

A call to motivate the marginalized

Everyday Political Citizens

Organizer fights to inspire Muslim youth and other targets of distrust



Luke Simcoe
Metro|Toronto

Every year, Samara Canada's Everyday Political Citizen project honours Canadians who are making positive changes in their communities. The winner of the contest will be announced Dec. 3.

Metro is profiling the four EPC nominees in the Greater Toronto Area. Today, we meet Sanaa Ali-Mohammed, a volunteer and community organizer from Mississauga, who's working to involve Muslim youth in political process.

During a federal election marred by what many considered anti-Muslim rhetoric, Mississauga's Sanaa Ali-Mohammed was working diligently

behind the scenes to get Muslim youth excited about politics.

"There was this concentration on the Muslim community during the election. There was this sense of being targeted," she said.

"Muslim youth in particular were being talked about as radicalized or a threat to this country."

Ali-Mohammed believes the antidote to politics of division is to involve marginalized or targeted groups in the political process. So she organized Young, Canadian and Muslim: Making Our Ballots Count!, a forum where young Muslims could meet their local candidates and help drive the political discussion.

Prior to the event, organizers surveyed Muslim youth about the political issues that matter to them. Unsurprisingly, their concerns were the same as other Canadians, namely jobs and the economy.

"We're not that different," she said. "We see ourselves as firmly a part of the Canadian fabric and we want to establish ourselves here. The first way to do that is to find economic security."

Following the event, Ali-Mohammed said, many of the 400 attendees pledged to vote in the election and some even began volunteering on campaigns.



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Sanaa Ali-Mohammed

"I think that was the direct result of them feeling more educated and knowledgeable about the political system," she said.

The 26-year-old isn't sure what her next political project will be but wants to continue to help other marginalized groups get their voices heard.

"In order for Canada to become the best country it can be, we need to start including these people in the conversation," she said.



Sanaa Ali-Mohammed put together the event "Young, Canadian and Muslim: Making Our Ballots Count!"