

ARE WE THE NEXT MUSIC CITY?

Plus: Six Musical Acts to Watch

Madison

magazine

WHAT IT'S
LIKE TO BE

MUSLIM IN MADISON

Five Followers
of Islam
Break Stereotypes
in These
Uncertain Times

BY MAGGIE GINSBERG



Emerging
Cartoonist
Finds His
Voice

16

GARDENING
TIPS FOR
YOUR SMALL
SPACE

14 PLACES
FOR GREAT
TAP BEERS



To Be

M

U

S

L

I

M

in

photos by
Paulius Musteikis
and
Romulo Morishita

M

A

D

I

S

O

N



Despite the rise of political rhetoric painting Muslims with a broad brush, Madison's Islamic community is diverse, devoted and 10,000-strong.

BY MAGGIE GINSBERG



T

HE WOMEN STOOD OUT LIKE

rainbow prisms of refracted light against the wet gray sky, covered from wrists to ankles in embroidered scarves and sarongs of green, fuchsia and mango. Some wore expertly wrapped hijabs in more muted colors, others temporary head coverings in deference to Friday services as they flowed into the Islamic Center of East Madison. Many pulled children in tow, some dressed as miniature versions of their mothers, most in the uniform of

American children: graphic T-shirts, leggings with cartoon patterns and the tiny Velcroed tennis shoes lined against the entryway inside the mosque. A young black teenager in jeans and a Milwaukee Brewers sweatshirt grinned greetings of “asalamu alaikum” (peace be upon you), as he shucked his shoes and joined the sea of button-shirted men in their separate prayer room.

In many respects, it was just another Friday, and the weekly service known as jumaa was about to begin. But it was also Jan. 20, 2017—Inauguration Day—and many things were about to change.

From my guest perch on a wooden chair in the corner, I had a front-row seat to Islam’s vast diversity as its women touched their foreheads to the carpeted floor. With 3.3 million Muslims living in America (and 1.6 billion throughout the world, nearly a quarter of the global population), U.S. Muslims are the most racially diverse religious group in the country. Madison’s estimated 10,000 Muslims represent countries from all over the world, from West Africa to East India. Here on the east side of town, where there’s a greater concentration of Gambian immigrants, the traditionally dressed African women sat side by side, occasionally shushing squirming children in the universal language of families at worship. After the message, they invited me to join them as they lined up to pray. When I demurred, a mother reached out to pull me between herself and her children, pressing her shoulder against mine and nodding, letting me know, in no uncertain terms, that I was welcome here—Muslim or not.

This acceptance of a stranger seemed to me an act of bravery, considering the times. Although it was still more than a week before a 27-year-old white

French Canadian would open fire at a Quebec mosque, killing six Muslim men, there have been other high-profile acts of violence against people of faith. In that moment, I thought about convicted white supremacist Dylann Roof, who’d been welcomed inside to pray with the nine African American churchgoers he ultimately shot and killed for being black. I also had the words of U.S. Attorney John Vaudreuil fresh in my mind from when we’d met at a west side coffee shop two weeks earlier, three months before he was abruptly asked to resign.

* * *

“Muslim communities are much more likely to become victims of hate than they are to become perpetrators of any crime,” says Vaudreuil. At the time, Vaudreuil was seven years into his federally appointed position as one of two U.S. Attorneys for the state of Wisconsin (and one of only 93 from Maine to Guam). Vaudreuil’s job, among other responsibilities, was to prosecute both acts of terrorism and civil rights “hate crimes”—like the 2012 Sikh Temple shooting in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, in which a white Army veteran from Cudahy, Wisconsin, likely mistook for Muslims the six people he killed. His caseloads involved criminal acts committed against individuals or institutions based on perceived race, religion, creed, place of origin, gender or sexual orientation.

But it’s Muslims who are often portrayed by American media as a direct terrorist threat, a perception that doesn’t play out statistically. According to the FBI, 94 percent of terrorist attacks in the U.S. from 1980 to 2005 were executed by non-Muslims. Vaudreuil said his office had only one case on the docket related to Islamic terrorism: a white Madison resident who wanted to join ISIS and was arrested at O’Hare International Airport in 2015. (This man—Joshua Van Haften—was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison on Feb. 17, 2017.) Reported hate crimes, on the other hand, have spiked 6 percent nationwide since 2015, including a 67 percent increase against Muslim Americans; the result, activists claim, of

Islamic Center of East Madison





John Vaudreuil, one of two U.S. Attorneys federally appointed to the state of Wisconsin, speaks with Masood Akhtar, an energy entrepreneur and Muslim community leader.

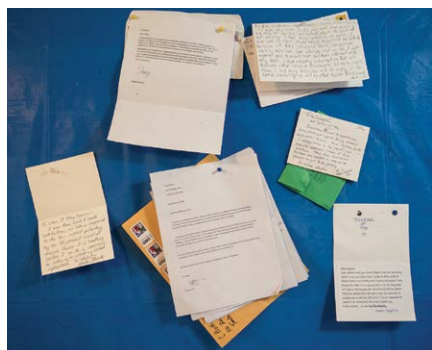
“Muslim communities are much more likely to become victims of hate than they are to become perpetrators of any crime.”

– JOHN VAUDREUIL

the anti-Islamic rhetoric that permeated the recent presidential election cycle, and continues.

Since his appointment by former President Barack Obama in August 2010, Vaudreuil made it his mission to reach out to Wisconsin’s typically marginalized communities—“all the groups I could think of who might be victims of civil rights hate crimes,” he says. Over the past seven years, Vaudreuil, a Wisconsin native, crisscrossed his territory of 44 counties spanning the western part of the state, visiting Native American reservations, LGBTQ community groups, NAACP and Urban League meetings, Jewish temples and Islamic mosques (including the Islamic Center of East Madison, as well as the two others in the city, plus Marshfield, Barron, Altoona and Janesville), hoping to put a friendly face to the Department of Justice name.

When we met, Vaudreuil was uncertain how long he’d hold his position. It’s normal for incoming presidents to make their own appointments; and Vaudreuil had said Obama eventually replaced about 70 percent of U.S. attorneys when



(Top) Letters of support are displayed at the Islamic Center of East Madison. (Bottom) U.S. Army veteran Mustapha Touray, imam (Muslim prayer leader) Driss Akawn and the center’s head of school Kemo Ceesay study the Quran at the center.

he appointed Vaudreuil. Three days before Inauguration Day, Vaudreuil and his colleagues received a business-as-usual notice stating they’d be allowed to remain in place until either a successor was appointed or they chose to leave. A little more than half, including Vaudreuil, chose to stay, even as acting U.S. Attorney General Sally Yates was fired shortly thereafter for defying one of eight executive orders issued by President Donald Trump in his first week, and despite the panicked onslaught of news articles reporting massive upheaval, lawsuits, protests and collective uncertainty.

“I took this job to represent the Department of Justice, and I will do it to the best of my ability until they tell me not to do it,” he said the day after Yates was replaced. He emphasized that he believes in the system of shared power and the difference between bad policy, remedied by the ballot, and unlawful acts, remedied in courts. “My concern is, I want to make sure people know we’re still in the game. That you can’t commit hate crimes. That you can’t punch a Muslim or a Hispanic because you think it’s OK now. And that’s the message I’m going to keep pitching.”

But on March 10, Vaudreuil was asked to resign immediately, along with the 46 remaining U.S. attorneys.

* * *

Back at the Islamic Center of East Madison, which also serves as a school and food pantry, several letters of support from an array of secular and faith communities are pinned to the bulletin board. After the service, the center’s head of school Kemo Ceesay, imam (Muslim prayer leader) Driss Akawn and U.S. Army veteran Mustapha Touray gathered in a lower-level office to answer questions about their faith—something they say they are willing to do with anyone, anytime. They say they’ve also received threatening letters like the ones Vaudreuil investigates, but they try not to focus on the hate. Their neighbors know who they are.

“They see we’re involved within the community, within our neighborhoods, within work. (cont’d on p.68)

● Farhan Ahmad



Farhan Ahmad

33 | Startup Entrepreneur

Farhan Ahmad started taking computer classes at a nearby community college when he was still in high school in Michigan. It was the introverted ninth grader's way of coping with the culture shock he experienced when he and his family moved from their native Pakistan to America in 1998. "I enjoyed programming and it was something I could relate to," says Ahmad, who lost weight from the stress. "When I get thrown into stuff, I don't complain too much. My approach is always to try to figure it out."

Ahmad's skills snowballed into the career that brought him to Madison to work for Epic Systems, then his work spun off into the startup community, where he has

thrived. He and two colleagues started a tech consulting company that grew to employ 130 people in four years before it was acquired. He now works with another local startup. But it's America's religious freedom, even more than its economic opportunity, that Ahmad loves about this country.

"Even in Pakistan, there are plenty of different religions as well and a lot of times they don't get along as well as you'd hope," says Ahmad. "Whereas, because [diversity is] encouraged here, those groups tend to work [together] much better in [the] U.S." Additionally, the spectrum of ethnic and cultural views found within America's Islamic communities allows Ahmad to be more thoughtful about his faith. The way one worships (or chooses to at all) is not a given in the U.S., and that freedom of choice has served to deepen his intellectual commitment to the Islam that he says has always ruled his heart.

"The reasoning and logic that's provided by [Islamic] scholars here tends to be much more fact-based than you would get in Pakistan, where it's just like you're expected to believe one way and there's no thought besides it," says Ahmad. "There should be more diversity in religion because then you get to see the other side and what everyone else is thinking."

So, too, with politics, says Ahmad, who has made it a point to have deeper conversations with his Republican friends who voted for Trump. They tell him they're concerned about rising unemployment affecting local economies, and he relates because he views unemployment and stagnant wages as contributors to corruption and instability in the Middle East.

Whether Americans or "radicals" from other countries, "if people are not kept busy and engaged, problems are going to appear," says Ahmad. "Everybody wants to live. Everyone wants to be happy, right? But if that's not happening, and if you don't have a job, and you're being made to feel miserable and everything else, people go crazy in those scenarios."

Ahmad is now a husband and father, and he relies on his faith to guide him in raising his young son. "Just teaching him to be a good human being, really," he says. "That's where religion really helps, because that's exactly what it tells you. To be a good human being."

Fatoumata Ceesay

19 | UW–Madison Student

Fatoumata Ceesay was a freshman in high school when she made the very personal choice to start wearing a hijab. She knew people would stare, knew her friends might not get it at first. Her mom gently cautioned her to be sure, worried how non-Muslims might treat her, that she might become a target. But Ceesay knew in her heart it was what she wanted to do.

"Hijab is seen as a form of oppression when in reality most Muslim girls actually choose to wear [one]," she says. "And to me,

personally, that's very empowering. Because you're taking this step to physically show that you're part of something great."

Ceesay was born in the Bronx, New York, but she calls Madison her hometown. She has been here since she was 12. Now a University of Wisconsin–Madison sophomore studying journalism and sociology, Ceesay, whose family is originally from Gambia, is among the 23 percent of Muslim Americans who identify as black—an intersectionality Ceesay says is invaluable on campus, where she serves on the board of the Muslim Student Association. The group holds events for Muslims and non-Muslims, such as Islam Appreciation Week.

"I'm part of two fights that are kind of similar," says Ceesay. When she's at a Black Lives Matter rally, she can bring the Muslim perspective; when she's organizing for Islam, she can share her perspec-

● Fatoumata Ceesay





tive as a black woman. “Black people here in the U.S. are treated so unfairly and, post-9/11, Muslims here have been treated incredibly horribly,” she says, pointing to President Trump’s policies regarding Muslims as an example. “Because of those injustices,” she says, “I want to help people who don’t have voices, to have their voices heard by the general public.”

From Ceesay’s perspective, Western women’s ongoing fight for equal rights, even the right to vote (which black women didn’t expressly have until the Voting Rights Act of 1965), seems “slow in catching on” compared to Islam, which she says has mandated women’s rights to education and their own money “literally since like the beginning of Islam.” Confronting stereotypes is part of why Ceesay, a Madison365 intern who has written pieces for Madison365.com highlighting social injustices—including one called “10 Things You Know About Islam That Are Wrong”—has chosen to pursue journalism, particularly photojournalism. Her hijab is a visual representation of her personal faith, and she hopes that when people see her wearing it, they’ll speak to her instead of stare.

“I’m letting people know that, yes, I am a part of Islam, and please come and talk to me if you have any questions or stereotypes,” she says. “Because Muslims aren’t scary. We will answer your questions and we won’t hold judgment towards you or anything that you say.”

Meryem Aksbi

17 | Madison East High School Student

Any hope of blending into the sea of 1,604 faces at East High School was dashed the moment Meryem Aksbi accidentally set off the schoolwide fire alarm when she went through an emergency door. “I tell them I’m just an exchange student,” she laughs, recalling her fears that she wouldn’t make any friends, that she was “only a Muslim girl” who’d be invisible in vast, expansive, glittering America, where “people won’t really care about you.”

But the opposite has been true. The 17-year-old Moroccan citizen came to Madison as part of the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study program, a post-9/11 U.S. Department of State effort that welcomes kids from predominantly

Discover the Impact

75
YEARS



Madison Gives 2017

Tuesday, May 16 • Monona Terrace

5p.m. Reception • 6p.m. Dinner and Program

Madison Community Foundation’s 75th Anniversary Annual Dinner, Madison Gives, is a one-time opportunity to celebrate and support our unique natural and cultural assets that make up the precious gems in our community.

Don’t miss the big announcement! We’ll kick off a year of impact by revealing the first of 12 major gifts to the community.

Event and registration details at
madisongives.org/events

75 YEARS
Madison
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Gold Sponsors



Media Sponsor

Madison
magazine



**OVER \$300,000 RAISED & 10,425 LIVES CHANGED
A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR PRESENTING SPONSOR:**



Hats off to these corporate Plunge teams:
JP Cullen, State Collection Service, Inc. and Sprecher's



SUBSCRIBE TO Madison magazine ON YOUR TABLET!

Each issue includes enhanced features such as interactive design, audio and video content and bonus material.



store.madisonmagazine.com

POWERED BY

THE
EDGEWATER

SPONSORED BY



Door Creek Dental, PC
Family & Cosmetic Dentistry

HO-CHUNK GAMING
MADISON

PARK BANK

Muslim countries for one scholastic year. An exceptional student—she taught herself English in just two months and maintains a 4.0 GPA—Aksbi asked to return for her senior year. East readily reaccepted the student whose memberships include International Club, French Club, Creative Writing Club, Yearbook, Engineering Club, Homework Club, Monday Madness, Math Modeling and Kioja. Today, fellow students often squeal greetings or give her hugs when she walks the halls.

"I think East is the best school for diversity," says Aksbi—something she didn't experience in her beloved Morocco, a North African country that's more than 99 percent Muslim. In Madison, at first, "Most of the people thought I was Mexican," laughs Aksbi, who does not wear a hijab. She hopes to attend either UW-Madison to study engineering or New York University for international business. She relishes the diversity of America's Islamic community, where she and her host family—the Moroccan-born Rachid Ouabel and his wife, American-born Teresa Pullara, who owned the recently closed Bunky's Café—pray alongside Muslims from all over the world. Having a Moroccan American host family helps curb her homesickness (especially when they share a plate of spicy chicken), and she admires her American host mom as a role model, volunteer and businesswoman. Aksbi says Westerners often misunderstand the way Islam "prizes" women. "The wife of our prophet Mohammad used to work, you know what I mean?" she says. "The woman can do whatever she wants."

Aksbi says that although the stereotypes she saw espoused on TV throughout the presidential election were deeply painful to see and hear, they didn't match up with her lived experience here in Madison.

"The people here are nice all the time. I've never seen somebody who's racist," she says, recalling after Election Day when students and teachers were crying, and scribbling chalk messages on the sidewalks surrounding school: "We love immigrants here, we love Muslims here, we love Mexicans, we love Americans, everybody is equal." She says she doesn't want to belittle anyone's political opinion, but says of Trump, "Maybe they think he's good because if he's a businessman, he can run the country, but [economics is] not the only thing that matters, you know? There [are] people. There [are] feelings."

HENRY VILAS Zoo Camp

Go Behind the Scenes
Exclusive Animal Encounters
Meet the Zookeepers

Full-day, week-long
programs

Registration Now Open!
vilaszoo.org/zoocamp



MADISON BUSINESS NETWORK

REAL ESTATE MASTERS



Jamie Brud
235.2566



Liz Erickson
843.3630



Marcia Flannery
575.2231



Joan Foster
576.7217



Mary Lee Frahm
444.7664



Faith Morledge
444.8330



Michael Restaino
628.0772



Bill Schiel
345.2022



Toni Sime
206.6905



Robin Taylor
576.6097

**RESTAINO
& ASSOCIATES
REALTORS**

RESTAINOHOMES.COM

Magic Happens



Learn more about the
magic of exceptional living

- ▶ neighborhood of ranch homes
- ▶ beautiful senior living campus

**ATTIC ANGEL
COMMUNITY**

8301 Old Sauk Road, Middleton
608-662-8842

www.AtticAngel.org

Mohammed Monawer

67 | Electrical Engineer

It's been nearly 30 years since Mohammed Monawer, a soft-spoken electrical engineer, was forced to leave his homeland of Afghanistan behind. The Russians invaded in 1980 while he was away completing his graduate studies in Thailand; so Monawer instead moved to the U.S., where he became a citizen in 1987. Since then, he and his wife have worked hard and raised a family: a daughter who is a UW-Madison medical student and a son who was a volunteer firefighter and is currently actively deployed as a nuclear technician on U.S. Navy submarines. But in all his years in this country, Monawer hadn't experienced anything like what happened at a Badgers hockey game in December.

Monawer and his daughter, who chooses to wear a hijab, were seated behind an overly enthusiastic (and apparently intoxicated) fan who kept jumping to his feet. When the man's companion chided him to stop blocking the view of the people behind him, he looked over his shoulder.

"He said, 'I don't care. They're not supposed to be here anyway,'" recalls Monawer. "Twenty-seven years of my life I put [in] here. I'm a civil servant. And that hurts."

Monawer says his "hat is off to our women" for wearing the identifying hijab when Muslim men can more easily assimilate, adding that his daughter is extremely dedicated, as well as stubborn—"and I like her that way." Monawer describes Madison as a liberal city filled with very nice people, but believes the recent political rhetoric permeating the election season has emboldened those with anti-Muslim views in a way he has never seen before. "When the leader insults the minority, everybody who follows [him] thinks that that's fine," he says. "The person you're looking to is doing it, so it must be good."

Before moving to America, Monawer spent a year (in 1967) as an American Field Service exchange student living with a family in Kewanee, Illinois, where he graduated from high school. The American family was instrumental in helping him eventually resettle in the U.S. 13 years later, and since then several family members of both Monawer and his wife's have also arrived in America as refugees.

● Mohammed Monawer



"If somebody says something bad about Islam, my question would be, how many Muslims do you know?"

Monawer holds a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Kabul University and a master's degree in industrial engineering from Bangkok's Asian Institute of Technology, and he has worked for the state of Wisconsin's Public Service Commission as a public service engineer since

1990. He has watched the Muslim community in Madison grow "tremendously" and says his service-oriented kids "are as American as apple pie."

"If somebody says something bad about Islam, my question would be, how many Muslims do you know?" says Monawer. Indeed, a 2016 Pew Research Center survey found 47 percent of U.S. adults say they do not personally know a Muslim. "I want them to know that we are just like you," he says. They have the same worries, the same daily routines. They want good housing and well-behaved children who care for others and are useful members of society: "Muslims are not any different."



READ UP MADISON

THANKS FOR YOUR DONATIONS & HELPING
US KEEP KIDS READING THIS SUMMER!

channel3000.com/read-up



CHANNEL3000.com

Madison
magazine



MADISON WISC 5 TV SHREDFEST

SATURDAY, APRIL 29 • 8:30 AM TO 11:00 AM (OR UNTIL CAPACITY)

WARNER PARK • 2930 N. SHERMAN AVENUE MADISON

LIMIT 3 PAPER BAGS/BOXES PER VEHICLE

(METAL MATERIALS WILL JAM SHREDDERS)



Pellitteri
WASTE SYSTEMS

● Samba Baldeh



Samba Baldeh

Madison Alder, District 17

Business owner turned politician Samba Baldeh was living in the United States nearly 18 years before he decided to run for local government. “I went into politics to fight for my people,” says Baldeh, who comes from Choya, a rural village in Gambia. In 2015, he became the first Muslim elected to the Madison City Council. “And my people are American people, my people are Muslim, my people are immigrants, my people are the city of Madison,” Baldeh says.

“Fight” is a strong word for the self-described “peaceful guy” Baldeh, but he feels he’s forced these days to actively defend the honor of his fellow immigrants, Muslim or not.

Baldeh helped facilitate a community

Explore Life to the Fullest



OAKWOOD'S REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

offer comprehensive care to speed up your recovery from surgery, injury, or illness. Expert physical and occupational therapists will guide you through daily sessions to rebuild strength, balance, and mobility to resume your active life.



OAKWOOD VILLAGE

PRAIRIE RIDGE

5565 Tancho Drive, Madison
608-230-4620



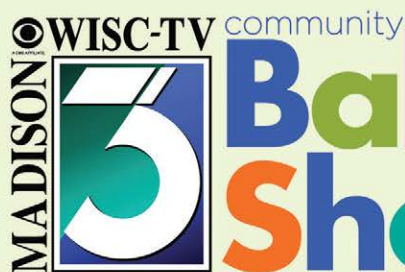
OAKWOOD VILLAGE

UNIVERSITY WOODS

6205 Mineral Point Road, Madison
608-230-4253



www.oakwoodvillage.net



Baby Shower

Partnering with Associated Physicians & Veridian Homes

Donate baby items for families in need
at the Veridian Homes Design Studio &
Associated Physicians Clinic

9:00am – 5:00pm

Monday, April 10th – Wednesday, April 12th

Veridian Homes: 6801 South Towne Drive, Madison

Associated Physicians: 4410 Regent Street, Madison

For more Information go to Channel3000.com/baby-shower



CHANNEL3000.com



Associated Physicians
Devoted Physicians. Trusted Care.



VERIDIAN
HOMES

Dream. Build. Live.



NEWS3
investigates



**CALL
FOR
ACTION**

608.270.2833

monday • wednesday • friday
11a-1p

CHANNEL3000.com/callforaction



#SmileFirst

608.848.5366
firstchoicedental.com

follow us  

**First
Choice
DENTAL**

Campus • Downtown • East Madison • Fitchburg
Middleton • Sun Prairie • Verona • Waunakee • West Madison

 **Our 2nd Sun Prairie Clinic Opens April 3!** 

forum “Know Your Rights—United We Stand” that drew an estimated 2,500 attendees to the Monona Terrace Convention Center on Jan. 29. Although it was in the works for months (in response to many constituents worried about their rights after Trump’s election), the Sunday afternoon event happened to fall just two days after President Trump capped his first week in office by issuing eight executive orders, including banning the entry of refugees and immigrants from seven majority-Muslim countries, sparking nationwide protests. “You can be a legal resident of this country and you can still be sent out of this country, so we have a lot to be fearful of,” says Baldeh. “But what I want all of us to understand is that we are all Americans.”

Baldeh was only visiting the U.S. when he met the student life coordinator of Madison Area Technical College (now Madison College) at a Washington, D.C., conference, which, along with realizing a family member lived in Madison, prompted Baldeh to move to Wisconsin (by way of New York) in 2000 to study information technology at the college. Although he became a U.S. citizen in 2005 and calls the U.S. “the best country that God has created,” he says there is nothing more difficult than leaving one’s family and homeland behind—and that’s why he feels it’s ridiculous to fear immigrants.

“This is the country I choose and I left everything else I know. And the reason I choose this is because of the promise that this country gives to everybody: the possibility of hitting the sky,” he says. “And so you cannot come for that opportunity and yet hate this country. It doesn’t make sense.”

It’s not lost on Baldeh that many critics of America’s first African American president chose the word “Muslim” as the deepest insult they could hurl at him. He’s frustrated that Islam is portrayed in the U.S. media as a violent religion, when other criminals committing acts of terror are never identified by their faith. For example, the U.S., a majority-Christian country, is only 6 percent of the world’s population, but incarcerates 25 percent of the world’s criminals.

“Do we say all Americans are criminals, or they are committing those crimes because they are Christians? No,” says Baldeh. “Every religion, in my opinion, is peace. If it cannot bring peace, then you should never follow it.”

Women in Business

presented by  SVA

Dr. Lori Veerman, Co-owner, Madison Family Dental

Dr. Lori Veerman recalls the fascination she felt as a young girl, watching her father craft his dental patients' crowns at the kitchen table after a long day at work. Still, she didn't yet imagine she could follow in her dad's footsteps. "You know, growing up in the 70s," she says, "females in dentistry weren't exactly the norm."

But her interest only grew, and she became a hygienist in her father's practice. When she thought teaching was her only option for advancement, Veerman went back to school in the 1980s. "I ended up in some classes with dental students and realized I was just as capable as they were," she says. "I realized dentistry is what I really wanted to do." Today, Veerman, two other women and one male dentist co-own Madison Family Dental, where five of the nine dentists are female and the practice has grown to nearly 60 employees. Because the community has supported Madison Family Dental for more than 35 years, Veerman commits to giving back. She prides herself in volunteering for the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County where she helps with two of their largest fundraising events. She is on the Board of Directors for Madison Dental Initiative, a clinic for the homeless and underserved population in Madison, where she also volunteers on a monthly basis.

Asked about women in business, Veerman says, "I think dentistry in general is an awesome profession for women, and I think women make strong business owners. You have to set your priorities, don't be afraid to ask for help, be honest, have integrity, and go for it."

CO-SPONSORED BY

Madison
magazine



Dr. Lori Veerman, Co-owner, Madison Family Dental

SVA Delivers Measurable Results

“ Being able to have access to the diversified range of consulting services available through SVA has helped us tremendously. They understand our business and the business of dentistry as a whole, providing us with better recommendations leading to greater success. ”

- Dr. Lori Veerman

 **SVA** | Certified Public Accountants
Tax, Audit and Business Strategy

Measurable Results.
SVAaccountants.com

(cont'd from p.55)

They know that we are Muslims, they know we pray, they know we fast for Ramadan,” says Akawn, a Morocco-born U.S. citizen whose children were born and raised in Madison. “And they know our action, it speaks louder.”

The men point out that the word “Islam” stems from “Aslam,” the Arabic word for peace. At the center, which is open to anyone, they rely on the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad to guide followers in their daily lives. As legal U.S. residents, says Akawn, they believe in the Constitution that protects them, and that “if your actions align with what this country stands for, then you are on the right path.”

“When you say Islam, you say peace,” says Kemo Ceesay, who came here from Gambia. “So if your religion is peace, then you also have to be peaceful, in your action, in your dealing, in your speaking. Whatever you touch has to be peace.”

Touray, who was stationed in Germany for over three years during which he was deployed to Iraq for 18 months, and was medically discharged from the Army due to injuries sustained from special forces training, emphatically echoes Ceesay’s



(TOP) MAGGIE GINSBERG; OTHERS BY ROMULO MORISHTA



(Above) Organizers of the Jan. 29, 2017 community forum “United We Stand” planned for 500 people and hoped for 1,000; An estimated 2,500 Madisonians attended the forum held at Monona Terrace Center in support of those subject to deportation or discrimination. (Left) A hadith, or collection of the Prophet Muhammad’s words, is a source of guidance for Muslims apart from the Quran.

“So if your religion is peace, then you also have to be peaceful, in your action, in your dealing, in your speaking. Whatever you touch has to be peace.”



(Above) Islamic Center of East Madison head of school Kemo Ceesay, imam (Muslim prayer leader) Driss Akawn and U.S. Army veteran Mustapha Touray pictured at the Islamic center.

sentiment. “I want people to know we are not terrorists,” he smiles. “We have government workers here. Factory workers here. Doctors here. Professionals here. Military personnel, active duty, right now. So we love America as any other citizen loves America.”

As their very existence becomes a political talking point—a surreal feeling to which many non-Muslims likely cannot relate—the men focus instead on the faith that sustains them, and on supporting the local community through volunteer work and weekend classes. They take comfort in the fact that they’re surrounded by thousands of average, everyday Muslims who call Madison, Wisconsin, home—a diverse and eclectic bunch of ordinary people living their lives, attending school, going to work, raising families, shopping for groceries, rooting for the Badgers and watching the news. Wondering, like everyone else, what’s next. **M**

Maggie Ginsberg is a senior contributing writer for Madison Magazine.