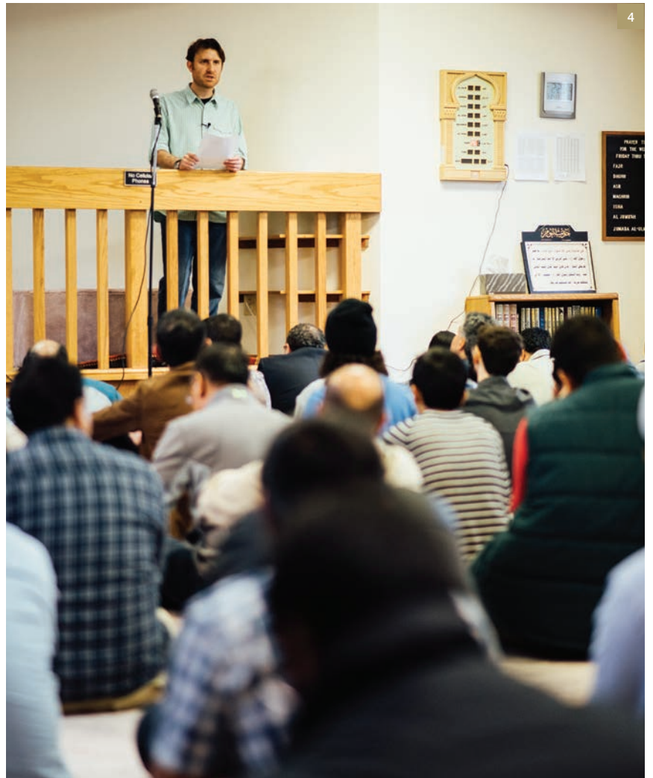
Katherine teaches English to international students at IUPUI, and notes that many of her students are Muslim. "International women, they can't say anything. They may not even have the language skills," she says.

Her husband, Hasan, points out that those students are actually doing something brave and, ultimately, very American: "The most patriotic thing you can do is leave your place of origin to better yourself, to come here for the American dream."

Khalaf and his family

Khalaf Alharbi is from Saudi Arabia, studying applied linguistics at Indiana University. As vice president of the executive board at

1. Bloomington Police Chief Michael Diekhoff. *Courtesy photo*
2. Katherine Barrus lived as a single Muslim woman before marrying Hasan Yusuf Ahmed.
3. Little boys praying (and peeking) during Friday prayers at the mosque.
4. Yasin Ramazan giving the *khutbah* (sermon) before the Friday prayer.
5. Preparing for prayer.



Khalaf's family

1. The Alharbi family (l-r) Tejan, Latien, Khalaf, Meral, and Naif. Khalaf's wife and the children's mother, Mona, chose not to be photographed for the magazine.

2. Three-year-old Latien with her father, Khalaf.

3. Just the girls: (l-r) sisters Meral, 7; Tejan, 12; and Latien, 3.

4. Khalaf and Naif, age 14, share a laugh.

the Islamic Center, he says he would know if there has been harassment of or attacks on any of its members. But when pressed, he admits there may be things that happen that don't get reported. And he thinks he may know why.

"I think it is a cultural thing," Khalaf surmises. "Following our Arabic roots, it's not nice to criticize our host by any means. Say you serve me very salty food. I would just say, 'Oh, this is so nice,' and then drink water for three hours. So, yes, it's a cultural thing."

An ambassador for Islam

But he sincerely doesn't believe there has been much harassment in Bloomington, and offers to recall all that he can.

"I remember one man at College Mall in 2013," he says. "He was yelling at a woman, telling her to get out of the mall, saying she should be out of America. But there were many American people shouting at him and inserting themselves in the situation. There was the incident at the Sofra Café, but he was a drunk person. And something happened once close to the Islamic Center. Two sisters were walking and someone yelled something racist at them. But that's it. Nothing physical except the Sofra attack."

Khalaf puts this in perspective: "I can remember things happening to people of other faiths in Bloomington, to the Jewish community or to African Americans. So a couple of stupid actions cannot be generalized and focused upon. That doesn't represent all the nice people in Bloomington."

For example, he mentions, "The other day, we were in Walmart and a woman came up and said, 'Do you mind if I tell you something?' And so I said, 'Okay, go ahead.' And she said, 'Bloomington supports you. We care about you.'"

Khalaf and his wife, Mona, are raising their four children here, far away from their family in Saudi Arabia. Naif, 14, is a freshman at Bloomington High School South where he's a defensive lineman on the junior varsity football team. He was 7 years old when he moved to the United States, old enough to notice the difference between Western and Middle Eastern cultures.

"There was culture shock, for sure," he says. "The biggest shock for me was the schools—boys and girls together. Now I've gotten used to it."

In addition to Naif, the Alharbis have three daughters: seventh-grade student Tejan, 12; second-grade student Meral, 7; and 3-year-old Latien.

While Mona says she was reluctant to come to the United States because it meant being separated from her extended family, Khalaf says it is he, not Mona or the children, who has been the most homesick. "I'm the weakest one of my family," he admits with obvious ease. "All of them have witnessed my tears on many occasions."

But Khalaf points to the benefits of being in a new country and learning new things. "When we go back to our home, we take back ideas," he says. And it isn't just that he is earning a Ph.D., it's more than that. "When I go back to Saudi Arabia, people want to know not just about my program, but about America and my life and my neighbors."

And it works the other way, too. People in Bloomington want to know about Islam. While he's here, Khalaf takes it for granted that he is an unofficial ambassador for his faith, and he's gotten used to answering questions from strangers. He recalls a rather disconcerting conversation with an elderly man at Sam's Club in 2010.

"He said, 'Can I ask you something?' And I said, 'Whatever you want to ask, go ahead.' He said, 'Are you willing to cut my head off if you know I am Christian?' And I was shocked," Khalaf says, shaking his head. "I was not aware people would really think this even though the media poisons people's minds. I told him, 'This is not true. Who gave you this idea?' I told him please don't generalize what you see in the media. I told him Islam is about peace, and Al-Qaida is like the KKK. You can't generalize all of Christianity from them."

Media portrayals of Islam

On February 28, President Trump made his first joint address to Congress, and used it as an opportunity to call attention to crimes committed by undocumented immigrants. He also announced the opening of a new office within the Department of Homeland Security: Victims Of Immigration Crime Engagement, or VOICE. The office was outlined in the executive order Trump signed in January ("Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States") and it officially opened February 20.

In principle, the office is meant to serve as a liaison between the government and victims of crimes committed by immigrants who are in the country illegally, aiding families by providing information about offenders, including immigration status and deportation efforts.

VOICE has been called a de facto media outlet for the Trump administration. Not only will the office issue quarterly reports outlining the alleged detrimental effects immigrants are having on communities, it is required to issue weekly reports about crimes committed by undocumented immigrants. This has caused several media outlets to compare VOICE to *Der Stürmer*, the vehemently anti-Semitic magazine which published lists of crimes ostensibly committed by Jews during the Nazi Germany–era. The fact that studies show immigrants commit crimes at a lower rate than the general public hasn't swayed those who support tougher immigration policies.

If statistics don't sway people, the media hasn't helped much either. Researchers Saifuddin Ahmed and Jörg Matthes looked at 345 studies focusing on media representations of Muslims and Islam from 2000 through 2015 (*The International Communication Gazette,* 2016) and came to the conclusion that "Muslims tend to be negatively framed, while Islam is dominantly portrayed as a violent religion." This isn't a new problem. Anti-Muslim discourse in American media began in earnest with the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis that followed. Middle East crises throughout the 1980s increased hostile media rhetoric, as did the first Gulf War in the 1990s. It all reached a crescendo with 9/11, when anti-Islamic sentiment in the media became much more noticeable.

That's not surprising. Ahmed and Matthes write, "The findings also point media portrayals of Muslims to be strongly associated with terrorism, and this association was generally more pronounced after a major terrorist event (more so if it was local). Muslims are consequently presented as a direct or indirect threat to societies through such portrayals."

Given that this has been the trend in the established media thus far, the messages coming out of VOICE cannot be expected to be any more favorable.

Yusuf's story

In 1986, Yusuf Ahmed Nur immigrated to the United States from Somalia. He became a U.S. citizen 10 years later, and now teaches at Indiana University Kokomo. He takes advantage of his citizenship status, telling it like it is with a broad smile and a sense of conviction.

"I post a lot of things on Facebook and I really don't care," he says. "A lot of anti-Trump things. Because I just can't get over it. It's the same surreal feeling I had after 9/11. I had to cancel class because I thought, 'This is not happening.' And I feel that way now."

Yusuf says he sees the media clearly. "I think the media intend for publicity [about Islam] to be negative," he says. "But people are smart. Surveys have shown that more than 50 percent of people think Christianity is just as violent as Islam."

But when talking about the support the Muslim community has seen since January and the signing of what he calls Trump's executive "dis-order," Yusuf says he sees a different side of things. "People have come out of the woodwork—supporting us, defending us. Even the media. It's one of the few times it did something good, naming it the 'Muslim Ban,'" he says. "I think there was a time when they wouldn't have done that. They would have used a euphemism or whatever the government told them to say. But most of them just call it what it is—a Muslim ban."

He says he is frequently stopped at the airport. "My name is such a common name in the Muslim world. There are terrorists with my first name or my second name. I've been on the watch list since the beginning," he says. "Flying out of the country? I get special treatment. Sometimes it's really bad. Sometimes they just say, 'Welcome back!' You get used to it. The other way I deal with it is I say, 'It could have been much worse.' By any standard, America treats people much better than most countries. Yes, even when I'm treated badly, it could be worse."

Making do with what you have

That might be what it is to be an immigrant and to have known a different way of life. Yusuf's father died when he was young. He and his brother, Mohamoud Ahmed Nur, were sent to Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia, into the care of an aunt, who intended to place the boys in an orphanage. But his aunt thought Yusuf was too small for the orphanage, so she kept him at home with her. "But the way she brought me up? I would have done better in the orphanage," he says without bitterness. "But you take what you get and do what you can with it. You can't really cry about things. A lot of things in life are beyond our control. What you can control is what you do with what you have."

What he has done is make a life for himself in the United States. He immigrated to get an education, and he did. He lives in Bloomington and is an associate professor of international business and business management at Indiana University Kokomo. For many years he has traveled back to Somalia to share his business acumen with the people of that war-torn country, though he says he won't be returning this year.

"I go to Somalia every summer, but I'm not going anywhere this summer," Yusuf says. "Until things become clear, until I know for sure, until I know citizens from those [six] countries [including Somalia] are not going to be mistreated. Even though I don't have a Somali passport. Even though I am an American citizen."

Yusuf is also a single father. His two oldest daughters are teaching English in Korea, and he has two sons at IU. Three younger daughters are still at home. His brother, Mohamoud, the one who did go to the orphanage? He also made do with what he had, pursuing an education in the United Kingdom and serving as the mayor of Mogadishu from 2010–14.

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Resistance as the New Normal

On January 21, 2017, more than one million women took to the streets of Washington, D.C., to protest the previous day's inauguration of Donald Trump. They were joined by women at sister marches across the country and around the world—more than five million women in all—marching for basic human rights issues. The signs they carried spoke to the multifaceted nature of their concerns, everything from reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights to environmental justice and disability issues to the rights and welfare of immigrants.

The Women's March on Washington—and the sheer number of women, men, and children who turned out to voice their anger and frustration with the new administration—was a catalyst for what has become a wave of resistance and protest in the country. Less than a week later, on January 27, Trump issued his executive order limiting Muslim entry into the country, closing borders to travelers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen (in the later order, Iraq was dropped from the restricted list). Travelers from the targeted countries found themselves trapped at airports, even those holding United States–issued green cards. The response from ordinary citizens was immediate. Demonstrators rallied at major airports around the country, including JFK in New York City, O'Hare in Chicago, and Dulles in Washington, D.C. A temporary stay was issued on January 28, but the fact that so many people had spontaneously rushed to protest the executive order signaled a change across the nation. On January 29, "No Ban No Wall" rallies were held around the country. Locally, Btown Justice organized a rally on the grounds of the Monroe County Courthouse. The speakers represented a coalition of groups, including the IU Black Graduate Student Association, the IU Latino Graduate Student Association, Bloomington Against Islamophobia, and the IU Muslim Student Association. Dawn Johnsen, a professor at the IU Maurer School of Law who served in the U.S. Department of Justice under President Bill Clinton, also spoke. Mayor John Hamilton, Johnsen's husband, was there. On the event Facebook page, more than 1,000 people signaled their intention to attend, and

1. Bloomington Mayor John Hamilton. *Courtesy photo*

2. Yusuf Ahmed Nur (center) with his two sons, Hasan (left) and Mikal (right).

3. Yusuf at the Openhearted Campaign open house.

4. Hasan and his wife, Katherine Barrus.

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Yusuf's family

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as they marched from the rally point to City Hall it seemed there were at least that many.

"Our community and our country has a great tradition of taking to public spaces to express ourselves," Mayor Hamilton says of the rally. "Our country belongs to the people. It is not the government's country. And the people have a right and an obligation to let the government know how they want the country to move forward. It's appropriate to resist the bad things that are happening."

Luma's story

Luma Khabbaz was a speaker at Bloomington's "No Ban No Wall" rally. Representing the IU Muslim Student Association, the 20-year-old sophomore read a letter to Trump in which she expressed her anger with his executive order and shared her story as a first-generation Syrian American.

Like many immigrants, Luma's father came to the United States for an education. He attended medical school in Damascus, Syria, and completed his residency in Chicago. Her mother joined him a few years later. "That's where part of my letter to Trump came from," she says. "You don't know what it's like to be alone in a country where you don't know the language, where you don't know anyone. My mother would literally sit alone at home and cry."

Luma says her parents made the sacrifices they did for the same reasons many immigrants do—to build a better life for their children. "My dad is a cardiac surgeon, so he's very successful, not just by Syrian standards but by American standards. And he had to overcome a lot to do that." She says there is a certain amount of pressure on her to be successful because of what her parents have sacrificed.

"If my parents can do that, I should use all of my privilege of being born in this country to work just as hard to make something of myself," she says. "I heard this quote about immigrant parents once—'They crawled so we could fly.'"

Luma recognizes there are levels of privilege and says that while she is a minority as a Syrian American and a Muslim,

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1. Luma Khabbaz is a student at The Media School at Indiana University. Here, she stands in front of one the large monitors in Franklin Hall projecting an image of President Donald Trump.

2. Luma's parents immigrated from Syria before she was born. Today, Luma is an activist for refugee and immigrant rights. She's shown here speaking at the "No Ban No Wall" rally held January 29 on the grounds of the Monroe County Courthouse. *Courtesy photo*

On Being a Teenage Muslim in America

Being a teenager is never easy, but for Muslim teenagers, the struggles are more complex. Not only do they have the usual worries all teens have about standing out and feeling different, they have the added burden of actually being unlike other kids their age.

Haifa Mohamed is a 15-year-old freshman at Bloomington High School North. When she entered middle school, she chose to wear the hijab, and she knows it makes her stand out. "I'm sure some people stare, but I never notice," she says. "Nobody's come up to me and said anything rude. But someone did say to my friend, 'Are you going to build a bomb today?'"

She says wearing the headscarf was a personal choice and is offended anyone would think otherwise. "Being Muslim and being feminist are not mutually exclusive," she says. "You can be both. We aren't oppressed. Wearing hijab is a choice."

Muslims pray five times a day, and Friday is their holy day. Mohammed Dabdoub, a senior at Bloomington High School South, says attending Friday prayers at the mosque during the day makes it obvious that he's different than the rest of his classmates. "That's the weirdest thing, to leave every single Friday," he says. "People notice because I walk back in, halfway through class. I'm the only person doing that."

It's prayer that also affects his brother, Zakaria, a sophomore, especially prayer in public. He remembers a trip with the family to an amusement park when he was younger. "So, we went off to pray, but I wasn't focused on prayers because I was just watching all the people watching us," he says.

Amanda Adhami is the mother of Mohammed and Zakaria. She says she's aware they feel this way. "They're embarrassed to bring friends over," she says. "At one point I asked why, and Zakaria said the *Athan* [the call to prayer] is going to go off." (The family has the call to prayer on phone apps and on their computers.)

Muslim teens can feel pressure from their parents that other American teens don't. Haifa's parents immigrated to the United States from Tanzania. "My dad has set out my future—all the way through college, through my master's degree," she says. "He waited a long time to get married, and education is really important to my parents because they want us to have a better future than they had."

That level of parental involvement is common, Amanda says. "I think because we are a minority, and because our religion does have a lot of protections, we have to be involved," she says. "We are very involved in their education, their whereabouts, their friends."

Haifa Mohamed, age 15.

For some American teens, that might seem overwhelming, particularly when it comes to relationships with the opposite sex. Single Muslim men and women are prohibited from being alone together. That means no dating.

Amanda is the facilitator of the youth group at the Islamic Center of Bloomington and says dating is a big topic of conversation. "When you are young, there is no long-term goal in dating. You're not thinking of marriage," Amanda points out. "In Islam, if you get into a relationship, your family needs to know about it. You don't go out alone. You can come to my house with my family. Maybe we can go out to a movie where there are a lot of people. Maybe not. Some families are okay with that, some are not."

Zakaria says the topic of dating is one that really makes him different from his non-Muslim friends. "It's hard because most of my friends go out with girls and I can't go," he says.

When it does come time to think about dating, what that really means is thinking about marriage. Amanda says, for Muslims, dating is the equivalent of courtship, and the ultimate goal is marriage.

"The families are involved in the process," Amanda says. Using herself as the example, she says, "I took their opinion into consideration because I know they love and care for me. I know they want what's best for me. Family can give you perspective—how much are you willing to put up with? How much change are you willing to make?" And, she says, many Muslim marriages are still arranged by the families involved, although most brides and grooms know one another before they are engaged.

For her son Mohammed, this is all just a little too much. "My mom has an idea about how we're going to do it [dating and getting married]. But I have a hard time thinking about it," he says. "Right now? I just want to go to college and think about that later."

she still has advantages others don't. "I'm a citizen, so I won't be deported," she says. "That means I need to stand up for those who might be." Another example she gives is her decision not to wear the hijab. "It's a choice," she says. "But because I don't wear the headscarf, I'm not as blatant a representative of Islam as others. So I'm fiercely protective of my friends who do wear it."

As a first-generation Syrian American, Luma says she feels the pull of two cultures. She grew up in Valparaiso, Indiana, but visited family in Syria every summer when she was younger. "I have two identities, and I don't fit in either," she says. "I felt like Syria was semi-home for me, but people could tell I was a foreigner there. I always had a slight accent speaking Arabic. But I wasn't 100 percent American here, either."

She feels the sting of Trump's travel ban. It reminds her of when trips to Syria were cut off after 9/11. "My parents were on green cards at the time, so we didn't leave the country for four years after 9/11," she says. "There were a lot of laws targeting Muslims." But the family did resume their summer trips. Luma remembers a trip in summer 2011 after the Arab Spring protests had jump-started the Syrian civil war.

"The revolution started in the rural areas, and we were in Damascus, so we were sure we would be fine," she says. "And it was fine, for the most part. We saw one protest, which was kind of surreal. Nothing really bad happened. The police with their sticks were chasing the protestors. But I remember that summer, there was definitely talk about the revolution. We would be at my grandparents' house and people would be like, wait, shut the windows. And then you were never really sure if it was safe to talk about it. There were a lot of euphemisms. It was very dystopian, like *The Hunger Games* and the books and movies we watch."

Because of experiences like these, Luma feels she might have a bit of insight into why there have been so few reports of incidents of harassment from Muslims to local police. "I've spoken to some Syrian refugee families over the past year and they say nothing bad has happened to them," she says. "But they come from countries where it is illegal to criticize their government, so they may have a fear of criticizing anything. And, in the past year or so, it has become unclear if their social media is being checked. This is what happens in an authoritarian Middle Eastern government."

Americans, she says, are not only allowed to criticize their government but tend to take that right for granted.

Still, she wonders where we are heading. "My family members [in Syria] see me on social media being very politically active and they're worried, which is funny to me, because they're in Syria," she says. "They say they are proud of what I'm doing. But someone told me to be careful. He said, 'Your guy seems a lot like our guy.' Meaning Trump seems a lot like Assad."

Luma has very definite goals. With majors in journalism and international studies, and a minor in Spanish, she plans to attend law school, with an emphasis on human rights and immigration law. "There is a lack of Muslim-Arab Americans in the humanities," she says. "We have a lot in the sciences. There are a lot of doctors. But it's important for us to have representation in law and policy and government. I want to be the person that people from the Arab Muslim community can come to and know someone has their back. I mean, everyone can come to me, but especially the Arab Muslim community."

"Just give me a chance. I won't disappoint you"

By any measure, the Openhearted Campaign's invitation to come and visit with members of the Islamic Center of Bloomington is a success on this warm Sunday in February. As the sun sets, families sit on tarps or at tables, enjoying conversation and watching children play on swings and slides and tricycles. Women in headscarves explain their attire to women in blue jeans. And soon, the call to prayer begins. All are welcome to come and observe.

"The people who are the object of discrimination, the people who are most vulnerable, have opened up their place of worship and their hearts," says Diane Legomsky, chair of the Bloomington Refugee Support Network. She notes that at the university, the Muslim Student Association and other groups have regularly organized panels and other opportunities for people to learn about Islam and Muslim culture.

"But some people don't want to learn," Legomsky says. "They aren't hearing them. In the faith community, certainly in the Jewish faith, there is something about welcoming the stranger. It means to bring them into your community. It also means getting to know them and trusting them and hearing what they have to say."

Anna Maidi says that Muslims, like everyone else, share that desire to be known. "I was born and raised in the United States, not as a Muslim; I converted later. But even a Muslim born and raised in Saudi Arabia has that same feeling when someone looks at them like they are evil or that they are someone to be afraid of," she says. "We all feel the same way. 'No, no. If you just knew me you would know I'm not like that at all. Just give me a chance.' It's that feeling of, 'Just give me a chance and I won't disappoint you.' That's what everybody wants. That's everybody." ✻

Editor's note: This story went to press on March 29, 2017. The actions the new administration could legally take regarding travel restrictions, immigration, and refugee resettlement of Muslims were still undecided at that time.

1. Diane Legomsky of the Bloomington Refugee Support Network. *Photo by Rodney Margison*
2. Anna Maidi reading the Quran at the mosque.
3. Visitors to the mosque enjoyed eating outside on a mild February evening during the Openhearted Campaign open house.
4. Sharing a meal and getting to know one another is the focus of the open house.
5. Visitors are asked to remove their shoes on entering the mosque.