



Arab-American Family Support Center
المركز العربي الأمريكي للخدمات الاجتماعية

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*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

Giant Photo Portraits Will Look Out on Court Street As Teens Raise Awareness Against Islamophobia

Young women highlight New York City's Muslim community
and work against prejudice with "We Are Not Invisible" photography exhibit
at Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC)

BROOKLYN— Beginning on Wednesday, June 1, 2016, 28 portraits of members of the local Muslim community (rotating from a total set of 56 photos) will gaze out from the windows of the Arab-American Family Support Center (AASFC) at 150 Court Street in Downtown Brooklyn.

The black and white, 3 feet by 5 feet portraits are the work of two of AAFSC's Youth Fellows, Leen Shumman and Isabella Arroyo. Their "We Are Not Invisible" project is part of an Anti-Islamophobia campaign launched by a group of female Youth Fellows who have dubbed themselves AYWA! – Audacious Young Women of Action. "Aywa" means "yes" in Arabic.

The students will speak about the project at a press conference outside the AAFSC office on Wednesday, June 1, 2016 at 6pm.

Shumman and Arroyo, both 17-years-old, organized an Anti-Islamophobia Youth Initiative during their AAFSC fellowship to address the growing threat of discrimination and racism towards the Muslim community. As Shumman comes from within the community, and Arroyo brings an outsider's perspective, their unique shared vision guides "We Are Not Invisible!"

"We Are Not Invisible" will be displayed for four weeks in AAFSC's windows before traveling to various public locations later this year.

Georgetown University's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding recently released a study documenting a surge in anti-Muslim violence in the United States since the start of the 2016 election campaign. In early May in Astoria, Queens, a 19-year-old Arab-American youth was attacked by three suspects who yelled "ISIS" and "Arab".

Lena Alhousseini, executive director of the non-sectarian AAFSC, said, "With the current climate of hatred and Islamophobia in the United States, we are proud that these young

women are taking such a creative approach to showcase Muslims from New York coming together and saying, 'We are not invisible!'. ”

“These young women see how the media leaves out average Muslims. Those who are portrayed invoke fear, anger, and violence,” said Esraa Saleh, AAFSC Youth Program Assistant Coordinator/AYWA! Coordinator.

“Muslims look all types of ways beyond your imagination! This project is about taking up space and rejecting Islamophobic bigotry that has become a norm.” Shumman and Arroyo said. “We come from different countries, and are different ethnicities and races. We are beautiful, vulnerable, and strong,” the students said.

Shumman and Arroyo, who also participate in AAFSC’s Youth Program and learned filmmaking and photography skills in AAFSC’s youth media program, are committed to using their art and activism to raise awareness and work against Islamophobia.

Arroyo attends Brooklyn’s Khalil Gibran International Academy, and Shumman attends the Brooklyn Collaborative School. In addition to the “We Are Not Invisible” photo exhibit, the students in AYWA! plan to create a comic book and outreach materials, hold public events and make a short film about their campaign

This project was supported in part by the Brooklyn Community Foundation and New York Women’s Foundation.

WHO: The Arab-American Family Support Center (AAFSC)

WHAT: AAFSC Youth Fellows’ “We Are Not Invisible” photography opening

WHERE: Sidewalk in front of AAFSC’s Brooklyn Office
150 Court Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

WHEN: Wednesday, June 1, 2016
6 pm

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The Arab-American Family Support Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-sectarian organization created in 1994 to provide low-income Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian immigrants and refugees in New York City culturally and linguistically competent social services. As a settlement house and member of United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), AAFSC’s mission is to empower new immigrants with the tools they need to successfully acclimate to the world around them and become active participants in their communities. AAFSC is the first and largest Arabic-speaking trauma-informed social service agency in New York City. AAFSC is headquartered in Brooklyn, the borough with the highest population of Arab immigrants in New York City, and has an additional center in Queens.