



THE DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION FOR ISLAMIC ART GRANTS \$1.5M TO EIGHT ORGANIZATIONS ADVANCING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MUSLIM AND NON-MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN THE U.S.

Foundation's Third Funding Round of the Building Bridges Program Awards Support To Organizations For Programs Fostering Connections With Contemporary Muslim Societies

New York, NY, March 3, 2016 – The Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art (DDFIA) announced today the eight U.S. nonprofit organizations who have won a total of \$1,503,100 in grants through the Building Bridges Program's third national funding competition. The Building Bridges Program supports organizations whose work advances relationships, increases understanding, and reduces bias between Muslim and non-Muslim communities through immersive arts and culture projects, ultimately contributing toward a more just civil society and greater well-being among peoples.

"In a world fraught with divisive problems, the work of creative people can be a powerful conduit to one another, a way to connect and see each other more clearly," said Zeyba Rahman, senior program officer for the DDFIA Building Bridges Program. "We are proud to support the fresh ideas and courageous programs that these organizations have proposed to expose the public to cultures rooted in Muslim regions, both abroad and in their own backyards, and look forward to watching them unfold."

This round of Building Bridges Program funding builds upon two previous years of successful competitions whose grantees also created performing, literary and media arts-based experiences and related educational projects. The Building Bridges Program is the grant-making arm of DDFIA, an operating foundation of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The program continues to provide grantees with support to plan and implement cultural programs or projects that forge deeper, mutual understanding and relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim communities across the country. Through a collective appraisal of self-evaluations conducted by the program's past grantees, the foundation has observed that strong relationships are built most effectively when audiences are able to immerse themselves in the experience of the project and directly interact, collaborate or communicate with the artists and other participants.

The [Building Bridges 2015-2016 Grants Program](#) sought arts and culture-focused organizations whose projects are dedicated to building relationships and mutual understanding between Muslim and non-Muslim communities among the populations they identified. A panel of four professional experts with extensive knowledge in arts and cultures anchored in Muslim regions reviewed the applications and recommended the eight projects to receive grants of up to \$300,000, distributed over one to three years depending on their respective needs.

This year's Building Bridges Program grantees are as follows:

- [Brooklyn Children's Theatre](#) in Brooklyn, NY will receive \$78,100 to support "Muslim Voices: Children's Musical Theater Collaborative," a series of four new plays created collaboratively by professional and student artists, themed around Muslim heritage, performed in public schools and distributed to community theatres nationwide.
- [Cedar Cultural Center](#) in Minneapolis, MN will receive \$300,000 to continue and expand "Midnimo," a project focused on Somali music culture, through further interaction and engagement with the local Somali immigrant and non-Somali communities throughout greater Minnesota.
- [Children's Museum of Manhattan](#) in Manhattan, NY will receive \$50,000 to develop "America to Zanzibar: A Muslim Art and Culture Program Series for Children and Adults," a complementary series

of family programs, festivals and evening events that will contextualize visitors' experiences of the museum's current exhibition, "America to Zanzibar: Muslim Cultures Near and Far."

- [Mark Morris Dance Group](#) in Brooklyn, NY will receive \$300,000 to support the creation, premiere and touring of "Layla and Majnun," an ancient love story well known in Muslim societies, as well as related engagement activities designed to increase the audience's understanding of the breadth and diversity of Muslim cultures.
- [PEN American Center](#) in New York, NY will receive \$225,000 to develop "Writing While Muslim," a series of high-profile events convening groups of Muslim and non-Muslim writers across specific genres including fiction, screenwriting, comedy and opinion to probe topics of unity, identity and self-expression in today's society and culture.
- [Sundance Institute](#) in Los Angeles, CA will receive \$125,000 to support its artists from the Middle East and North Africa region in their creation of up to four new theatre projects, thereby encouraging increased intercultural exchange and relationships at the lab.
- [TheatreSquared](#) in Fayetteville, AK will receive \$250,000 to support the development, production and touring of "R&J Damascus," a reimagined "Romeo and Juliet" based in Damascus, Syria, as well as related programming and panel discussions about the contemporary Muslim context in which it is set.
- [Words Beats and Life](#) in Washington, D.C. will receive \$175,000 to support two upcoming seasons of "From Sifrs to Ciphers: The Global Muslim Influence on Hip Hop Culture," a series of performances, exhibitions, workshops and dialogue sessions highlighting the breadth and diversity of global and American Muslim hip hop artists across gender, religion and geography.

Since 2007, the Building Bridges Program has supported endeavors that engage U.S.-based Muslims and non-Muslims in arts and culture 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 more than five million in the United States. Yet, despite this large, dispersed and diverse worldwide population, studies have shown that U.S. perceptions of them may remain narrow. A [September 2014 report](#) from Pew Research Center for the People & the Press showed that 50 percent of Americans believe that Islam encourages more violence than other religions, and a [May 2013 Pew report](#) stated that 45 percent of Americans believe that American Muslims face "a lot" of discrimination. In the face of this reality, Building Bridges grantees have provided compelling opportunities using arts- and/or media arts-based programs rooted in diverse Muslim cultures to catalyze a social transformation in attitudes for target audiences.

About the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art

The [Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art](#) (DDFIA) is an operating foundation funded by the [Doris Duke Charitable Foundation](#) (DDCF). The mission of DDFIA is to promote the study, understanding and appreciation of Muslim arts and cultures. Based in New York, the Building Bridges Program is the grant-making program of the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art and supports national efforts to advance relationships, increase understanding, and reduce bias between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. For more information, please visit 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.

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