



## Muslims in America: A Year of Learning

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **400 Leaders Nationwide Kick-Off a 2021 “Year of Learning” with Muslim Americans on Feb. 18**

*Program gives philanthropic community, allies & civic leaders an inside look into Muslim communities and their most pressing challenges needing investment*

**(CHICAGO - February 15, 2021)** Nearly 400 leaders from across the philanthropic, social and civic sectors are expected to come together virtually this Thursday, February 18 from 12:00 - 3:15 pm CST for the launch of [\*Muslims in America: A Year of Learning for the Philanthropic Community\*](#).

“As part of the most diverse faith group in the nation, Muslim American organizations find themselves squarely at the intersection of race, class, and health issues in our country today,” says Dilnaz Waraich of the Waraich Family Fund, and one of the lead conveners. “Ensuring that equitable resources, support, and funding are provided to these organizations is the collective responsibility of philanthropic and donor communities committed to social justice and integration. These efforts are long overdue, and we are excited to help build and strengthen the bridges to change.”

*Muslims in America: A Learning Launch for the Philanthropic Community* is designed to create an understanding of who Muslims are today, what issues drive them, and the challenges they face which require philanthropic investment for long-term impact. The event is being convened by the Field Foundation, Waraich Family Fund, Indiana University’s Community Collaboration Initiative and the IL Muslim Civic Coalition. Leaders from across the Philanthropic community, government, and corporations have committed to join. Speakers include Monique Jones, CEO, Forefront; and Anne-Marie St. Germaine, Board Vice-Chair, Woods Fund. For more information about the program and speakers, visit [www.ayearoflearning.org](http://www.ayearoflearning.org).

With the gathering of philanthropic, academic, civic and Muslim leaders, the kick-off event is expected to open up pathways for potential partnership, impactful giving, and meaningful investment.

This week's launch program is a unique opportunity to gain an "insider look" at Muslim America by:

- Sharing success stories of Muslims working and/or partnering with philanthropy
- Creating meaningful encounters among philanthropic, academic, business and Muslim community professionals
- Exploring the Muslim American stories through cultural experiences with artists, storytellers, and musicians

"The opportunity for those involved with philanthropy to deepen their understanding of the Muslim community is essential to better understanding our collective community," says Daniel Ash of the Chicago Community Trust, one of the partnering organizations. "As a place-based foundation, such knowledge and relationships are vital to creating the representative coalition that will move the Chicago region forward."

The *Year of Learning* evolved from current relationships with the philanthropic community and Muslim American social, civic, and cultural organizations. In this engagement, Muslim organizations and their allies have recognized the need for improving fact-based knowledge, as well as removing systemic barriers that historically prevent Muslim American nonprofit organizations from acquiring equitable opportunities to build relationships and receive funding and resources. In Fall 2020, a committee of leaders convened to start planning the first in a yearlong series of events for 2021 that will foster a deeper understanding, action towards change, and long-term successful impact for all Americans.

The event is open to the public and there is no cost to attend. Advance registration is required at <https://yearoflearning.uic.edu/events-2/registration/>. Members of the media can register at <https://forms.uofi.uic.edu/sec/1728510215>.

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**Editors' Note: Interviews are available with conveners, presenters and participants. Interview requests should be directed to** Debbie Goetz (215.630.5408 | [dgoetz@dgmediaconnections.com](mailto:dgoetz@dgmediaconnections.com)) or Edina Lekovic (310.560.4898 | [edina.consulting@gmail.com](mailto:edina.consulting@gmail.com))

*Muslims in America: A Learning Launch for the Philanthropic Community* is made possible by key partners, including Doris Duke Foundation For Islamic Art, Institute For Policy and Engagement at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago Community Trust, JP Morgan Chase and Company, The Tides Foundation, and others. For the full list of sponsors, see website [www.AYearOfLearning.org](http://www.AYearOfLearning.org). The year-long initiative is aimed to foster greater understanding of America's 3.5 million Muslims, inspire action towards change, and create long term impact.