The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University named Saïda Oumulkhairy Niasse the inaugural recipient of the Global Humanitarian Citizen Award.

Known by her followers as “Mama Kiota,” Saïda Oumulkhairy Niasse is the leader of a Sufi Muslim women’s movement with over 200,000 members across West Africa. A tireless advocate for women’s rights, education, and peace, she has spent more than 50 years establishing schools and networks that promote peace and women’s advancement.

The ceremony to honor her at Tufts included a welcome blessing by Tufts Muslim Chaplain Celene Ibrahim, remarks by Niger’s Ambassador to the United States, Hassana Alidou, traditional dhikr recitation, and reflections by the honoree’s nephew Ousmane Kane, Alwaleed Professor of Contemporary Islamic Religion and Society at Harvard University. Learn more about the life and work of Mama Kiota at https://mamakiotasmessage.com.
Fletcher Islamic Society

From probing global crises in Myanmar, Syria, and Palestine, to traveling the world from Moscow to Pakistan to Paris; from having late night conversations to praying shoulder-to-shoulder, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy truly provides transformative education. In this environment, Muslim students and their peers have become an ever more vibrant part of Fletcher life.

Alongside a host of stimulating lectures, the Fletcher “Diversity in Islam” series has become a popular forum that features Fletcher students from different backgrounds and experiences. Participants reflected on questions including: Can you recall the earliest memory in which you were called or self-identified as a Muslim? What are some of the most entertaining things you have been asked about your Muslim identity? What role did faith-based spaces play in the formation of your identity or understanding of Islam?

Above: Fellow Advisor at Sahar, an organization promoting education for Afghan Girls, Airokhsh Faiz Qaisary, F18 Honos Civicus, is a passionate advocate for issues of girls and women's education in Afghanistan and around the world. She writes, “I am forever indebted and grateful for the community at Tufts University and the Fletcher School for deepening my knowledge and putting me on the right path to making the world a better place.”

Above: Fletcher Muslims and friends enjoy a moment to celebrate the end of the academic year.
Above: Ayesha Khan, F17 at her wedding in New Delhi, India in January this year: “He brings out the best in me, ma’sha’Allah. He inspires me to be a better person,” she says, about her husband Sameed, whom she met as a student at Fletcher. Ayesha is currently based in New York and works for the UN Global Compact. Congratulations to the happy couple!

TUMAA Alumni Spotlight
Tufts University Muslim Alumni Association

The Tufts University Muslim Alumni Association (TUMAA) was established in January 2016 with a mission to support Tufts University alumni from all schools and academic programs in their ongoing involvement in the educational mission of Tufts University.

TUMAA is a network to mentor current students and a platform to support alumni in connecting to other professionals in their field. It is also a core mission of TUMAA to work against the dangerous effects of Islamophobia and xenophobia by promoting the stories of Tufts Muslim alumni who are making valuable contributions to the arts, science, and society.

To nominate yourself or fellow alumni/ae to the TUMAA steering committee, send a short bio and note of interest to TUMAA@googlegroups.com as well as Chaplain Celene Ibrahim: Celene.Ibrahim@tufts.edu. The commitment is approximately two hours per month and can be remote.

Left: Proud Jumbos Saja Alani, A18 and Mariya Ilyas, F18 Honos Civicus.

Mariya writes, “I am humbled by the opportunity to serve my country through the US Foreign Service starting this summer. This dream would not have been possible without the generous support of Fletcher faculty, staff, friends, and campus resources such as Tufts Chaplaincy which allowed me to grow not only professionally and personally, but also spiritually. Fletcher, and the people who made this journey possible, will always hold a special place in my heart.”

2018 graduates, may the journey be full of light, peace, and hope.
Notes from the Chaplain’s Desk

The Muslim community is thriving at Tufts and also working extremely hard to educate about Islam and Muslims in a wider political climate that has seen rampant xenophobia and a disturbing rise in anti-Muslim public discourse. For these efforts to spread education, hope, peace, and community bonds, the Muslim Students Association (MSA) under the leadership of Nazifa Sarawat, A17 (pictured below) was awarded the 2017 Student Organization of the Year, an impressive feat considering that Tufts has several hundred student groups.

Continuing the tradition of excellence, in 2018, MSA president Saja Alani, A18 was awarded the Tufts Presidential Award for Civic Life for her leadership on campus and in the wider community. From steering the Tufts Muslim Students Association to combatting health care disparities, supporting Syrian refugees, dismantling harmful stereotypes about Islam, teaching and mentoring Muslim youth, and so much more, Saja is a shining example of what it means to put Islam into practice. Saja summarizes her experience at Tufts as a journey of intellectual and spiritual growth: “The easy times and the challenging times have revitalized what being a servant truly means. I was blessed with opportunities to serve Muslims and the wider community, to serve friends and strangers, and to serve nature, all of which transformed my relationship with the Most Merciful One and with myself.”

Above: Faryal Jafri, A18 Honos Civicus, in conversation with Dr. Celene Ibrahim (center) and author and entrepreneur Rev. Dr. James Sherblom on the occasion of the Russell Lecture on Spiritual Life at the Tufts Interfaith Center.

Faryal, a longtime member of the University Chaplaincy student worker team and a past board member of the MSA, reflects on her time at Tufts, “The Muslim community was the first community I really felt a part of during my time at Tufts. I’m so grateful for the friendships I made through it.”

Left: Nazifa Sarawat, A17, a Tufts concentrator in environmental engineering and math, lighting up the room with her joyous laugh and deep care for inclusive community, for the environment, and for the value of spiritual life.

Nazifa began rewarding and challenging work this year as an entry-level civil engineer at EA Engineering, Science, and Technology, Inc. in Rhode Island. Nazifa writes, “I’m grateful to the Tufts Muslim community for teaching me so many essential skills that I will take with me wherever I go.”
Alumna Maha Mian, A14, a biopsychology and sociology concentrator at Tufts, worked in research at Boston’s Children’s Hospital before transitioning into Ph.D. studies in Clinical Psychology at the University of Albany, SUNY. Chaplain Celene recently caught up with her to reflect on the growing legacy of strong female leadership in the MSA.

In her time at Tufts, Maha looked to then chaplain Naila Baloch (Tufts Muslim Chaplain 2009-2014) for guidance: “She had a way of helping me experience how prayer was grounding. After our women's circles, I would feel like I was breathing a little easier!” During Maha’s tenure as president, a primary goal was to ensure that the community would be welcoming to all and that friendship would light up the gatherings: “If someone is coming to MSA for the first time, they should feel like they already have friends here.”

Left: Sara Arman, A19 will steer the MSA throughout the coming year. Long-serving board members Iqra Asghar, A18 (in yellow) and Rumzah Paracha, A18 (in blue) listen intently as Sara emcees the Senior Dinner, a celebration honoring graduating students. Recently inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest honor society in the nation, Rumzah will be matriculating at the Tufts University School of Medicine in the Class of 2022. She hopes to remain connected to the Tufts MSA through TUMAA, as well as build a vibrant Muslim student community on the health sciences campus.

Above: Alumna Maha Mian, A14, a former president of the Tufts MSA.

Above: In the spring of 2017 Nazifa Sarawat, A17 passed the mantle of leadership to Saja Alani, A18.

Above: MSA leadership knows how to get things done, but it’s no secret that they also know how to have a good time.
Support Muslim Life at Tufts University

A substantial portion of our annual programs are made possible by community donations. To give to the Tufts Muslim Chaplaincy Fund online, please visit:

http://chaplaincy.tufts.edu/how-to-give

To make a gift by credit card over the phone please contact Tufts Senior Associate Director of Development Rob Ayles:

617-627-2675
Robert.Ayles@tufts.edu

Thank you for your support.

Dr. Celene Ibrahim, Muslim Chaplain

Tufts prides itself on a rich history of service and civic engagement—from taking care of fellow classmates, to striving to tackle the largest social challenges, Tufts’ Muslims are engaged.

Above, left to right: Najma Jama, A21, Yasmin Farah, A21, Samsam Dirie, A20, and Nofal Ouardaoui, A20, and all members of the MSA 2018-2019 board who have been elected to continue their service in the coming academic year under the leadership of rising senior Sara Arman, A19 (featured on the previous page).

Left: Mohamad (Hamoody) Hamze, A19, senior percussionist with the Arabic Music Ensemble and part of the University Chaplaincy student worker team.

An aspiring medical professional, Hamoody enjoys challenging the norm, thinking outside the box, encouraging discussion, and finding solutions with the power to save lives. He writes, “I came to Tufts hoping to find a community of support, guidance, and learning with regards to my religion. Thankfully, two of the very first communities that welcomed me to campus my freshman year were the Muslim Students Association and the University Chaplaincy.”