

47
years of
community service

Human Beings, Not Numbers

Art shines on the
humanity of the
incarcerated



'City
of
Roses'

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Making Amends

Racist past
jettisoned in
renaming
college dorm

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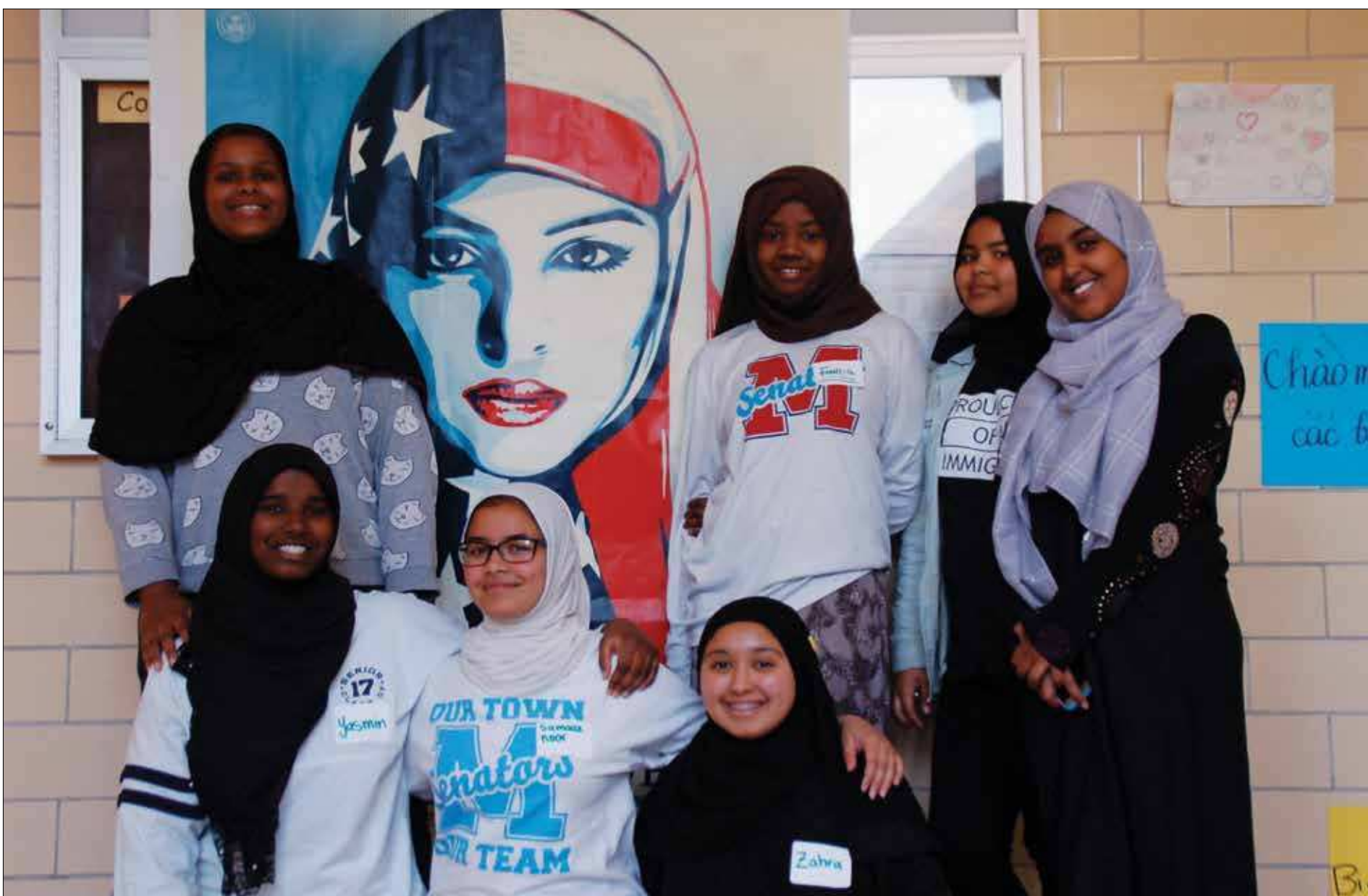


PHOTO BY CHRISTA MCINTYRE/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Students at Madison High form the Muslim Student Alliance, working together to break stereotypes about Islam, picking up leadership and education skills, while volunteering in the community. Pictured from left (top row) are Ahlam Osman, Fowzia Ibrahim, Balkissa Noor and Amira Jeylani; and (front row) Yasmin Elmi, Samaax Noor and Zahra Abukar.

Empowered Madison grows Muslim Student Alliance

BY CHRISTA MCINTYRE
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A group of students at Madison High, the most ethnically and culturally diverse school in Oregon, is leading the way to facilitate positive perceptions about families in Portland who have emigrated from Muslim-majority countries around the world. The young adults formed one of the first of its kind, the Muslim Student Alliance to educate and break stereotypes about the culture and religion of Islam.

As sophomore Samaax Noor, a member of the alliance explained, "At Madison no one tolerates racism. You can

walk down the hall, go into a classroom and explore a whole new culture. Then go down the hall, into another classroom and see something completely different, but you're still welcome. That's the beauty of it all."

It was during the holy month of Ramadan last year, as many of these students observed their faith in silence, that the roots for change were generated. From dawn until dusk Muslim students at the northeast Portland school fasted in the tradition of the religious observance, continuing with the same dedication to their classes as in other months.

During P.E., for example, Muslim students would

stretch, run laps, and push their bodies to the edge while practicing their faith by foregoing water and food. Many of their fellow students and teachers weren't even aware of the cultural and religious practices.

This year during Ramadan, Muslim students at Madison met in a classroom set aside during the lunch period as a designated space where fasting students could support one another. The math classroom of Miss Brown, who has supported the alliance from its beginning, became a symbol of

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