

Ohio writers afford young readers life and learning lessons

By Craig McDonald

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My Name is Bilal

Dr. Asma Mobin-Uddin, a Dublin resident, provides young readers important lessons in acceptance and faith in *My Name is Bilal* (Boyd's Mills Press, \$15.95 in hardcover). Bilal and his sister, Ayesha, recently relocated from their native Chicago, arrive for their first day at a new school where they are the only Muslim students. As they approach their new school with its "cold, hard windows," one of the kids jerks at the scarf draping Bilal's sister's head and shoulders. To his quick shame, Bilal doesn't rush to her aid. His reticence soon triggers a cascade of issues for Bilal ... complicated by the fact that the bully who picked on his sister is also in Bilal's class. Asked by his new teacher to introduce himself, Bilal obscures his true name by asking to be called "Bill." Bilal's instructor, however, Mr. Ali, is also a practicing Muslim and a longtime friend of Bilal's father. He gives the boy a book to read and write a report about titled, *Bilal Ibn Rabah, Friend and Helper of the Prophet*. Mobin-Uddin then deftly contrasts young Bilal's crisis of identity and conscience with that of Bilal Ibn Rabah, "the first person to give the Muslim call to prayer during the time of Prophet Muhammad ... " a man who withstood torture in defense of his own faith. Young Bilal is given a second opportunity to defend his sister and his faith when the bully, Scott, again mocks his sister's scarf. The book is illustrated in watercolors by Barbara Kiwak. In her author's note, Dr. Mobin-Uddin provides information regarding the *salat* and *adhan*, as well as several key Arabic phrases. The author is a member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and illustrators and is a pediatrician. She will be appearing at 4 p.m. Sept. 22 at the Old Worthington Library (820 High St.) to discuss and sign copies of *My Name is Bilal*.

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