



## DDFIA AWARDS \$2.49 MILLION TO CREATE POWERFUL INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCES

### The Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art's Building Bridges 2018-2019 Grants Program Funds Arts and Media Projects That Strengthen Bonds Between U.S. Communities of Muslims and Their Neighbors.

**New York, May 30, 2019** — The Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art's Building Bridges Program (DDFIA's Building Bridges Program) today announced grants totaling approximately \$2.49 million to initiate arts and media projects designed to create powerful experiences that advance relationships among communities of U.S. Muslims and their neighbors. Fifteen organizations nationwide will receive up to \$300,000 each. (The full listing is included below.)

Among the projects are:

- a "jingle truck," created by a Pakistani truck-art painter, that will tour ten elementary schools;
- theater performances, discussions and workshops where the resettlement of Muslim refugees is causing divisiveness;
- literary programming at three public town halls on themes such as the African-American Muslim experience;
- a hands-on fabric design workshop connecting Muslim and non-Muslim women;
- a three-hour documentary series spanning the 500-year history of Muslims in the U.S.

Grant recipients are based in California, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Vermont.

The grants are announced as anti-Islam sentiment in the U.S. is rising according to a [report](#) released this month by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU). Additionally, across Americans surveyed by ISPU, Muslims—at 62 percent—are the group most likely to report experiencing religious discrimination.

"In many places across the country, the frayed bonds of community need restoration and strengthening," said Zeyba Rahman, senior program officer of DDFIA's Building Bridges Program. "The projects proposed by this year's Building Bridges Program grantees offer an inspired, inventive, arts-based approach to deepen connections between Muslims and their neighbors in the U.S. We are excited to support the launch of these 15 ambitious and worthy endeavors to improve well-being across the country."

The Building Bridges Program is pleased to award the following organizations support for their projects:

- [Art 120](#), in **Signal Mountain, Tenn.**, will receive \$25,000 to support a one-year mobile art project that will use a "jingle truck," created by a Pakistani truck-art painter and accompanied by educational programming, to tour ten different elementary schools within a 120-mile radius of Chattanooga, Tenn. to build familiarity with Pakistani culture;
- [BRIC](#), in **Brooklyn, N.Y.**, will receive \$175,000 to support *Muslim Voices*, a three-year community and media engagement project to deepen conversations between communities of Muslims and their neighbors on what it means to be Muslim in Brooklyn through events,

discussion programs, short films, a storytelling podcast and a media toolkit for participating schools and community groups;

- [Commonwealth Theatre Center](#), in **Louisville, Ky.**, will receive \$225,000 to support the expansion of *Connecting Cultures*, a theater education residency program, into a three-year immersive performing arts project documenting and celebrating the unique experiences of in-region Muslim and non-Muslim youth and transforming their intersecting narratives into region-wide performances that invite audiences to witness struggles and triumphs that transcend stereotypes;
- [Connecticut Players Foundation](#), in **New Haven, Conn.**, will receive \$223,500 to support the expansion and deepening of Long Wharf Theatre's *Newcomer Play Project* over three years, which will connect and collaborate with Muslim immigrants and refugees in theater-based workshops in the greater New Haven area through community partnerships, including Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services Agency (IRIS);
- [Erie Arts & Culture](#), in **Erie, Pa.**, will receive \$37,500 to support the development of *Old Songs, New Voices*, a 15-month cultural exchange and preservation project that aims to tap into the rich indigenous knowledge that is "hidden in plain sight" by nurturing and developing the talents of folk and traditional artists from Erie's community, including former refugees from Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Bosnia, Afghanistan and other predominantly Muslim countries;
- [Filmmakers Collaborative Inc.](#), in **Melrose, Mass.**, will receive \$125,000 to support *Muslims in America*, a three-hour documentary series spanning the 500-year history of Muslims in the U.S., in an effort to improve public conversations about American Muslims and provide a national audience insight into what it means to be both Muslim and American, and in turn, what that reveals about America itself;
- [Global Detroit](#), in **Detroit**, will receive \$150,000 to support *Common Bond: The Muslim Ladies Social Club*, a women-only, hands-on fabric design workshop series over two years, that will connect Muslim and non-Muslim women in Detroit neighborhoods around themes of shared experience and personal storytelling;
- [Jannus](#), in **Boise, Idaho**, will receive \$135,000 to support the *Refugee Speakers Bureau*, a multicultural, live storytelling project in Boise, rural Idaho and Salt Lake City that will build connections between Muslim and non-Muslim communities through narratives about the Mountain West's Muslims;
- [Kindling Group](#), in **Chicago**, will receive \$200,000 to support production of a documentary film titled *Loyalty* that tells the story of Muslim military chaplains and their experiences as they work for religious freedom in the U.S. Armed Forces;
- [Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska](#), in **Omaha, Nebraska**, will receive \$244,000 to support a traveling, multi-disciplinary, refugee arts festival with the aim of creating a welcoming environment for resettled Muslim refugees through the fostering of cultural exchange, mutual trust and understanding between these refugees and white non-Muslims in rural communities, such as Crete, Grand Island, O'Neil, Lexington and South Sioux City, among others;
- [PEN America](#), in **New York**, will receive \$75,000 to support literary programming and the production of three public town halls focusing on changing perceptions and creating deeper understanding about the African-American Muslim experience, the fight against Islamophobia, and Muslim identity and representation in the media and publishing;
- [Sandglass Theater](#), in **Putney, Vt.**, will receive \$90,000 to support *Babylon: Journeys of Refugees*, a two-year residency project in partnership with U.S. Committee for Refugee offices across the world that will bring theater performances, discussions and workshops to eight U.S. communities where the resettlement of Muslim refugees is causing divisiveness;
- [Somali Family Service of San Diego](#) in partnership with the [Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego](#) and the [Intrepid Theatre Company](#), in **San Diego**, will receive \$298,000 to support *Perform Peace*, a suite of programs that include interactive theater, a feature-length documentary film, community dialogue and a youth-driven summit to advance understanding among Muslims – particularly refugees from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia and Syria – and their neighbors in San Diego County;
- [StoryCorps](#), in **Brooklyn, N.Y.**, will receive \$300,000 to support the development of *Muslims in America*, a new three-year project to increase understanding of the diversity of American Muslims

and encourage empathy, trust and relationships among Muslim and non-Muslim neighbors, with the resulting cross-section of stories collected to be ultimately archived at the Library of Congress and amplified through multiple far-reaching platforms, including podcasts, broadcasts and social media;

- [Twin Cities PBS](#), in **Saint Paul, Minn.**, will receive \$185,000 to support *Be My Guest*, multi-course public engagement project combining short-form media and interactive community meals, using storytelling and conversation to advance connections between Muslim and non-Muslim communities across Minnesota.

The [Building Bridges 2018-2019 Grants Program](#) sought organizations whose arts- and media-based projects align with program goals to advance relationships and increase understanding among U.S. communities of Muslims and non-Muslims. A panel of six subject expert reviewers recommended these projects for support over a period of one to three years.

Since 2007, the Building Bridges Program has supported endeavors that engage U.S.-based Muslims and non-Muslims in arts and media experiences to increase understanding and advance relationships between communities. The need for this work is clear. Muslims number approximately 1.6 billion people around the world, including 3.4 million in the United States.

Despite this large, dispersed and diverse worldwide population, studies have shown that U.S. perceptions of them remain narrow. A February 2017 report from Pew Research Center showed that, out of nine listed religious groups, Muslims are viewed the least warmly by Americans. A January 2016 survey from Pew also noted that approximately half of America thinks that at least “some” U.S. Muslims are anti-American, greater than the share who say “just a few” or “none.” In the face of this reality, Building Bridges grantees have provided compelling arts- and/or media-based programs rooted in diverse Muslim cultures to catalyze a social transformation in attitudes of strategically selected audiences across the country.

#### **About the Building Bridges Program**

The Building Bridges Program is the grant-making arm of the [Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art](#) (DDFIA), which is an extension of the [Doris Duke Charitable Foundation](#) (DDCF). Based in New York, the program supports national efforts to advance relationships and increase understanding among Muslim and non-Muslim communities for mutual well-being. For more information, please visit [www.ddcf.org/what-we-fund/building-bridges](http://www.ddcf.org/what-we-fund/building-bridges).

#### **About the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation is to improve the quality of people’s lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and child well-being, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke’s properties. For more information, please visit [www.ddcf.org](http://www.ddcf.org).

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