



MEDIA RELEASE

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Community Leader Named as Highline’s 2024 Distinguished Alumna

DES MOINES, Wash. — Advancing the rights of domestic violence survivors has earned Rahma Rashid the Highline College Distinguished Alumna award.

Rashid is the founder of the nonprofit [Muslimahs Against Abuse Center](#) (MAAC), an organization that provides crucial programs and support to women and girls experiencing domestic violence.

For Rashid, the challenges are personal, having survived domestic violence herself. In fact, when she attended Highline College as a student from 2017-2018, she was at the start of her healing journey, while raising four children under the age of six.

She credits Highline with providing the environment and support that helped her through that time. In particular, the Women’s Center offered financial support, books and a one-on-one counselor who helped her stay on track as she pursued her Associate of Arts in Teaching degree.

Recognizing that other students at Highline might not know about all the services Highline has to offer, Rashid became a volunteer adviser. In this role she used her experiences to guide and support first-generation students as they navigated college. This involvement not only reinforced her commitment to supporting her community, but also equipped her with the skills and empathy needed for founding MAAC.

“My time at Highline was instrumental in preparing me for my current role because it introduced me to crucial support programs such as the Women's Center,” Rashid said.

In the late 1990s, Rashid immigrated to the U.S. to escape the turmoil of Somalia’s civil war, where she experienced firsthand the struggles of displacement. With perseverance, she was able to overcome adversity and now the mother of 7 stands as a symbol of resilience.

“Creating MAAC has allowed me to give back to our youth and the most vulnerable people in our community by offering a sanctuary where they can find the help and resources they need to navigate and overcome their challenges,” she said.

Fatima Ismail, who nominated Rashid for the award said: “Rashid’s journey from adversity to advocacy exemplifies the transformative power of resilience, compassion and determination. Her dedication to advancing the rights of domestic violence survivors and marginalized communities makes her an exceptionally worthy candidate for recognition as a distinguished alumna, serving as (an) inspiration to current and future generations of Highline College students.”

Regarding the founding of MAAC, Rashid explained: “This achievement is profoundly personal and fulfilling, as it enables me to transform my experiences into a beacon of hope and strength for others, fostering a supportive and nurturing environment that I wish I had during my own difficult times.”

Rashid believes it was her time at Highline that made her realize that anything is possible.

She says her degree, “...marked the beginning of my determination to continue my education and overcome the many barriers that had been created for me to fail. Earning my degree at Highline College was a significant milestone that fueled my passion for breaking down barriers and advocating for others facing similar challenges”.

Tanisha Williams, Highline’s Alumni Relations specialist, said Rashid’s accomplishments stood out to the selection committee.

“Rahma was selected as this year’s Distinguished Alumna because of her relentless dedication and transformative impact on the community. Her personal story of resilience and her exceptional contributions to others has set her apart and made a lasting impression,” Williams said.

Beyond her degree at Highline, Rashid obtained a bachelor’s degree in education from Central Washington University as well as a master’s degree in higher education with a minor in nonprofit leadership.

As Ismail puts it: “Her academic journey is not merely about personal advancement but is intricately linked to her mission of advocating for the rights and well-being of those affected by domestic violence.”

This year's annual Distinguished Alumnus award search had 12 nominees. Rashid will be recognized at Commencement on June 13. She is the 36th recipient of the award, the most prestigious award given to alumni.

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Attachment: Photo of Rahma Rashid

Links within this release:

- <https://ma-ac.org/>
- <https://alumni.highline.edu/recognition/rice.php>; <https://alumni.highline.edu/recognition/>;
- <https://www.highline.edu/about-us/highline-profiles/sandra-cravens-robinson/>;
- <https://alumni.highline.edu/recognition/teshome.php>
- <https://www.highline.edu/about-us/highline-profiles/linda-junki-yoshida/>;
- <https://www.highline.edu/dist-alum-2021/>

Founded in 1961 as the first community college in King County, Highline College annually serves 14,100 students. With more than 75 percent students of color, Highline is the most diverse higher education institution in the state. The college offers a wide range of academic transfer, professional-technical education, basic skills and applied bachelor's degree programs. Alumni include former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, internationally acclaimed author Ann Rule, entrepreneur Junki Yoshida, Dr. Tom Jackson, president of Cal-Poly Humboldt and retired Army Lieutenant Colonel and nurse Sandra Cravens Robinson.