

MUSLIM CANADIAN WOMEN WHO **INSPIRE**

DR. AMBARO GULED was born, raised and educated in Somalia. She came to Canada in February 1991, as a refugee claimant after civil war erupted in her country. A veterinary by training, she now works for the Regent Park Community Health Centre. She has extensive experience in settlement services, issues related to health and education. Her work has helped Muslim women become more self-reliant in handling issues related to access to services, education, health, and employment. She speaks five different languages: Italian, Romanian, English, Spanish and Somali.

ASMAH ARSHAD MEHMOOD is a Toronto Based artist, who was born in Pakistan and received her initially art education in Islamabad. She has also trained as a ceramic and pottery artist in Bogotá, Columbia. Asma is known to use her art work as activism on various levels in the Canadian Diaspora. She has served on the Board of Directors for South Asian Visual Arts collective and on the community editorial board of the Toronto Star. Currently she is on the board of Massala Mehndi Masti and heads the Canadian Community Arts Initiative.

FARIDA CHISHTI is the President of the P.E.I. Chapter of CCMW and of the P.E.I. Multicultural society. Through bake sales and auctions she raised \$50,000 to acquire a place of worship for the Muslims in P.E.I. Moreover, she also visited various government, business and community leaders and raised awareness regarding the scarcity of jobs for Muslim women. Fairda also produced a pamphlet called "What you always wanted to know about your neighbors, but didn't want to ask!" This pamphlet addresses questions which many non-Muslims may have about Muslims and Islam.

FARZANA DOCTOR is a consultant and trainer specializing in organizational diversity and clinical issues relating to marginalized populations. She is also psychotherapist and specializes in working with people from an anti-oppression perspective. She has been an instructor at the University of Toronto and Ryerson Faculties of Social Work. She co-produced a documentary video for South Asian LGBT families, and authored a novel, *Stealing Nasreen* (Inanna Publications, 2007). She received her Master in Social Work at Carlton University in 1993.

IDRISA PANDIT is an accomplished, innovative and collegial community leader. Though a relatively recent resident of Waterloo Region, she has quickly involved herself with Interfaith dialogue, and helped to establish Muslim Social Services Kitchener Waterloo, under the auspices of her local Masjid. In her dedication to Community Development, Interfaith Relations and Social Justice, Idrisa is articulate, insightful and gracious in her dealings with peers, neighbours and local colleagues of all faith traditions.

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JAMILIE HASSAN is a well known Canadian artist who has exhibited widely, nationally and internationally. She has been awarded the "Canada 125 Medal" in recognition of her service to the community and in 2001 she received the Governor General's Award in Visual Arts. In 2005 she was appointed adjunct professor in The School of Visual Arts at the University of Windsor. She is active in the cultural life of her city and is involved in artist rights and artist-centred movement. She has served on advisory panels and art juries for the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts, Ottawa.

KAREN HAMDON, for the past 25 years has been an active member of Edmonton's Muslim Community. Her work has concentrated mostly on women's and social issues. She is a founding president of Canadian Council of Muslim Women, Edmonton Chapter. She worked tirelessly to save and move the first mosque built in Canada. She is a founding member and director of Edmonton Council of Muslim Communities, a co-founder of Arab/Jewish Women's Peace Coalition in Edmonton, and is very active in the Edmonton Interfaith dialogue.

KHALIDA TANVEER SYED is currently enrolled in a PhD program in multicultural education at the University of Alberta. She has published widely on issues related to Muslims, multiculturalism and education. As the only Muslim volunteer at Northern Alberta Alliance on Race Relations, she keeps everyone informed of the significant details often overlooked, criticized or undervalued by mainstream society. As a result of her involvement and commitment, her fellow volunteers have grown tremendously in their understanding of Muslim culture, particularly in a post 9/11 context.

MARYAM MIRZA Maryam Mirza, is a articulate and confident 20-year old student studying political science at York University. She made history on 13 November 2004 as she became the first woman to deliver a *khutba* (sermon) in a mosque to a mixed gathering. In the course of her sermon she urged the congregation to "keep an open mind" about gender equality and to let more women be active within the sphere of religion. Her hope is that more women become religious leaders as opposed to followers.

MONA EL-TAHAN was born in Egypt and immigrated to Canada in 1975. She was the first woman in Canada to complete a Master's Degree in Ocean Engineering from Memorial University (1980). She is recognized as an ice environment and information technology specialist and her company, CORETEC Inc., which she founded and heads, has designed software and systems that help ships stay on course, avoid icebergs and maneuver in tight waterways. This system bears her name and is known as the El-Tahan model.

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NEELOFER PAZIRA is a journalist and filmmaker who emigrated to Canada in the 1980s. She starred in the movie *Kandahar*, which is based on her true story, and was featured in *Return to Kandahar* which she also co-produced and co-directed. She currently works for the Canadian Broadcasting Company's nightly newscast, *The National*. She has also set up a charity—Dyana Afghan Women's Fund—to provide education and skills training for women in the city of Kandahar.

RAHEEL RAZA is an author, journalist and community activist. Through her work she addresses issues dealing with the status of women, arranged marriages, media stereotypes etc. She is also a much in demand public speaker and has spoken many groups including the armed forces college on issues of National identity. She is winner of the Canadian Ethnic Journalists and Writer's Club award for excellence. Currently she is Director, Interfaith Affairs for The Snowstar Institute of Religion.

SABRA DESAI, is an educator, human rights activist and therapist. She established Interim Place, the first shelter for women and children escaping violence in Peel in 1981. She has received numerous awards for her contribution to Women's Human Rights, community service and education. Currently she is working with the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians to develop culturally appropriate interventions to help address family violence. She continues to work with individuals infected and or affected by HIV and AIDS, specifically with women and children.

SAHAR BADAWY is the president and founder of Flemingdon Park Parent Association, a community grass roots organization that is involved in projects such as accessible soccer league, baseball, cricket, a tutoring program and communication classes for parents. She has organized programs focused on fighting childhood obesity and concentrating on health. Sahar also organizes fitness class for moms that gives them an opportunity to come out and network. Her organization has partnered with TDSB, Ministry of Education, Public Health Toronto Community Foundation, Police etc.

DR. SAJIDA SULTANA SHARIFF is a medical doctor by training. She also volunteers with Doctors Without Borders and is one of the few people to have been on assignment for two consecutive terms. She has always worked towards raising awareness on different health issues, amongst the Muslim Community and the Canadian mainstream, by organizing blood drives, seminars and workshops on topics related to health, including mental health, and nutrition.

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TANYA KHAN is a teacher and an advocate for diverse communities. She talks to students on issues related to Islam and its stereotypes in today's society. Tanya is involved in a number of literacy agencies and was the force behind the Peace Tree project—an anti bullying campaign which encouraged diverse communities to look within and find unity and peace. She works with Muslim women and gets them involved in issues of women's rights and human rights. She also organizes an annual interfaith conference at her mosque.

TIA TARIQ works with youth in Thorcliffe Park, where she has set up Da United Effort, which creates a safe space for youth between the masjid and the mall. Through Da United Effort, youth find hobbies and ways to interact with others. Tia writes poems, prose and is creating a musical to raise funds for youth and children. As a cancer survivor, she also stands as a role model for surviving cancer and giving hope to those in despair, especially young women. Tia has traveled to Indonesia, Pakistan, Lebanon, Kuwait and Malaysia to volunteer and work with youth.

YASMIN RATANSI was first elected to the House of Commons in the 2004 general election. She was re-elected as the Member of Parliament for Don Valley East in the January 2006 general election. Currently, Yasmin is the chair of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Prior to her election to the House of Commons, Yasmin was a community activist in Don Valley East for twenty-five years. As a Certified General Accountant (CGA) and Certified Management Consultant (CMC), she has enjoyed successful careers in both the public and private sectors.

ZARKA NAWAZ is a freelance writer, broadcaster, and filmmaker who lives in Regina, Saskatchewan. She has worked with CBC Radio, CBC Newsworld, CBC Television's *The National*, and CTV's *Canada AM*, and was an associate producer of several CBC Radio programs. Many of Zarka's films have won critical acclaim. In 2005, her documentary *Me and the Mosque*, was broadcast on CBC's *Rough Cuts*. She is also the creator of *Little Mosque on the Prairie*.

ZOHRA ZOBERI is involved with an organization called *Bridging the Gap*. She is a poet, playwright and producer. Has written and produced *Window Shopping*—a play dealing with the pros and cons of love and arranged marriages; *Gasoline Queen*—a play based on personal experiences of the oil boom in Nigeria. President of *Kehkashan Ladies Club* in Mississauga and board member of *Vision and Literacy International*. Also president of international Women's organization on a university Campus in Nigeria

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