

Urur Dhex-Dhexaad Ah: Community In-Between

Urur Dhex-Dhexaad Ah, which means a *Community In-Between*, derives its name from a *maahmaah*/proverb: *dhex iyo dhexaad* / betwixt and between. As more Somalis come of age as American citizens, including those born in other locations across the diaspora and a rising second generation of Somali-Americans, the conversation turns from issues connected to survival and assimilation to those of identity, community participation, and belonging. This new generation of Somali-Americans describes the community where they feel like they belong as one *in-between*—in between identities, nations, generations, languages, cultures, and communities.

Urur Dhex-Dhexaad Ah: Community In-Between portrays the experiences of 15 Somali-Americans under the age of 40 who are up-and-coming leaders in the arts, business, health care, political, nonprofit, and education sectors. Their divergent yet interlocking narratives provide an opportunity to better understand the Somali community and its contributions to central Ohio and the diaspora. Individuals locate their multicultural knowledge, critical and creative energies, and the ways in which they are creators of their own destinies within the interconnected dynamics of Somali-American life. The individuals in this project are aware of the effects of these intersections and are well versed in navigating them. They work to improve fluency among themselves and others through participation in activities and groups aimed to connect, mentor, and lead. These roles serve to organize the following photonarratives. Each participant's story is titled with a defining attribute, and together these values create a model of success unique to Somali-Americans.

Urur Dhex-Dhexaad Ah: Community In-Between recognizes and honors Somali excellence by highlighting the stories of trailblazers, creating visible role models, and in turn creating a sense of validation and inspiring the community to continue to seek opportunities to build community and succeed.

Soomaalida Columbus / Somalis in Columbus

There are an estimated 55,000 Somalis residing in Columbus.¹ There are over 400 Somali-owned businesses and eight Somali mosques. Roughly 2,000 Somalis are enrolled in higher education, and several charter and private schools cater to Somali students, offering an emphasis on literacy, ELL, and Islamic education. In 2016, the Somali Political Action Group formed, and Ahmed Shukri was the first Somali-American to be sworn in as a Franklin County Sheriff's deputy. Nonprofit organizations such as New Hope Foundation, Our Helpers, SELF of Ohio, and Somali Education Resource Center offer services such as tutoring, dropout prevention programs, parent advocacy, case management, and more. There are many important cultural initiatives, including music and film studios, an annual Somali Cultural Festival, and soccer tournaments that bring competing teams from across North America. A recent report on the impact of refugees confirms the importance of refugee communities in central Ohio (the Somali community being the largest) in developing small businesses and creating jobs, with significant social and economic impact.

Despite these successes, separation between communities, economic disparities (the average median household income is roughly \$10,000 less for a refugee family than the county average), and lack of political representation suggest that, despite their achievements, Somalis in Columbus are still in the process of integration. In addition, anti-Somali ideologies based on cultural racism, nativism, and Islamophobia persist.

Race affects assimilation, and Somalis' limited human capital, financial obligations to family in diaspora and in Somalia, and the development of community enclaves present barriers to integration in American society. Furthermore, the Somali diaspora's composition of mixed migration, the continual movement of its members, and even the flourishing small businesses can reinforce enclave boundaries and prevent participation in the wider American community. The strong connections among Somalis in diaspora, the sharing of resources, Somali residential areas, and business opportunities such as those in northeast Columbus are typically developed in areas with overall depression, low-performing schools, and high crime rates. However, more and more Somali families are moving into the suburbs of Hilliard, Westerville, Dublin, and New Albany. One has only to follow the journeys of our participants to see these dynamics and their connection to geographic location.

¹ 5,935 Somalis have been officially resettled as refugees. Most of the population arrived as a result of secondary and chain migrations. Ismahan cites 1997 as the year in which the influx of Somalis began. Secondary migrations, the movement from the location of initial resettlement, and chain migrations, a series of migrations within a family typically beginning with one family member who sends money (remittances) to bring other family members to the new location, often result in migration fields, areas with a large cluster of one group of people. Secondary and chain migrations have made counting the Somali population difficult, as no official records of movement are kept, and pose challenges for the city as federal funding does not follow secondary migrants to their new homes. See CRP, "Counting the Franklin County," for more information on the Somali population in Franklin County.

Benchmarks of participation including political representation and the building of schools, community spaces, and businesses, are what one participant describes as only the beginning of a strong community. Ilhan goes on to say that she hopes the community will have members who feel they belong here as much as they do in Somalia, and they will build with each other across community lines.

Support and perceptions have changed throughout the years from a post-9/11 climate to recent political rhetoric and nativist immigration policies affecting Muslims, immigrants, and perhaps most surprisingly, refugees in addition to the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. Somalis in Columbus are caught in the crosshairs of racial tensions, Islamophobia, and an increasingly volatile debate about immigration and refugee resettlement policies. So, how do Somali-Americans understand, negotiate, balance, and present their identity as Muslims, Somalis, and Americans? The answers to these questions contribute to the success of community building among Somali-Americans.

Participation: Participation, an alternative to assimilation, entails deciding which aspects of U.S. culture to adopt and which to disregard. A participating community is politically active, has an easy flow between Somali areas and those populated by other ethnic groups, is economically active, offers as well as takes advantage of educational opportunities, and is involved with local law enforcement. There are three stages of the Somali refugee experience: dependence, preparation, and participation.

Aqoonsiga Qurba Joogta / Identity in the Diaspora

I don't think I ever learned about being Somali or American. I think there were many times in my life where I was experiencing my Americanism in a predominantly Somali space and feeling American, or experiencing my Somaliness in a predominantly American space and feeling very Somali. There are, I think, less times that I can think that I felt very Somali and very American at the same time and was completely at ease with it, except for with other Somali-Americans. I think that's the only place where I can completely inhabit both of those identities and feel comfortable in those identities.

—Ilhan

Diasporas are composed of complex networks defined by geography, generation, education, gender, and belonging. Diaspora, by definition, lasts multiple generations, and in looking at 1½- and 2nd-generation members (those who grew up and were born in diaspora), we can see how these young people understand and consciously engage with different value systems. The creation of hybrid diaspora identities allows Somali-Americans to identify with many different sub-identities such as Somali, American, black, Muslim, immigrant, refugee, and others, and as Elmi writes, “Managing all these identities and moving between them is a necessary element of being young and of belonging.”

From the narratives, we found four major experiences in the management of multiple identities:

1. Experiencing difference within groups of belonging, and realizing that they are different than others around them. Moments of culture shock were often turning points, inspiring career choices, prompting further study of religion or culture, and motivating outreach activities and mentorship.
2. Resistance, performance, and representation, resulting from occupying multiple identities, family and society expectations, and coded roles. The manifestation of these moments varies by gender and occupation.
3. Critical belonging often developed either through travels to other locations in diaspora and Somalia or from visiting family members. Values such as community, connectedness, faith, family, and entrepreneurship permeate their understanding of what it means to be Somali. As Ilhan points out, Somali-Americans experience a multiple consciousness as a result of their multiple competing identities, including refugee and immigrant status, religious identity, gender, class, socioeconomic status, race, and Somali tropes. In these intersections, individuals choose vocations that focus on voice, leadership, innovation, and

creativity and cultivate spaces saturated with understanding, support, and opportunity for themselves and those following.

4. Building communities for themselves and others and recognizing the interconnectedness of local, diaspora, and home communities.

Diaspora: a community building process spanning multiple generations with two major factors: (1) self-identification of belonging to a diaspora and (2) interconnections between host and home countries as well as within diaspora localities.

Xidhiiriyaasha / Connectors

Our first grouping focuses on those who act as connectors, individuals who describe their role in the community as that of a bridge, translator, or networker, connecting people to people or people to resources.

Xiiso iyo qalbi wanaag / Passion

Ismahan, 37, kinship coordinator and co-founder of SELF of Ohio

We're very passionate overall, but I think some of that passion is very much needed because when you're passionate about something, you work very hard to accomplish that.

Ismahan has lived in Columbus for over thirty years. In 1982, her family was one of the first Somali families to arrive in the city. Her father came to study engineering at The Ohio State University after his family was forced to leave Ethiopia where he was working as an agricultural engineer. During the Ethiopian War, he had to walk many miles to Djibouti, where he later sent for the rest of the family. It was from there that they came to America.

From day one, her mother has been helping other immigrants. Growing up, Ismahan and her siblings were always a part of this work. Because they were one of the first Somali families in Columbus, they had to interact daily with Americans (rather than only with other Somalis). Newcomers today have strong Somali support networks, something Ismahan cites as a disadvantage at times. "They're not growing outside of the Somali community and understanding what it takes to be successful in a new country," she said. Despite the size, strength, and successes of the Somali community in Columbus, there are still people involved in the resettlement process who have issues and concerns ranging from the increase of Somali youth in the juvenile system to barriers between Somali parents and their children, and the schools.

Subsequently, Ismahan is trying to work with the Columbus public school system to have advocates teach Somali parents how the system works and to have representatives available in the schools to offer help and guidance.

My mother is not an educated woman, but she's the smartest woman I've ever known. She was born in a country where she had no education but she is able to drive. She is able to talk and communicate. She was able to advocate for her children. My mother was at every parent-teacher conference. My mother would go into the school and she would use one of us to translate to express how she felt whenever my sisters and me got into fights [with other kids] because we were different and were being attacked. She taught us to learn about where you live and how it works. Learn about voting, learn about why it's so important. Learn about why it's important to have a home and raise your kids in a home and to have something to call your own. It's not about having the nicest cars. It's about having a car to get you around and learning about going to work every day to give your kids an example.

For her to have so many barriers herself and not really have the education and knowledge herself of how things work, she gets it done. She just inspires. If she is capable of doing it with the little bit of what she has, then there is no reason why we, growing up in America and living that life already, cannot be able to help people in a faster, quicker, and more efficient manner, and be advocates and empower others by giving them the tools that we found we needed to be successful.

So my sisters and I started SELF of Ohio—Sisters Empowering and Lifting Families—which helps advocate for and empower immigrants and refugees in Central Ohio. With the resettlement process, they have three months and they are let go. They've reached their cap but there's still so much more that needs to be done, and that's where we step in and assist in that process.

Qaban-qaabin / Advocate

Ladan, 26, mental health practitioner

I like providing resources and being there for the family without taking all the credit. The way that I describe myself is I tend to give them the little extra push that they need.

Ladan was born in Somalia and grew up in Nairobi, Kenya, where she lived in a gated community and went to a private religious school. She comes from a big family—she is the third of seven. Right now, there are four siblings in college studying law, education, and other fields. Her dad came to the United States before the rest of the family and thought it would be a better place for education and opportunities. Someday Ladan plans to go back to Somalia.

When we came, I already had a stable upbringing and background, so I didn't go through a lot with the culture clash with my parents. We always had a foundation at home that both mom and dad kept reminding us of what's important: happiness, respect, education, religion. My parents remind us of where we come from. Always try to balance in between.

When I was in college, that's when I went out to volunteer. I've always wanted to see what the youth are capable of, and starting with my family was a big step for me because I could then help my siblings ripen to do things. Right now I'm involved with Mid Ohio Food Bank. My dream is to have a food pantry on the North Side so I can serve the Somalis and anyone else that has barriers like transportation and language. I'm also involved with the Salvation Army and a tutoring program at Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services. I signed up to work with international families when they come to Children's Hospital just to support them and introduce them to all the places that they can go to, mosque or church or anywhere that they need and connect them to their community. I help with the Health Fair every year providing mental health information, and then I picked the ER to work so I can work with the Somali community as well. I used to be involved with the mosque before I picked up a million projects. I also volunteer with the city of Westerville as much as I can.

Ladan graduated with her bachelor's degree in 2011 and received her master's in social work in 2012. She plans to return to school to get her PhD. Initially, she wanted to be a psychiatrist but decided to pursue social work to spend more time with patients, build a rapport with them, and collaborate with families.

When I was an intern, we had a Hispanic mom come to the clinic about to get evicted and wanted utility assistance. This mom could not read English, could not make the phone call. So what I did, even though I was supposed to be off at a certain time, I took the time to kind of

make that phone call with her Spanish interpreter to schedule an appointment for her, explained how the coding works, and just gave her all the resources that she needed. Then I promised that I would go ahead and follow up with her the next time I came in. Right before I ended my internship, she sent me a note just to say thank you, and I've kept that note with me from that moment on. I don't think it was going above and beyond. That was just being a social worker. I was just doing what I've always wanted to do. This was the reason why I stayed with social work.

Right now, I do home-based counseling, so it's anywhere from assessing for safety, connecting families to resources, bringing communities together, advocating for justice, as well as addressing policy change and just being there when patients need someone to talk to without getting any judgment. I work in the ADHD clinic and we have been tracking the progress of the families and the patients that have reported controlled or managed symptoms. We collaborate with school systems. We also talk to the court system—talking to parents, counseling agencies, connecting them to resources that they need. I love working with people and I tend to give them more resources that they need, and I need to step back and let them be the driver.

Xiriris/Network

Ahmed A., 24, political organizer and community worker

My community is definitely an evolving community. It's definitely a community that's growing, both population-wise and mentally. I think now with a lot of different community events or social organizations, it brings a lot of us together. All of those really bridge the gaps in our community and you network like crazy with everyone here.

Ahmed Ali is the second oldest of four siblings raised mostly by their mother, who taught him perseverance. He was born in Kismayo, Somalia, and immigrated to Atlanta, Georgia, at age five. There he and his family lived with his aunt. In 1996, his family moved to Columbus.

When I talk to other people in diaspora, I feel like we are in that same in-between community. Sometimes you feel lost and don't know where your place is. When I'm around the older generation, it's hard to relate. When I'm around younger people that were born here or lived here for a long time, it's sometimes hard to relate as well. I came here as a refugee, so it's different.

Ahmed is a program coordinator for the high school dropout prevention program at the Somali Educational Resource Center. This is a great position for Ahmed, who values helping others and treating people with respect and fairness. Resisting discrimination is a vital factor for nonprofit work in a community where *qabiil*/tribalism for some, is a basis of support for those who belong to a specific tribe yet prevents progress for members of other tribes. Ahmed also values education.

Starting college as a first-generation college student, it's difficult navigating the system because sometimes it's hard to get through. College is not cheap. If I failed a class, it was hard when I had to go apply for an appeal for financial aid. It made me question, "Do I really want to continue? Is this what I should do?" In those moments, it was hard because I didn't have a support system of people who had already done it.

Now I work with Somali teens who are trying to graduate and get into the work force. I try to be that person that I wish I'd had when I was going through some of my struggles in the beginning with education or with finding a job. There are emotional moments. There's times where some kids, especially boys, you really can't do anything to help them. But, at the end of the day, there are things I do that I see impact people lives, and it's something I really enjoy doing. Seeing this progress lets me know that I actually can make a difference in the world.

Ahmed started a political caucus for Somali-Americans in Columbus, Ohio, after participating in forums during the 2015 mayoral election. Within days of formation, the group attracted the attention of local, state, and national politicians. The group changed its name from the Central Ohio Somali Democrats to the Somali Political Action Group (SPAG) to better suit their mission. For Ahmed, the most important aspect of politics is education. As the 2016 presidential election season geared up, and along with it anti-Islamic sentiments, Ahmed's desire to educate people about Islam and politics increased, making sure that Muslims in central Ohio show their voice and tell people, "We live here too. We should get the same respect as anyone else."

I just felt, especially with the Somali community, that there was a lack of education when it came to what city officials did, voting rights, different things within civic engagement, and the political platforms. So what I wanted to do is help our community be more involved and educated. With that, I started the Somali Political Action Group. The group is kind of like a political caucus, but its main goal is to unite and empower a group of young Somali-Americans to be actively involved in their local politics, making sure they're informing the community, educating voters, registering voters, helping campaign for politicians who support our community, and just being active—whether they want to run for office, campaign, or work in politics—just giving them a platform to use.

I'm trying to build networks not only for myself but everyone. Connecting because we are Somali and American. There are people like me who are interested in giving back to the community, who have a willingness to do something, to be a part of their community, in the diaspora. I want to bridge those gaps and bring Somalis from Minnesota with Somalis from Columbus and Seattle and Virginia. I want other people to take the torch. I want other people to be like, "Hey, I want to lead this and I want do it." That's the goal at the end of everything.

Cadaalada/Justice

Nima, 21, economist and co-founder of Refuge

The idea of justice without mercy is not justice at all. The idea of allowing communities to be strong through the fundamentals of justice and equity have all been formed through my faith.

Nima was born in Toronto, Canada, and raised in Columbus, Ohio. She is the daughter of immigrants, who left Somalia shortly before the war began. Education was central and her parents emphasized the importance of learning from every experience. As the middle of four sisters, and the one who has been at home the most in recent years, Nima has become a paragon of working to excel academically, in interpersonal friendships, and in everything she does so that her younger sisters have a template of success in a variety of different contexts.

Growing up, my parents both worked. My dad's mother lived with us and is still the most important person to me in terms of growing up and becoming the person that I am. She didn't speak English, and she was Somali above all. She also had this sense of wanting us to learn.

I learned Somali first because she was at home with us. My older sister spoke literally no English before she went to school. She would come home and teach me. I remember realizing one day that there are two words for everything. My grandmother, even though she didn't speak English, was very adamant about us learning English and becoming part of American culture. My grandma and I would drop my older sister off at the bus, then come back home and watch PBS. Dragon Tales would be on and my grandma would always ask, "What's going on?" I didn't speak English so I would just make things up. I know that she knew that I was making things up. But she still continued to ask me, wanting me to learn from this experience of watching Dragon Tales together.

I learned from her the importance of existing in the place that I am, in Canada or, when we moved, in Ohio. My grandma spoke so much about growing up in Somalia and what her experiences were. She was a single mother after her husband died. She was an incredible woman in the sense of her resistance against the patriarchy of the Somali culture and wanting to exist as this woman, independently raising these five children on her own. Now all her children have at least master's degrees.

She was this incredible example of what it means to be Somali, a woman, and a Muslim, and those are the identities that I hold most dearly. Being Somali I learned entirely from her, and being American fit into the structure that she and my parents had built of becoming a person

first and then finding yourself within the communities that you have. Being an American means that I work towards the betterment of this country always. I also have this incredible rich history of being able to speak this language of Somali, being able to wear clothes that are Somali, to go home and interact with my parents and my grandparents, and hear about this whole other country that could also be my home. It means I have the opportunity to interact with Somalis across the world and that I speak Somali. Being a Muslim is the motivator of my entire life and it pushes me to work towards the ideas of equity and justice in everything that I do. Being an American and being a Muslim fit very well for me because I know that by making this country better for as many people as possible I am fulfilling a religious duty as well. Those identities have never felt in a particular conflict to me, they've just always felt like they fit together.

Nima graduated in 2016 from The Ohio State University. Growing up, she wanted to be a doctor, but at the end of the high school decided that she wanted to do something different. Her parents were confused about the change, but they always pushed her and her sisters to use their particular skills to build a career path that would maximize their impact and represent both their culture and faith well. It is an expectation of excellence, an expectation that she has met. Nima won numerous scholarships and fellowships, worked as a research assistant, and interned at the Federal Reserve Bank. Outside of the classroom, she was a Buckeye Leadership Fellow, a volunteer and board member for the Broad Street Food Pantry, and editor of *The OSU Journal of Politics and International Affairs*. She has also studied abroad in Morocco and volunteered teaching English to young girls in Somalia. She is a Resolution Fellow for her work with Refuge, a peer-to-peer online mentoring program connecting university students with refugees. For the next two years, Nima will be doing economic research at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York on the applied microeconomics team on how to most efficiently allocate resources across different sectors of American life like education and health care.

Right now [I'm] trying to understand how I can best fit into the field of economics and maximize my impact while also doing research that I care about. Economics is very white and very male. Black women are a statistical anomaly; they don't exist in economics. Although there is a pretty large literature on race discrimination in economics, much of the time economists come to the conclusion that there is discrimination, but it's not racism; it's another factor that hasn't been found yet. I worked with a professor and I told him I don't know if I can do economics because papers published will say blatantly racist things or misogynistic things. He said, "That's true, a lot of times it gets really frustrating and exhausting. But if you're not at the table who is?"

Garasho/Understanding

Khalid, 23, journalist and filmmaker

Understanding is the biggest thing we can have. Understanding the line between me and understanding other cultures. Maybe just a little more accepting will go a long way and I think that's just going to bring back hope.

Khalid comes from a large family. The second youngest, Khalid was under five years old when his family came to United States. Khalid grew up in Minneapolis before moving to Portland, Oregon. He returned to the Midwest for college.

We arrived in Houston but only stayed there for maybe three months. My mom heard of the large Somali population in Minneapolis. We got our bus tickets and we went on a three-day bus ride to Minneapolis. We stayed in a hotel in Minneapolis for two whole months and then we got one of the crappiest apartments. It was a two-bedroom and we were six people.

I connected more being a Somali in Minneapolis than I did any other time before because Somalis were all around me. On the weekends, I'd go to dugsi. I was confident. I think that's the time when my Somali was the best too.

When we moved to Portland in my freshman year of high school, I had a cultural shock. In Minneapolis, I lived in a Somali community. I went to a school that was predominantly African American and Somali. Then I went to the suburbs of Portland and it was really different. Portland is like the whitest city in the country. I think I've learned more about the American culture those four years in high school than I ever did in any other time. Then when I came to Columbus, it was a little more diverse, more comfortable than anything else. It's cool. I like that I move a lot because you get to see different people. You get to learn to react to different people. I guess you could say, the more you move, the more culture that you get. I think that's good.

You all watch the TV show, Masters of None on Netflix? It stars Aziz Ansari and Alan Yang, and they talk about being first-generation Americans. You have to say, "I'm Somali." But really, are you? People ask you, "Are you American?" And then you ask yourself, "Am I?" When people ask you that question, they go, "Where are you from?" and you go, "Oh, man." It makes you think. It gets your wires going. You're like, "I'm from here but then I'm from here but then I'm from here." Growing up, when I lived in Minnesota, I'd go, "Oh, I'm from Minnesota." But when I went to Oregon, I'd say, "I'm from Minnesota" too. And then when I left Oregon for Columbus, I'd say, "Oh, I'm from Oregon." But then people always go, because they sense maybe I have a small accent or maybe the way I look, they go, "No, but where are you from?" Then I just go, "My family's from Somalia."

Growing up or being part of the diaspora is emotionally draining at times. There's no connectivity to other people. What confused me the most was what I should say to people when they told me, "Oh, you're from Somalia. Tell me about Somalia." Then I'm like, "Ah, man. I don't know." Then you gravitate a little towards the area from Minneapolis because you can talk about Minneapolis. I know more about Somalia now because my parents talk to me about the culture more often than they did as a young kid. Now, I know so much more about it. I feel comfortable talking with someone about Somalia even though I haven't been there. I connect with it more because of my family and my parents. Now, I say, "Mogadishu."

I chose journalism and filmmaking because I like stories. I think stories are what drives us. Personal stories are what makes the world a lot better. What drove me toward it is imagination. I chose it because of its flexibility. I chose it because I can tell it's a form of communication. Whenever I write something, when it comes to films, it doesn't necessarily have happy endings because I understand in the real world, there are no happy endings. In some occasions, there's happy endings. Then for journalism, I understand that we're not just in America. I understand there are all these people overseas. There are other problems. I think just understanding people emotionally has been really helpful. I feel I have a good understanding of the stories I tell because I see things in two ways. I can see things the American way and then I see it on the view from my home, like the culture I grew up in. As a journalist, it makes me more honest, understanding. I think it gave me the ability to think of both sides. I think that's the best way to balance my identities.

Maalgaliyayaasha Mustaqbalka / Investors in the Future

Sometimes my biggest problem as a kid was understanding what success was. My father would say success a lot. My mother would say success a lot. My neighbors would say success a lot. Everyone would say success, but what is success?

—Chowder

Success is defined not only by personal accomplishment but also by family and community accomplishment and has been defined by Chowder (and others) as being in a position to give back and help those in need. How do these young people attain success amid the challenges and barriers presented to them as Somali-Americans?

The ability of youth to thrive is part social capital. A recent study found that refugees in central Ohio do in fact have significant social capital, while other studies found human capital lacking among Somalis—because of limited education, language, knowledge, and skills, especially among those who left after the start of the civil war and those with family obligations—making integration difficult. The ability to stay within a highly-developed Somali network is a danger of chain migration. These networks are vital, not only for survival but also for developing a support network that addresses identity, emotional support, and financial needs. However, when these networks are primarily internal, their sustainability is affected. External networks are needed to move the community forward.

Overrepresentation on government support, which diminishes the ability to implement long-term financial planning, and the structural barriers intrinsic in American racial and socioeconomic stratification present significant challenges in achieving structural assimilation, equal access, and opportunity. Gender also contributes to these barriers, affecting whether or not race or religion becomes the dominant obstacle.

Velasco found first-generation Somalis to be highly resilient, and resiliency needs to be redefined for those who have not personally experienced the traumas of war and famine. Risk factors in the second-generation context include racial and religious discrimination, social isolation, cultural confusion, and lack of cultural competence resulting from multiple consciousness. However, the factors of resilience include education, the development of social literacies, and peer support, which often means finding a community among other Somali-Americans, Muslim Americans, and children of immigrants and refugees.

Amid the struggles and in response to the urges to perform, resist, and represent, individuals have found creative, resilient, and innovative responses.

Lataliyaal/Mentors

Mentorship in careers, education, and navigating identity negotiation as a Somali-American and Muslim American is key. Project participants are inviting youth into their businesses, speaking at the Somali Student Association, youth groups, and classrooms, and creating for others what they did not have. For example, Mohamed Rage gave a presentation about product design at the mosque; he influenced a young boy who knew that he liked drawing but didn't know how to use his creativity in a career. Mohamed brought the boy to his design studio so the youth could shadow him and see what it was like starting a business. Older siblings overwhelmingly see their role as role models, mentors, or being, as Ilhan describes it, "the lead camel" for their younger siblings in all aspects: education, career, and life, particularly in navigating multiple identities to avoid isolation and find a sense of belonging. Those who did have mentors express desire to reach out and give back, the way that they were helped, as in the case of Ibrahim, whose professor told him after writing a letter of recommendation, "I'm doing this for you, but you have to realize that when you're in my position, to not forget this. For you to do this for others." Isiah, Ibrahim, Hoda, Qorsho, and Mohamed Rage have all expressed a desire to, as Isiah states, "be that person in the community" through leadership and participation in organizations focused on mentorship and education.

Dulqaad/Tolerant

Isiah, 21, photographer and mechanic

[In diaspora] you're not just confined to your own community. You get to see that world outlook. You see different cultures, you learn tolerance and respect, and you get to appreciate what the world has to offer.

Isiah was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and moved to Columbus when his grandmother got her visa to America. He is an only child, raised by his mother and grandma. His father is African American and Christian. He spent four formative years in Kenya where he learned about Islam, Somali, and filmmaking. He began a photography page on Facebook, "Muslims of Ohio," in 2015. Through it, he hopes that people will see things in a different light, ask themselves questions, and bring about change within themselves. "You can't change what's on the outside until you change what's on the inside."

When I was growing up in Columbus, I never had a sense of responsibility. When I was twelve years old, I was sent to Kenya. When I went to Africa, my entire mentality changed. I saw people starving. I saw my neighbors didn't have running water or electricity. I'd always get money for break and lunchtime, and a lot of kids didn't have that. You'd see grown men, strong men, carrying gallons of water, like fifty gallons of water. Really strong men. You'd think that this person is uneducated, he can't go out and apply for a job. But he probably has a degree. The only thing he could do, the only form of work he could find is carrying water for people. He probably spent four years in college, and he doesn't have opportunities like we have.

I grew up believing that I'm American. Only American and nothing else. My name's Isiah Chillous. I'd belittle my Somali side. I always asked my mom, "What did Somalia invent? Did they invent the plane? Did they harness electricity? What'd they invent? Nothing." Until I actually went to Kenya, and saw what Somalis do, I didn't know who we were as a people. We're great business people. We have a lot of great traits. Getting to know my people at a personal level made me acknowledge my Somali roots.

My family emphasized education, but they couldn't go to college because they were working all the time. I didn't really get all the help I needed. I'm an only child, and my half brothers lived in different states, so I didn't have someone to help me in school. My father's side of the family is different. My dad entered the military after high school. His dad entered the military, and his dad entered the military. We're an army family. They all have college educations. My dad's sister, she's a doctor. I've seen how they live; I see how my Somali side lives. They're two different sides. I already chose my side.

Now I go to Columbus State. I'm studying automotive technology. That's just a means to an end. I want to make money through that, through fixing cars and from my photography. If you're a mechanic, you can go anywhere in the world and you know how to make money.

I'd say I started liking photography and film because my family gave me the opportunity to go back to Kenya in 2013. When I went there, I had an iPod. I took a whole bunch of pictures, great pictures, and when people started seeing the pictures, they're like, "Oh my God, you took this? That's amazing." I never thought too much about it. Before I left Kenya, I stopped by a film studio and I loved it. When I came back, I talked the masjid into getting a camera and I said that I'd do photography for MAS (Muslim American Society). They stood behind me when it came to actually getting the camera and when it came to spiritual upliftment...They're the type of people that will tell you, "This is what you're good at, then excel in it. Help society any way you can."

I wish I had somebody to tell me, "Do this, avoid that. This is going to save you time. This is how you're supposed to deal with your actors. This is how you're supposed to come up with your budget. This is how you're supposed to find your budget for your film." I wish I had a road map for all that. I didn't really have that.

What I've learned about myself is if I want to grow individually, I have to help people. If I want to grow spiritually and mentally and physically every day. Me personally, I can't see myself just living an individualistic lifestyle. For me, Isaiah, I've got to help people. I've got to help a greater cause than myself. That's what I've learned about myself.

Taageero/Support

Ibrahim, 27, anesthesiologist

I know a lot of people who were actually very intelligent who just didn't have the right mentorship. They didn't have people to look up to in a situation, and so they may have missed out on opportunities that they probably could have taken advantage of.

Ibrahim is the youngest of seven; he has three brothers and three sisters. He makes an effort to stay connected with his family and friends in England, Ohio, Minnesota, Toronto, and all the other Somali capitals in North America. His family expects him to be a good person and a good Muslim. He was born in New York.

We were in England for nine years. After the war, my father moved here to America. There was always the plan that we were all going to live in the same city together. When my older brothers and sisters got to college age, my father said there were some good schools here and that we should work on coming. I wasn't involved in any of the planning. I just remember one day we were here.

When I first moved to Columbus, there was just one car among our whole family. It was a four-door car, so not everyone could ride together at the same time. If we wanted to go somewhere, we had to make two trips, which we didn't do as much, but it worked out, Alhamdulillah. We lived in an apartment complex that was probably a mile away from one of the libraries. I remember walking that mile, and every couple of minutes or so, someone would pull over and offer to give us a ride, just because we were Somali. To ask us if we knew where we were going, if we needed any help.

When I came to America, I started middle school...[at a] a very multicultural school. There were other Somalis there, people from all sorts of countries. My English accent made me stand out. I remember I was asked to read a chapter in a book or something out loud in front of class. That's when I realized that I need to get rid of that accent pretty fast. Within the next year, it was gone. Then we moved and I think I was maybe one of two black kids in the entire school. That was new.

I didn't experience that again until my first year at Otterbein. I think I was the only minority in the chemistry department. That wasn't the reason why I transferred; actually, they were very welcoming. The original plan was for me to go to Ohio State, but my parents recommended me to go to a college with smaller class sizes, get more interaction with the professors in classes. A lot of my friends were at Ohio State. I used to play soccer with them regularly, so transferring to Ohio State was pretty smooth just because they showed me around. They pointed things out to

me that I would have struggled with if I would have come on my own. Then, I went to med school in Toledo, and now I'm back here for training.

There was one doctor who was kind of like a mentor to me, and he asked, "Before you went to med school, what was your idea of a doctor?"

Some people, when they think of a doctor, they think of the family practice guy that took care of them when they were younger, or they think about a surgeon, or they think about many different types of doctors. I never really had that specific type of doctor in my head until one day, I was working with this African American anesthesiologist. When she described the field to me and had me tag along with her for a day, I just knew then and there that this is what I wanted to do.

I think I'm so lucky in anesthesia because you help anyone. Someone comes into the hospital, not only surgery, any type of procedure, and we make sure the person's comfortable, give them some medication if they need it. We monitor them to make sure they do okay. Sometimes someone's not doing so well, and they'll call us to help. I think I'm so lucky to be in a position that, basically, from the moment I walk in the door, I can help out anyone.

Xurriyo/Independence

Hoda, 27, psychiatrist

Independence [is]...being able to be a professional and be a part of the community and have a voice without having necessarily being a part of someone else's identity. Have your own identity I think is what I've seen independence more of.

Hoda is a medical student at the University of Toledo, specializing in child psychiatry. She and her younger sister, Qorsho, were raised by their *hooyo*/mother, making their small family atypical among Somalis. Her uncle was a big part of their lives, teaching them Somali language and culture, and when their grandmother came in 2001, she taught her how to pray and wear the headscarf. Her *hooyo* did not expect them to conform to an ideal Muslim woman, but to get an education and be independent, values arising from migrating here by herself and losing her husband as a young woman.

We were born in Louisiana, and shortly thereafter we moved to Canada. We were there for four years or so, and my mom kind of felt like we weren't really getting the best experience there with the schools and it was more difficult for her to find a job. My uncle was living in Atlanta at the time, so we moved to Atlanta.

What I remember clearly is my sister and I coming home from school and my mom sitting us down at the dinner table. She would be doing something for herself, taxes or something like that, and then she'd have us sit down and do our homework. She would look over it. That's what I really remember, her actively making sure that we finished our homework, we understood it. I also remember during the summer, sometimes it was too hot to play outside, so my sister and I would make flashcards and teach ourselves multiplication or something like that. It was a lot of active learning that was really encouraged by my mom.

I personally never felt like I was poor growing up. We had a lot of opportunities to go outside, have fun, so we weren't really thinking about things that my mom was thinking about, which is that Atlanta is kind of a dangerous place, it's expensive. The schools were okay, but they're not the best...When we moved to Hilliard, it was kind of a shock because the schools were a lot better so I wasn't the superstar that I was in elementary school. I was just an average kid. I had to work harder, so I did. I really pushed myself. I did the AP classes and the advanced classes.

I think the turning point for that, for us, as I'm sure a lot of people would have experienced, was 9/11. On the outside I looked very Muslim, and then after 9/11, my mom thought I'd be safer if I just took my headscarf off, at least for a while because we weren't sure what was going on at the

time. That was when I really first experienced questions about everything and not really understanding who I was because I didn't look like the person I was the day before and I wasn't wearing a scarf. I think that was the first time I questioned everything.

I was very, very upset about having to take it off. I considered it as like an extension of myself. When I took it off, I kind of was wondering what was left of my identity as a Muslim woman. I had questions about it and I talked to my mom about it and we had discussions. She ended up not taking her scarf off, even though she had had threats at work. I just decided after a year that I wanted to put it back on.

I went to medical school at the University of Toledo. My experiences growing up definitely made me understand what some of the patients go through. I don't mean to generalize, but a lot of my classmates are from upper middle class in terms of socioeconomic status. They don't understand when we have patients who are on Medicare, Medicaid, or can't pay their bills, why they weren't able to make it to their doctor's appointment because they couldn't find a ride. Those kinds of things, those social issues, I feel like I have a better understanding of because I've experienced it or I know people who've gone through it.

I think access to health care is a very, very important point because there are resources. I'm not really sure why there's a gap still. Because of the language problems? That's maybe part of it because a lot of Somali people still even prefer to speak Somali even though they do speak English. I think more what has to do with it is just that stigma. Because once you make that jump of going to see someone, you're acknowledging that there is a problem and that it's real and it's not just in that person's head. I think that Somalis might be aware of it, but I don't think they want to go to that step until they absolutely need to. By that point, it might be too late.

I'm interested in helping Somalis, but I think more importantly, I'm just more interested in helping people who have mental health issues whether or not they're Somali, whether or not they're poor or rich. Having greater access to that. Becoming some sort of physician, having an outpatient practice, seeing patients. I think long-term management is very much lacking and not just in the Somali community, but in other communities as well. That's the place that I would start.

Waxbarid/Educate

Qorsho, 26, educator and community activist/researcher

I educate beyond my capacity. My mom calls it, *miro dhaliso* which basically means I sow seeds. I cultivate them but they have the power and the means to grow.

Qorsho is an educator and researcher in the Somali community. Her mother instilled in her a strong sense of independence and faith, something that, Qorsho describes, “no one can really disrupt or dismantle. I honestly think that the strongest people in the world, and I’m not meaning physical strength but mentally, whatever they’ve endured through life, have faith.” Her faith has informed her work, particularly in the form of charity, by giving back to those who don’t have the means to provide for themselves. This is evident in a long list of community involvement, beginning around 9/11 when she started teaching people about what it was like to be Muslim and American. From that point on, she used whatever resources and power she had to make a difference—first as a volunteer with the Somali Bantu community, then as an AmeriCorps volunteer with at-risk kindergarteners, then as a Fulbright teacher in Malaysia, and now as a third-grade teacher at Cesar Chavez College Preparatory School in Columbus.

I think my experiences growing up have made me very much appreciate the hard work that my mother put into our upbringing. I was raised in an area where the people who lived there were very affluent, and I had the opportunity to go to Hilliard City Schools. Thinking about that in my adult years has really given me the opportunity to realize that I probably wouldn’t be right here if I didn’t go to those schools. I think about the privilege that I’ve had going to suburban schools and how that’s led me to The Ohio State University. Basically, pursuing education because I truly believe that no matter where you live you should get the best education and resources, and enforcing that as a reality.

I think that people assume that everyone has the same rights to education, but the truth of the matter is that’s not the case. My family, particularly my mother and my uncle, fought really hard for that success to be attainable for my sister and I. They made sure that we were involved in many activities, and I remember my mom, when we first moved to Hilliard, she knew that we would be anomalies, because we were one of the first Somali families. She made sure that while we were being integrated into the school, into the suburban life coming from inner city schools, that we also retained our culture. Granted, I still went through a phase where I questioned my identity, but I never got to the point where I either didn’t see myself as Somali or didn’t see myself as American.

My mom made sure that there was a balance, and whether that was at home instilling the cultural values through food and language or whatever, but also making sure that we got the religious component like going to dugsi, and then being very involved in the American life as well. Watching TV and playing outside and doing all of these things that were quintessentially American, so it was a good balance and she made sure of that.

I think that your twenties are for making mistakes and figuring out who you are. I have a better understanding of my family, that component has always been there. Education's coming around full circle being a teacher, but I still struggle with not the identity portion of who I am, but where I see myself.

A lot of the times I think about what I want to do in ten years or twenty years. I don't see myself being complacent. I don't see myself staying necessarily here in Columbus or even in America. I don't know where in the world I might end up, but I just know that I'm not going to stay in one place or even one field. I don't see myself being a teacher for very long. That always shocks people when I say that. I really want to write children's books, bilingual children's books that are very much necessary and needed in the community. I see myself doing a lot of outreach work for young women who live in Somalia, either some sort of youth program or even facilitating an all-girl Somali school...I would like to say that my role in the community first of all as a young Somali female is that I'm not afraid to be heard or seen in whatever capacity that is. I think when people see me they say, "Macalin Qorsho," which means Teacher Qorsho. They basically appreciate and are respecting my role as a teacher, but I think that I educate beyond that role, or educate beyond my capacity.

Hopefully, I'm seen as someone who is trying to shed light on the positive work of young Somalis, but also bring light to the changes that need to happen and the challenges that we need to overcome. There's a balance and I think that's really important, that we have a balanced perspective. It's not one sided, we're just not saying the Somali community is roses, because no community is. We do have our thorns, but we need to be actively removing them, in whatever, whichever, way we can. I feel like I do that in my own way, every day.

Sharaf/Integrity

Mohamed Rage, 27, industrial designer and co-founder of Five ID

We literally learned everything on our own. We're product designers, and business is on the opposite end of the spectrum...there's no deceit involved. We don't try to undercut or try to get one over anyone.

Mohamed Rage was born in Somalia and has eight brothers and three sisters. His family instilled in him the importance of staying connected with *deen/culture*, while also having a sense of balance with school, work, and his environment. His father and his older brothers were the ones to make sure that he was doing the right thing. Their involvement is what Mohamed cites as the difference that has helped him succeed.

I was eleven at the time when we first arrived in America, and it wasn't that big of transition for me personally. How do I describe the experience? Overall it was good. I didn't have any big issues that I struggled with other than coming to terms with cultural norms, a new way of thinking, basically the American dream, and learning good enough English to communicate with my peers, neighbors, and classmates. Coming from a predominantly Islamic country, we adapted to our new environment, culture, and language and our sense of tolerance and understating of people from different faiths, cultures, and ethnicities grew as well.

Just like every Somali kid, you go through identity crisis, especially in high school. The last two years are the most pivotal. It's when you figure out who you are and where you're headed. Depending on your friends, it can be good or bad. A lot my friends from school started going in different directions. Some started smoking, drinking, clubbing, and eventually robbing. Some had the sense to stay on track and not get involved. The group that did not stay on track went down an unfortunate path, which landed five of them in jail: two serving four-year sentences and the other three serving nine. One of them recently came out, and I realized then that no matter what, friends you grow up with will always be friends, no matter the circumstance.

In some ways, the community also serves as second parents. For example, when we were in high school, a group of friends and I would go up north to just run around and have some fun while hoping to not run into anybody that knows me or my family. However, that's not always the case. Sometimes you unexpectedly run into them and they bombard you with questions. "What are you doing out here? What are you up to? Why are you hanging around these people?"

Everything starts at home. My parents kept me balanced. My mother would often emphasize the importance of prayer and would say, "Make sure you pray and make sure you fear God. Don't do anything harmful to yourself or to anyone." My father, on the other hand, was more, "Get an education." Growing up, I didn't understand why he valued education that much. After I entered

college is when I understood why. It was because he never received a formal education, because growing up he had to work and put food on the table. He wanted his children to be as educated as possible and vicariously lived through each one. Whenever one of us graduated, you could see how proud he was as a parent. You saw a smile on his face that said, "I accomplished something. I made sure that they got the education I never received."

Growing up, Mohamed was always drawing. He would write and illustrate short stories and draw cartoon characters. After graduating high school, he didn't know that he could use his creativity to make money or have a career. He tried engineering, behavioral medicine, and architecture, and when he came to Ohio State, he applied for the product design program. He was one of nineteen accepted out of 109 applicants. He and a group of four other design students invented the TITAN Mixer Bottle, the first no-shake mixer bottle, which raised over \$66,000 from 2,000 backers on Kickstarter, and now has work orders for more than 3,000 bottles. Together they formed the design studio, Five ID Studio. His core values, especially including honesty, play a role in his business dealings, and Mohamed subsequently makes a conscious decision to make sure there is no deceit and that he delivers the best product possible.

Dhismaha Bulshada / Building Community

I believe that the Somali community, to be better than we are now, what we've got to do is actually make the community, community.

—Isiah

Participants describe their vision for their future community as more involved in politics, higher education, health care, business, law enforcement, and other forms of public service. They see more institutions dedicated to the growth of the Somali community, such as a museum and school run by Somalis, for Somalis. They see the importance of education, and using that education to give back. They see the necessity of developing a diversity of careers, skills, new ideas, and approaches to community building and progress. They see the importance of cultivating political leaders from a new generation of individuals, both men and women. They see the change potential, using words such as *pride, stability, coalition, dialogue, welcoming* and *understanding, awareness, united, bigger, active, wealthier, and progressive*.

There are many ideas, complications, and challenges: new leadership, dynamics between diaspora and Somalia, and a desire to create unity among a diverse people. At the basis of all these ideas is moving forward as a community, based on a shared sense of being Somali, what Ilhan describes as “seeing ourselves really begin to act in accordance with the kind of strong social bondage that I think I grew up thinking was synonymous with being a Somali and begin to hold each other up instead of working as individuals.” Working together to be more active, to have a voice, to be more involved, to be better Americans, Somalis, Muslims, men, and women.

Community building is an approach in which neighbors work together on concrete tasks that take advantage of collective and individual assets and build human and social capital to create a strong and equitable foundation for the future. Among the seven themes of community building identified by Kingsley, McNeely, and Gibson, which we expand within the diaspora context, values, collaboration, and community assets were among the most important.

Community building entails specific improvement initiatives carried out in a manner that reinforces values. For our participants, these values come from family, culture, and religion and include helping others, showing respect, honesty, connectedness to *bulshada*/community of Somalis, and trust. Experiences specific to 1½- and 2nd-generation Somali-Americans contribute values of balance, independence, open-mindedness, and diversity. These values inform the work of each participant—from Mohamed Rage’s

business decisions and Hoda and Ibrahim's approach to health care to Ilhan's community activism and Nima's perspectives on economic justice.

These initiatives are community driven with broad resident involvement. Community leaders work to build strong internal networks, both locally and within the diaspora. Building social-capital networks created and sustained transnationally, nationally, and locally are particularly important within diaspora as internal networks help spread news of jobs, affordable housing, and offer support upon arrival or during hardship such as the death of a family member. Because families are spread across the world, these networks are quite complex—money, ideas, resources, and people moving between locations and across national borders.

However, as we've seen in Columbus, internal networks are not sufficient for building communities. Highly developed internal networks can lead to isolation for newcomers, limiting the activation of strong social capital and inhibiting participation in local communities. Thus, engagement with local, national, and transnational communities is important. Initiatives must be collaborative with broader society to strengthen community institutions and enhance outside opportunities. These activities fit within different categories. Some educate and inform. Others inspire and mobilize individuals and groups to action. Yet others nurture and heal people and their communities. Still, some build and improve community capacity or infrastructure. Moving beyond ethnic boundaries is vital for community growth, as Roble and Rutledge found with the Somali community in Minneapolis, and recognition of the multiple ways to frame and activate community, based on shared experiences or online, for example, strengthens these external networks.

Finally, community assets are one of the most important elements of community building. Identifying and maximizing individual and community assets are, as both Nima and Ilhan have expressed, the ways to best help others. Participants identified six major assets within the Somali community in Columbus, including:

1. A strong sense of community and a willingness to help out.
2. Size. As the largest immigrant group in central Ohio, and the second largest Somali population in the United States, Columbus's Somali population has the advantage of size. Politicians recognize this, and harnessing this power is challenging because of divisions between generations, tribes, ethnic groups, and race.
3. An entrepreneurial spirit, which is seen especially in the large number of businesses started by recent arrivals and women.
4. The youth, who have great energy, the power to create change, and are multicultural. Several participants were quick to acknowledge, however, the important role that elders play in effecting change in the community and passing on history, culture, and traditions.
5. Community resources such as businesses, community spaces, mosques, community leaders.

6. *Somalinimo*, a shared sense of belonging, which for many young Somali-Americans has come to represent a shared set of values based on a shared community and culture.

Urur Dhex-Dhexaad Ah: Community In-Between itself is a form of arts-based community development: training young artists; centering stories; creating resources to provide mentors to youth; working with youth and young adults to identify assets, challenges, and barriers; and utilizing stories and images to prompt community conversation and unity.

Urur Dhex-Dhexaad Ah: Community In-Between combines significant elements of ownership, authorship, and participation to work toward community improvements.

Hoggamiyaal/Leaders

The following individuals are among the first Somalis to begin new initiatives that set a tone for leadership among young Somali-Americans. This tone is defined by a unique list of qualifying attributes derived from their values and experiences: passion, advocate, network, justice, understanding, tolerance, guidance, independence, educate, integrity, advocate, community, humility, self-awareness, knowledge, and respect. We have used these words to title each of the fifteen stories and collectively create a model of success and how it is achieved for youth to follow.

Jaaliyadda/Community

Ilhan, 23, Fulbright recipient, Rhodes scholar, and writer

I really don't think we can underestimate how important it is for young people to feel their own power, especially when its organized and when its toward a large scale that isn't just for them or their community, it's for the communities around them and down the line.

Ilhan is the oldest of four girls, including her younger sister Nima. Her mother is an educator, teacher, and a librarian. Her father, a former social worker, is interested in the ways that government and people interact positively with each other. Her family taught her the value of justice and seeking it out.

Ever since I was little, my mom would remind me of a Somali saying: "Wherever the lead camel goes, the rest will follow." She was reminding me of my role in the family. She was letting me know that my first-born status meant that I was always setting the example for my younger sisters. I came to appreciate the expectation that my family had for me, the reminders they often gave me to be critical, the example I want to set, and ultimately the kind of woman I want to become. Hopefully, a woman constantly working hard to improve herself and her community.

So much of who I am as a person is shaped by the Somali community, the Muslim community, but also just being in Ohio, a midwestern state, a previously industrial state. I think all that has to do with who I am as a person, in shaping who I am. My interest in justice, my interest in workers' rights, in labor, in immigration, in refugee issues are all so deeply shaped by Ohio that I can't imagine having been raised anywhere else or being from anywhere else.

When I was maybe fourteen years old, my mom said to me, "You know, Ilhan, you're a woman and you are black so you're going to have to work harder than everybody else to get to where they are." I got angry with her. I remember asking, "Why would you say that?" You're setting my expectations so low; I can do just as much as anyone else and it doesn't matter that I'm a woman." She said, "I'm just letting you know how the world is and you can be angry if you want as long as you're also aware."

I remember having a big argument with her and then walking into school fuming. Looking back on it now, I think I was reacting so strongly because she was right; she was verbalizing something that I've always felt as a woman in the Somali community. The expectations were always higher for me than for the men in my community. I was also noticing the same pattern with all the other communities that I was around—that young women were always feeling like they are being held to a standard that the young men in their community just weren't held to. I think women are asked to prove themselves over and over and over again. Even when we get to some

of the higher levels, we're asked to prove ourselves amongst our peers. My mother is without a doubt the wisest woman I've ever met and I often feel overwhelmed with gratitude that God saw it fit to make me her daughter. The conversation outside of my high school was only one of many where she affirmed my feeling but also prepared me for the reality waiting for me outside of her eyesight.

Ilhan's Muslim identity has always been a huge part of who she is, part of the fabric of her being. At fifteen, she attended an interfaith leadership camp in upstate New York where she got to know Muslims from all over the world. "That was the moment where my Muslim identity was widened and I began to really feel a part of the global community of Muslims that look and practice differently than I do." When she went to college, that idea of strength through diversity was even more amplified. In 2015, she spent a year in Izmir, Turkey, on a Fulbright grant to teach English to university students. Being in a majority Muslim country was a challenge because of the assumption of homogeneity, and it highlighted for her the importance of critical thinking in her faith practice. The primary conflict in Ilhan's life while growing up was between her different identities—her Muslimness, Americanness, and Somaliness. But now she sees her ability to speak to all those experiences simultaneously as the gift of social literacy.

Ilhan graduated from The Ohio State University in 2015, where she was involved in community activism through the Ohio Student Association. She is currently a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University studying refugee and forced migration studies and global governance and diplomacy with the world. During her Fulbright year, she spent time learning about the government's role in moving refugees and reintroducing them to communities. She hopes to use these experiences to play a role in effectively reintroducing refugees into communities that helps them not only survive but also thrive.

A lot of things that my parents and my grandparents didn't say, but that I was able to pick up as a child from their life, motivated me to do the kind of work that I do now. For instance, my grandmother was a single mother in Somalia and she was raising an entire household on her own. My father, being the oldest, started working when he was very young, eleven or twelve, and he was able to find a scholarship for himself to the United States. Each of them, they don't talk about their accomplishments or the work that they did as individuals almost ever. They always talk about the ways that their communities helped them, helped to create the safety net that they needed, and gave them the resources or the scaffolding to hold them up. Whenever I hear their stories from that perspective, I understand the necessity and the absolute imperative for us to work toward creating societies and communities that are going to hold individuals up. Because if it weren't for those communities, my grandmother wouldn't have had the resources to educate my father and his siblings. My father wouldn't have had the resources to come to the United States and try to build a life for himself here. In each of these cases, I hear their individual stories, but it's echoing off the walls of all the people that helped bring them there.

Edeb/Humility

Shukri, 21, Franklin County sheriff's deputy

I kind of just want to do it for the whole community, and make the whole community proud and have a voice for everyone else. I wanted to be ... the bridge between law enforcement and the community.

Shukri was born in Somalia, and came to the United States with his parents and two brothers when he was four years old. He spent his elementary years in Minnesota and came to Columbus when he was in the fifth grade. He grew up in Hilliard, a suburb of Columbus with a small-town feel. "I did what every young kid would do, and that's go to school, play sports, play football growing up."

Shukri's parents are both religious, something that they passed down to Shukri. "Even now, this day, I can always become a better Muslim. I don't like always using words to defend myself, it's kind of more my actions. I always try to tell people, if you show with your actions how you really are then that's the true definition of the religion or yourself. That's the one thing I emphasize. Words is words, but actions—it's like no one can ever doubt you." And his actions support his words. In 2015, Shukri became Franklin County's first Somali sheriff's deputy. Being the first Somali in law enforcement has put him in a leadership position, one that he has accepted with a humility, honesty, integrity, and a hard-working attitude.

When I first found out we didn't have any Somali police officers in Columbus, I was like, "Really?" At the time I was nineteen years old. I'm like, "How is that possible? I know people who've been here for fifteen, maybe twenty years!" I would think there was people ahead of me that were a lot older that would have done it. A lot of people might not want to do it just because, back home, people are scared of police officers, just because it's either corrupt or they don't know how to treat actual citizens. I can see how they could come here and don't want to be a police officer.

It's mistrust. People don't trust the police officers here just because they're used to what they had back home. You don't think about that, but that is one of the biggest reasons why Somalis have an issue with authority is because of what they remember.

I was like, "Why can't it be me? I'll be the first one." Not only for myself, but for my family. I kind of just want to do it for the whole community and make the whole community proud and have a voice for everyone else.

My parents are always expecting something high, because they didn't sacrifice coming to America for no reason. They left their families, brothers, sisters, their own parents for us to have a better life. They always expect us to do something that's going to pay off the reason why they came here. When I graduated from the Franklin County Sheriff's Academy, they were so proud! I've never seen them smile that big. Especially being the first Somali deputy, it's something big. The community was proud of me as well because we actually have something to be proud of and not always some people saying negative stuff about the community. Our kids are actually doing something good and not something bad.

In the future, hopefully, I get out of corrections and have a bigger voice and do stuff for the community just because I want to better the community. I don't have to even get paid for it, I just want to do it to feel good about myself and knowing that I'm helping other people out.

Kalsoon/Self-Awareness

Nadira, 26, registered nurse

Often times we teach our girls and our women in general that it is all about the family, it's all about doing stuff for others but we need to remind them, you need to take care of yourself before you can take care of anyone else...Girls can be doctors. They can help the world, they can help heal people.

Nadira is one of nine siblings, including her twin sister. Her parents have been married for over thirty-five years and, through their example, taught her the importance of family—putting trust in God, education, and respect—and taking advantage of opportunities. Her family migrated from Buloburde, Somalia, in December 2000, when Nadira was twelve years old.

In the diaspora, you miss out on growing up with a community that knows you. I remember growing up, our holidays, Eid, the whole community celebrated. And the fact that you didn't feel that you were alone. There are things that, being here, you realize that the fact that you are Muslim, you are different from other people. Back home, you didn't realize that because everyone was the same. We spoke the same language. We ate the same food. Having that culture, knowing where your ancestors came from, their history, and just knowing, you miss out on that growing up here. You miss out on the small stuff that you don't realize is important, like hearing the adhan when they call for prayers.

When I first came here, me and my sister, we got bullied just for being different. I remember after we ate lunch we would have recess, we would go outside. We would always stand next to the door, so when the door opens after recess we would go in, because if we didn't, they would push us, pull our scarf. Being there made me realize how different I was. That it doesn't matter what you do, you can never fit into a culture that doesn't want you.

Honestly, I didn't start feeling comfortable until I got to college. I remember freshman year was the first time I started liking reading. The first time I read a whole book by myself from front to back. It was called "A Child Called It." It is based on a true story about a kid who got abused by his mother, it was such a beautiful story. That was the first book that introduced me to the world of reading and it made me also realize that I had a long way to go.

Since the age of six, Nadira attended Islamic school. As a freshman in college, she explored other religions because she believes that although she was born a Muslim and Islam is her religion, she wanted her faith to be something she decided. "If I was going to say I was a Muslim, I was going to say that I chose to be a Muslim. No one chose it for me. I feel like I understand Islam more. Looking and comparing it with other religions just reiterated to me

that Islam is the true religion. It's a religion that fits my life, that it gives me the reason to wake up every day and move on because I know that there is a greater reward after this."

I think one of the things that Islam teaches is respect, respecting others, giving others their respect. There's an ayat/verse in the Qur'an where it says, "Say you are a non-Muslim. I'm a Muslim. You have your religion. I have mine. Now you be on your way and let me be on mine."² That's one of my favorite surahs/chapters in the Qur'an because I felt like in my field personally that's something that I have to do. I've met patients that are completely different than me. Islam teaches me to show respect despite what they think of me. So that's in one way just being open minded, respecting other people's choice and knowing that at the end of the day it's not my responsibility to correct others. God is holding them accountable for their actions.

When Nadira first began college, she knew she wanted to do something in health care, and quickly realized that she wanted not only to heal people but get to know them as well. She followed in her mother's footsteps and chose nursing. She now works at a local hospital and has practiced as a traveling nurse. The experience of nursing in third-world countries has imparted Nadira with the importance of health education and the opportunities she, and others, have as Americans. She feels it is her responsibility to create a bridge between health care providers and the Somali community. Additionally, she sees it as imperative to educate her community on taboo topics, like sex education, HIV/AIDS, and sexually transmitted diseases, and to provide a support system for those dealing with illness that carries stigmas. She has presented on breast assessment, reproductive health, menstrual cycles, and sex education at *halaqa*, a women's group that meets at the *masjid*. Nadira's mother talked about these topics with her, but Somalis and Muslims in general "don't really talk about sex. As a nurse, I feel that you need to educate your children. That education gives them power, especially our girls. The good thing about our younger generation is that they want to learn." Experiences with patients have also reinforced the importance of action.

I remember when I was in orientation, on duty, and a patient came from ER. He got rolled in the room, and his nurse was busy so I told them I would go in and help get him settled. Well, my little friend wasn't happy. He told me, "You're a terrorist, get the heck out of my room. What's that thing on your head? Don't come in here." He started going off so I left and told his nurse. It turned out that he was a rescuer at 9/11...A few days after, he came to me and apologized. He explained where he was coming from and I was like, "Okay."

My actions showed him that I wasn't what he assumed me to be, and personally it was a moment that made me realize I need to be really careful about my actions and I should try to educate people more. That was the one incident that I guess really defined how I interact with the patients that are really flat out rude, who will question everything....That patient helped me realize that my actions speak louder than my words. I had the opportunity to walk away. I could have just ignored him the times he came to find me. I could have just completely blocked him.

² Qur'an 109:2-5: "I do not worship that which you worship nor do you worship which I worship."

But I didn't. It made me realize that he probably had stuff going on but I shouldn't be judgmental, that I should be more open and just let it go.

All my experiences, growing up, being a traveling nurse, made me want to be a better nurse. It made me want to make sure that those that don't have voices that their voices are being heard. It also made me realize how important it is that I work for those that especially do not know the language because I've been there, my family has been there. We have faced discrimination just because we didn't know how to speak English. We were different. More than anything, it made me an advocate, advocating for others, and it empowered me in a way just to help others, and just to see that people that need help in general.

Cilmiga/Knowledge

Chowder the Poet, 18, poet and student

I think a lot of my knowledge that I have, if I have any of, it comes from just my life, my background, and a little bit of it comes from school. Most of it comes from my parents, where I grew up, my environment, America, and back home. There's a lot of things that I know today based on just what I have seen and what I've heard.

Chowder the Poet was dubbed Chowder, after the cartoon character, by friends when he wore a purple *qamis*/tunic. He added “the Poet” to his Twitter handle in 2015. The quest for knowledge guides his life. The hadith, “whether it’s of a good thing to do or a bad thing to avoid, God will make him easy a road to have it”³ was something that always stuck in my mind, that I always applied to my daily life.” In addition to being a student, he has spent the past two years working with Ask a Muslim, an initiative to educate people about Islam. His ability to give voice and talk to people has made him successful in this endeavor and his pursuits as a burgeoning spoken-word poet. He is the third born of seven children, the third role model for his younger siblings.

I was born in Garissa, a minor city, a very hot place, that’s a little bit off the border of Somali and Kenya. Then the family relocated back to the refugee camp for a little bit. Growing up in a refugee camp was very simple. There was no school. There was not much, except for dugsi, which was every day. I just liked being at home and hanging out with my mom and also herding sheep. I loved the idea of just going with the sheep and taking them to a place where the green is and letting them eat. Then coming back home at around sunset time and just drinking my tea and going to sleep really early.

Then, when I was seven, we made a trip to the capital of Kenya, Nairobi, and we stayed there for the better part of that year. When we moved to Nairobi, we started going to school. We started doing multiple things to not-on-purpose get us ready for the American lifestyle, where you have to do school and you’re taught a lot of responsibility and that sort of thing as a child.

Then we flew to America. We came straight to Columbus, Ohio. July 11, 2006, ten years in America. It’s a pretty big deal for us.

My ESL teacher, Mrs. Reese, at East Linden Elementary School, she helped me a lot with learning big words like commencement or disenfranchisement. For a person who’s new to America in

³ Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith No. 225 “Whoever follows a path in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise.”

ESL, learning synonyms and acronyms was very difficult at first. Then, once I got the hang of it, I started learning how to rhyme words and how to put things into certain sentences. I think that's where I got my love for the English language, from Mrs. Reese.

Chowder continues the practice of poetry deeply rooted in Somali culture. His grandmother did freestyle poetry with lots of cadence, and upon discovering Chowder was writing poetry in English, his father started showing him Somali poems. Chowder draws from his experiences growing up and his surroundings to write, often from a general viewpoint, so that other diaspora youth can relate. Reading is a major source of his learning, and when a word or two catches his attention, he writes it down and starts a poem. Last summer, he wrote six poems a day, and over 190 that winter. Many begin with the same two lines and have completely different endings, a process that he has found keeps him on his toes creatively. Chowder dreams of inspiring people to make a difference through his words, as he writes in an untitled poem:

*Every time I'm deep in contemplation I have this aspiration
to be the inspiration to those who will change the whole globe and all its nations.*

He performed publicly for the first time in 2015 at The Ohio State University. One of the poems he performed, "Mom and Dad," details some lessons learned from his parents.

I saw the number of people that were there. There were people on the roof and everything. When I got on the stage, I grabbed the mic and I froze. My legs started twitching and I was like, "Should I get off the podium and stand right there and speak?" Then I'm like, "If I do that, I'm going to fall." I go back, put the mic right back on the podium and I started just doing my poetry. I was really nervous that day and I didn't know there was 1,400 people until after I got off the stage.

I wrote this poem a while back called "Refugee Reflections." When I performed that poem, I had to improvise because of that crowd.

*If you truly feel that a man's mind is your greatest weakness then you are so insecure
You fight with weapons so impure
That you made me feel like
In seconds my innocence is gone with my inner sense I sense my consciousness is gone
As a reconnaissance a new place to call home*

That was supposed to be the end of it, "a new place to call home," but I added two lines at the end when I noticed who was watching and listening. Some of them were immigrants. So I said,

*. . . my innocence is gone with my inner sense I sense my consciousness is gone
As a reconnaissance a new place to call home
They told me home is where the heart is
But sometimes I feel like my own heart departed*

Ixtiraamka/Respect

Muhamed A., 31, founder of Somali Youth Foundation and ambassador for Walaal Afuri in Columbus

Respect all mankind, all human being, no matter which faith or which race they are from. Respect all religion and respect the elders, and of course, if you can, if you can help poor people, no matter what help.

Muhamed A. is the second youngest in a large family who taught him the value of respect and to help no matter what. He grew up in Ethiopia and Kenya, where “there was nothing to do, no school. Playing with my friends and nothing else because there were not a lot of opportunities.” His two brothers and sister were the first to come to Columbus in 2000, and five years later, they sponsored their parents and Muhamed, who in turn sponsored his brother and sister in 2007. He was almost nineteen years old.

When I was coming here, I didn't know anything. I didn't know what to do in the beginning but I got my first job in America. Rental car service agent. And then I went to school. I started from scratch until I got my college degree. I started early 2007 at Columbus State Community College. There I spent three years and then I transferred my credits to Ohio State University, where I graduated in 2012. My major was International Studies, minor in Political Science. I've always admired and been interested in what's going on around the world, especially politics and how other countries and how many countries develop and how a lot of countries did not develop.

My family always wanted me to go to school and to educate myself, especially my older brother who brought us to USA. I've listened to his advice, I admire him, and of course I have to respect, he's the older brother. I went to school because of him. My mom and dad always wanted me to become a sheik, or a mullah, as you say. Alhamdulillah I finished the Qur'an and I've also respected what they actually wanted me to do but never became the sheik that they wanted me to become.

Although I was born in Somalia and grew up most of my life in Africa, I've been here almost eleven years. I've already become a citizen. I consider myself as a Somali-American. You have to balance both of them. You have to remember and respect your culture, the Somali culture, and you have to follow whatever it teaches—and also you have to respect and have the American culture as well. Having both of them together is always good.

As a young Somali boy, who grew up Ethiopia, Kenya, and America and has never been to Somalia, it is always very hard to attain our ancestral culture, or actually to continue. When I was young, back five, seven, eight years ago, I never, to be honest with you, liked to follow the

footsteps of my father and my ancestral cultures. But especially when I went back to Somalia, I've learned that our culture is very rich. It's dynamic. I went to the villages. I talked to the elders, both men and women. You learn a lot of things, especially if you go and see the camel, goats, cattle, and everything. How they live. The house that they live around, no AC, no electricity, no water, no nothing, and they are happy. They believe in their faith and they believe in their culture and it's Mash Allah.

Muhamed went to Somalia in 2012, working as an educational officer building schools. He visited an Internally Displaced People (IDP) camp during Ramadan and found that those living there hadn't had food for almost eight months, despite the UN's World Food Program presence. He went back to his office and shared this story on Facebook. Friends started sending \$50 or \$100 or whatever they could from Columbus, Europe, and elsewhere. Muhamed recorded when he presented the money to the poor and posted it on social media. While Muhamed collected money from Somalia, Facebook friends in London started Walaal Afuri to give *iftar*/breaking fast meal during Ramadan to those who need it. Now Muhamed helps run the Walaal Afuri program in Columbus, and there are projects everywhere in the Western world, including Australia, UK, Canada, and the United States, which compete in raising money. The volunteers that make up Walaal Afuri were so successful raising money that in 2015, the minister of information of the Somali Federal Republic congratulated the youth in London and Columbus for their work. Despite having a smaller diaspora population than Minneapolis and London, Columbus has raised more money in two of the past three years, a generosity that the London folks have acknowledged.

I think it is a step forward. The Somali youth never participated in a good way for the first time, but we are participating in a good way. We are actually helping. Although I think, we are taking over the elders' job. They are supposed to do this job, but they are not doing anything. They are not helping their fellow Somalis in Somalia. We are actually filling the gap, and we are stepping up and here we are bridging the gap.

What I do for the community right now is actually what always my parents taught me. Help your colleagues, your country, especially the poor people. In fact, when I told them I'm going to Somalia to help the poor people, they actually liked it. They let me go back and help the vulnerable folks who live in IDP camps in Dollow, and they admired my work. They used to call me every other day, congratulating me for what I'm doing. Every one of us has a responsibility, especially the Somali youth who graduated from higher education. And if you can, you have to contribute back, no matter what. We have to.

Ka danbeeya goobta / Behind the Scenes

Urur Dhex-Dhexaad Ah: Community In-Between is a community arts project that values collaboration with community members, education toward social justice, and a belief that research should lead to action, whether through the development of policies benefiting communities, increased knowledge and understanding, or empowerment. Following the tradition of documentary practices as a medium to research and present diaspora and migration histories, including Somali diaspora,⁴ the use of photovoice in participatory action research, the prevalence of stories within Somali culture, and the effectiveness of stories to connect, inform, persuade, and transform thinking, we used both oral history interview and environmental portraiture to share the stories of our participants.

In July 2016, Dublin Arts Council hosted a three-day photography workshop. This workshop was part of a scholarship awarded to three high school Somali girls that also included a Canon Rebel T6 and the opportunity to have their work published. The workshop was led by Riya Jama and emphasized technical skills, building self-esteem, and becoming vulnerable with the camera. Riya worked to empower the girls encouraged a “big sister” approach. Following the workshop, the community artists took these skills and utilized them in photography sessions with the participants.

⁴ Some examples include Demos, *Migrant Image*; Grossman and O’Brien, *Projecting Migration*; Glenn Jordan’s Somali Elder Project; Lehrer and Sloan, *Crossing the BLVD*; Roble and Routledge, *Somali Diaspora*; Smith’s Durmarka Soomaaliyeed Voices Unveiled; and Tariq Tarey’s visual ethnography.

Riya Jama

Farxiya Maxamed Cabduallahi Jaamac (Riya Jama) is a Toronto-based diasporic visual storyteller, whose art centers on reclaiming her narrative. She is invested in her *somalinimo* and creating spaces where she sees herself reflected, especially in the world of science fiction, by using words and visuals to “throw black girl into space.” One painful conversation with her dad launched her dedication to creating spaces for black and Somali girl representations.

Harry Potter introduced me as a young girl to the power of creating an entire universe with my art. I remember I was really young and I went to my father. I think I was on the fifth book, and I just felt this incredible pain in my chest. I love Harry Potter. I love what Harry Potter represents, like the underdog winning above all odds. I love the fact that it's mythical. I love that fact that my favorite creature, the phoenix, was in it. I just love so many elements of it. But at the same time, I am a black girl seeing no representation.

I just went to my dad. “Aabo, this really hurts. Even in these fake worlds, I don't exist. Where do I exist?” I remember telling him I don't feel like I belong anywhere. The media's telling me I don't exist. And in these mythical, fantastic worlds, I also am not present. Where do I belong? Who cares? Who gives a damn about this little black girl who's into these worlds, who's into dragons? Why am I not in space? You know what I mean?

My dad, he let me cry. He let me rage. He let me vent. And then at the end he goes, “I'm going to tell you something and you're probably not going to like it. When J. K. Rowling wrote these stories she wasn't thinking of you. If you want to see your narrative being represented, then you should consider creating that because that's how all great stories start. It comes from this hunger. Hunger to see a story being told.”

Toni Morrison said, “If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.” At that time, he shared this advice through tough love to remind me that it is not her responsibility, this white woman, to represent a black girl. You have to reclaim your narrative. Ever since then, I've just been really obsessed with creating stories about my existence.

Now I've created this empire of every type of reflection of black girl. One of my favorite pieces is this one I did of Serena Williams using a picture from her Vogue campaign where she was holding the ball in one hand and she was holding the racket in the other and she was getting ready to serve. She's looking directly at the camera, so it's like this very aggressive, dominant expression. So I put Serena on top of the surface of a moon and behind her is space, like all the stars, and also behind her is earth. That is so powerful, especially as a black girl seeing this, because you're literally seeing this black, amazing champion, this Olympian, this winner of everything there is to win in tennis, in her field, who's a legend, a living icon who's on top of a moon and behind her is earth and the caption is “I'm going to take over the universe, so get

ready." That is important to me. I like to think that when a black girl looks at my page, all my art pages, that she will feel at home and she will feel empowered.

Community Artists

Faduma is a senior at Westerville Central High School. Her father and uncle, local photographer Tariq Tarey, introduced photography to her at a young age and ever since, it captured her imagination. When she was growing up, Faduma's father would set up his tripod and a couple of lamps in the living room to ask her questions for mock interviews. As Faduma got older, she watched those years of interviews and saw how she grew from a child to a young woman. Currently, she enjoys taking pictures of friends, fashion, senior pictures, using locations around downtown Columbus and The Ohio State University campus. Photography, for Faduma, captures moments and emotions. She wants to inspire girls through her photography to pursue their dreams.

Asia is a creative and hardworking senior at Hilliard Bradley High School. With the use of the camera, she hopes to expand her creativity in photography. Her mother bought her first camera and lens and has encouraged her to work toward her goals and dreams. The year before the scholarship, she took a photography class at school, which peaked her interest of photography even more. She loves working with people and capturing emotions and moments. She also loves the artistic freedom photography gives her because she can choose to take pictures of her interests. Through this project, she wishes to expand her photography knowledge and meet new people.

Preparators

Qorsho Hassan and **Ruth Smith** collaborated to develop, research, and prepare *Urur Dhex-Dhexaad Ah: Community In-Between*. Qorsho is currently the Reading Intervention Teacher at Gideon Pond Elementary School in Burnsville, Minnesota and previously taught third grade at Cesar Chavez Preparatory School in Columbus, Ohio. She is also a community organizer and researcher.

*As an educator, I often invite guests into my classroom in order to construct a safe space for Somali-American role models to be recognized for their excellence. My scholars' response to the guests are profoundly powerful and this classroom activity is one of the many reasons why *Urur Dhex-Dhexaad Ah/Community In-Between* was developed. Visible role models, who are minorities, play an important part in their marginalized communities because they allow members to see what they can be; they ensure dreamers have access to success. By showcasing the community building and success of the 15 role models and the Somali community, we help build a dialogue to better understand the New American community growing in central Ohio. The participants share their unique, yet interconnected narratives that emphasize the flexibility of Somalinimo (the Somali identity), as well as their meticulous rendering of Islamophobia, racism, forced migration, communal strife and poverty.*

Being the guest curator and coauthor of UDDA has given me a lot of insight to how this project has the ability to educate, heal and give hope. UDDA reaffirms the sense of belongingness Somali-Americans desire in a space that can be both foreign and home. It exemplifies Somali excellence while stressing what America truly is: a paragon of multiculturalism.

The powerful portraits showcase the skill and talent of the young Somali community artists, Asia (Marian) and Faduma. Their passion for photography was amplified through empowerment and mentorship from their mentor, Riya. The community artists, with the addition of I.C. and Aafi Hassan, played an instrumental role in the collaboration and remuneration of ethnographic photography. Somali photographers were the collaborative force in this project, and had a vital role in ensuring a balance between the photographer and the photographed.

The partnership and support received from the Dublin Arts Council and the Ohio State Press is unmeasurable and greatly appreciated. These organizations played a fundamental role in the creation of the exhibition and publication of the book.

Ruth is an online lecturer for the Department of Arts Administration, Education and Policy at The Ohio State University and is a community engagement consultant in her current hometown of Lafayette, Indiana. In addition to her work with the Somali community in Columbus, she is a co-founder of the Muslim Neighbors initiative (www.muslimneighbors.com) and the Interfaith Leaders of Greater Lafayette.