

MAY 2013

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# THE BAY AREA MUSLIM STUDY: *ESTABLISHING IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY*

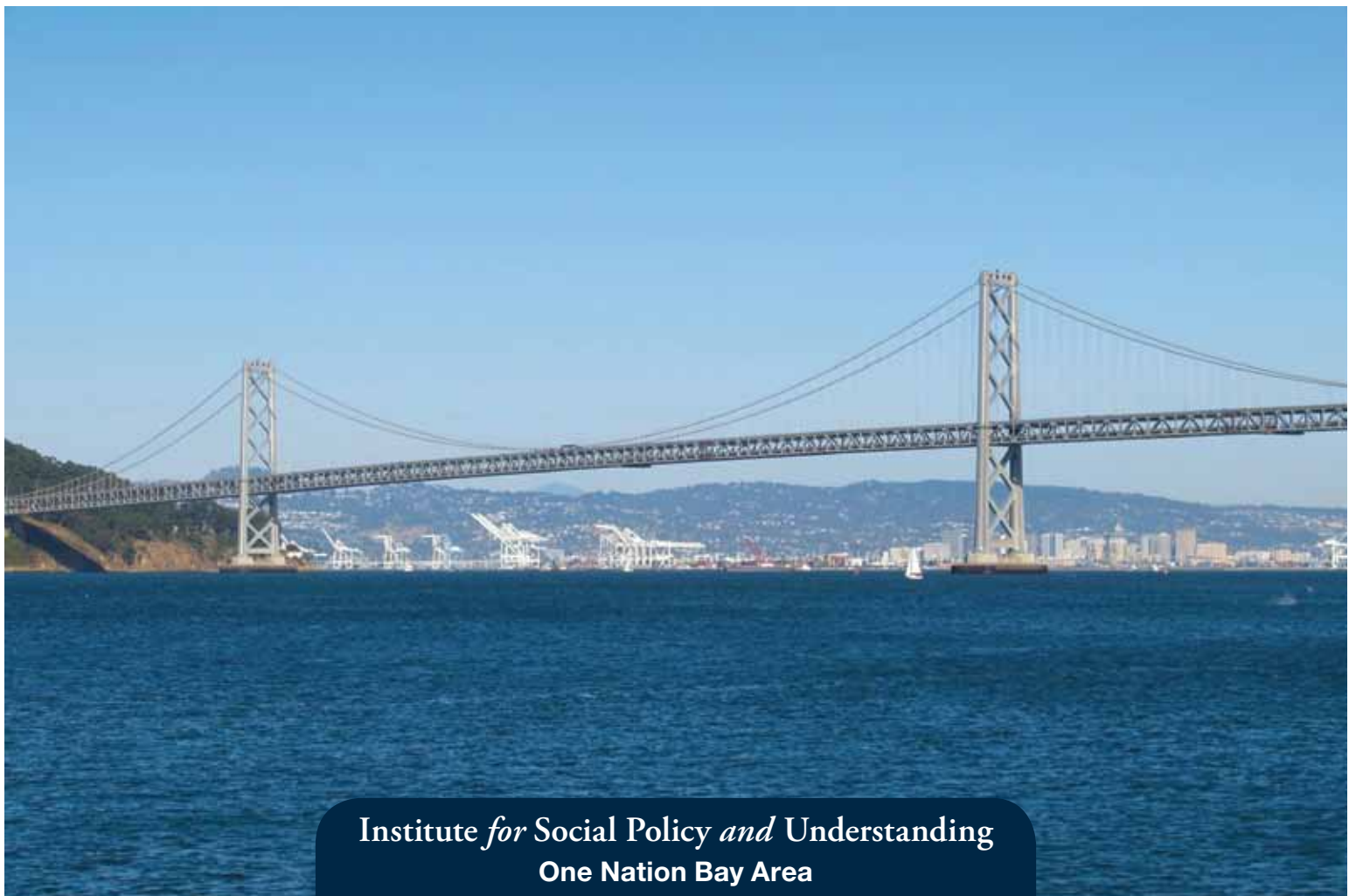
*Commissioned by the One Nation Bay Area Project*

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## A CALL TO ACTION: A Letter from the Funders

The San Francisco Bay Area is one of the most diverse regions in the United States. More than 30% of its population is foreign-born, and close to two-thirds of its residents under the age of 18 are the children of immigrants.

Nearly 250,000 Muslims—one of the highest concentrations of Muslims in the country—live, study, volunteer, work and contribute to the economies and communities of the Bay Area.

With a history of supporting and funding the American Muslim community, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, The San Francisco Foundation, the Marin Community Foundation and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP) partnered with the One Nation Foundation to create the One Nation Bay Area project in 2010. The One Nation Bay Area project complements the community foundations' and AAPIP's social justice and interfaith understanding, civic engagement and immigrant integration grantmaking portfolios.

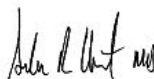
The One Nation Bay Area project commissioned the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding to help us—and the Muslim community members themselves—better understand who is in the community, what languages they speak, what their educational attainment levels are, what their immigration status is, what the levels of employment are, what civic engagement means to them, and to honor their resilience in the face of continued misperceptions about the American Muslim community.

This benchmark study provides historical, religious, and cultural context for a community that is often misunderstood and misrepresented – in our schools and communities. For the first time, this report gathers quantitative and qualitative research about the needs of the Bay Area Muslim community and suggests recommendations for philanthropy, public agencies, and the private sector.

We invite you to join us in responding to this study's call to partner with American Muslims in the Bay Area in order to leverage their strength and resilience, and to address the complex challenges of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, socioeconomically diverse community of enormous potential.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The San Francisco Bay Area (hereinafter “Bay Area” and “area”) has one of the largest Muslim populations in the United States: nearly 250,000 Muslims live in the six counties surrounding the city of San Francisco. It is home to a large number of immigrants who sought economic and educational opportunities, as well as refugees and their American-born children who fled strife, violence, and economic hardship. Many work in Silicon Valley, but survey results show the existence of clear regional socioeconomic disparities. This region is also attractive to immigrants because its diverse and inclusive atmosphere allows religious and cultural diversity to flourish. It also hosts a significant African American Muslim community and a growing number of converts.

Over the past thirty years, the Bay Area in general, and the Muslim population in particular, has experienced significant growth brought on by the region’s economic transformation and the emergence of an information technology industry that required a massive infusion of educated and skilled labor. This growth has resulted in the proliferation of mosques as well as community institutions.

In 2009, the One Nation Foundation announced an initiative to partner with community foundations in cities across the United States to support increased understanding between American Muslims and non-Muslims in their local communities. This foundation and its Bay Area project partners (Silicon Valley Community Foundation, the Marin Community Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation and Asian American/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy) commissioned the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) to conduct original research and provide demographic information and analysis about this specific community. In particular, there was a desire to identify its needs and assess the challenges it faces. Even though Muslims are an integral part of the area, their relatively small size often means that they are not included within the region’s more general needs assessments.

## Benchmark Nature of the Study

This benchmark study, the first of its kind on the Bay Area’s Muslim community, serves many purposes including providing groundbreaking data on its demographics, sense of identity, economic wellbeing, political and civic engagement, and the challenges that it faces. The resulting data is useful for academics and practitioners wishing to pursue further research, as well as for the community and its leaders, philanthropists and foundations, policymakers, and the general public. As a source of information, it will serve as an important tool for advocacy

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and media purposes, given that data about the community has often been misrepresented. Finally, the report will add to and complement the growing body of empirical data on local Muslim communities and the national portrait.

## Methodology & Limitations

The report offers a robust picture of the Bay Area Muslim community by drawing on data from both qualitative and quantitative research, as well as the principal investigators' deep knowledge and understanding of the community. This project utilized a mixed-methods research design with quantitative indicators coming from an in-person survey and qualitative data elicited from in-depth interviews and focus groups. Survey data was collected throughout the area with a total of 1,108 Muslim respondents aged fifteen to eighty-five. In addition to the quantitative survey, five focus group discussions with sixty-two participants aged sixteen to seventy-five were conducted, along with fifteen in-depth one-on-one interviews.

The analysis is broken into the following categories: 1) views on Muslim identity and religiosity, 2) views on civic and political engagement, and 3) needs and challenges facing the community and its institutions.

Before moving forward, it is also important to identify the limitations to the research. First, obtaining a representative sample of Bay Area Muslims is very difficult, time consuming, expensive, and therefore not feasible. Another issue was the high non-response rates for some questions posed. This included surveys that were partially completed or questions that were left blank. The length of the survey – over 100 questions – likely contributed to a low response rate. The final limiting challenge was the lack of detailed data on the community's subgroups and the subsequent difficulty in analyzing their major differences.

We anticipated these kinds of challenges in advance and employed a number of survey techniques, as well as including research assistants who were both culturally sensitive and known to the communities where they were gathering data. A fuller discussion of the research limitations and the countermeasures to mitigate them is in the body of the report.

## Key Findings

### *Overall Racial/Ethnic and Residential Demographics*

We estimate the Bay Area Muslim population to be approximately 250,000. The community, therefore, constitutes 3.5 percent of the area's total population and is one of the highest concentrations of Muslims in the country. The community is made up of a diverse mix of racial and ethnic groups who maintain their own cultures: South Asians (30%), Arabs (23%), Afghans

(17%), African Americans (9%), Asian/Pacific Islanders (7%), Whites (6%), and Iranians (2%). Based on the survey findings, the majority of Muslims live in the following counties:

**Alameda (37%),  
Santa Clara (27%), and  
Contra Costa (12%).**

A much smaller percent lives in San Mateo (6%), San Francisco (3%), and Marin counties (1%). The heart of San Francisco (the Tenderloin district) has a heavy concentration of Yemeni, Iraqi, Moroccan, Algerian, Indonesian, and Malaysian Muslims, most of whom are working class and small business owners. South Asian and Arab Muslims tend to cluster in the South Bay, Afghans are dominant in the East Bay, and African/African American Muslims mostly reside in Oakland. Overall, the bulk of the community lives along the “880 and 101 corridor,” the primary thoroughways to Silicon Valley and the East Bay.

### *Educational Attainment Levels*

Many Muslim immigrants arrived already highly educated; others attended colleges and universities after their arrival. The survey indicated that 74 percent of respondents have completed at least some college or more. Nearly 25 percent have completed graduate school, and 5 percent have earned a Ph.D. In comparison to the 2010 U.S. Census data examining other minority groups, the Muslim population is doing as well or better with regard to educational attainment.

Among immigrant Muslims, 67 percent spoke at least three languages. Over 71 percent of all respondents spoke a language in addition to English. This high percentage of bilingualism may be due to the fact that India and Pakistan have been primary targets for recruitment to the high tech industry and English is the language of instruction in these countries.

### *Levels of Income*

**The Median household income is \$70,686, lower than the average for the general Bay Area region (\$77,879).** This is significantly higher, however, than the national median household income for the general public (\$50,054 in 2011). However, the cost of living in the Bay Area is significantly higher than the national average.

**Significant income disparities are evident across geographic, occupational, and racial/ethnic lines.** About 11 percent of Muslim households make below \$20,000, almost 23 percent make below \$40,000, and 34 percent make below \$60,000. San Francisco had the highest percent of Muslims at the lower income level: 39 percent indicated they had less than \$40,000 in household income. This was followed by Alameda County, where one-third indicated they had less than \$40,000 in household income. Those whose household incomes had less than \$40,000 are distributed among Marin (27%), San Mateo (18%), Contra Costa (17%), and Santa Clara (10%) counties.

**South Asian Muslims had the highest income levels, with nearly half (49%) of them having a household income above \$100,000.** In comparison, those groups with the lowest proportion of household incomes above \$100,000 were Hispanic Muslims (15%), Afghans (10%), and African American Muslims (10%). These latter communities, as well as large numbers of South Asians, Iraqis, and Yemenis, are primarily employed in blue-collar professions, such as custodial staff and taxi cab drivers. An analysis of the qualitative data, presented in greater detail below, will illuminate the findings further.

### *Religious Practice and Identity*

On the whole, the majority of participants state that religion is important in their daily lives. A majority reported that they prayed five times a day, considered himself or herself religious, and identified themselves as Sunni Muslim. Based on the survey, more than half of the respondents identified as Muslims first (54%), felt that the Muslim experience has affected their life greatly, and felt that they have a fair or great amount in common with other Muslims (84%). Most of the respondents (68%) reported attending a mosque at least once a week. The survey indicates that just over 11 percent of the respondents were converts to Islam.

**After 9/11, Muslims were put in the national spotlight and many utilized the opportunity to educate and inform the public about their community and religion.** According to the focus group discussions and interviews, the increasing amount of Islamophobia has added to a sense of urgency. Some Muslims did not identify as such prior to 9/11. But as Muslims were increasingly portrayed in negative terms and Islam came under attack, they became more assertive in practicing and identifying with Islam and other Muslims. The data validates this. Nearly three out of four respondents felt that what happens to other Muslims has a “fair amount” or a “great” effect on their lives.

**The vast majority of Muslims believe in giving to charity, including the obligatory annual alms (zakat).** Over 71 percent of participants felt that giving zakat was somewhat or very important. Of those who responded, a plurality (18%) of Muslim households gave at least \$100 and \$100-\$500 (16%), followed by those who gave \$1,000-\$5,000 (15%). Those who reported contributions between \$1,000 and \$5,000 per year were in line with the average charitable donations of Americans and the other ethnic groups more specifically.

### *Civically and Politically Engaged*

**The majority of participants were civically engaged.** When asked if they had volunteered recently, 62 percent said they had volunteered in the past year by donating time to local charities and nonprofit organizations, being involved in their local mosque, or in similar activities. Some were involved in more indirect ways, such as helping extended family members by babysitting or driving children to soccer practice, providing meals for a sick relative or sending money back to their country of origin. Many of them, regardless of their type of civic engagement, can be seen

as “promoting the quality of life” in their communities (Muslim and non-Muslim) and felt part of the “larger social fabric” while personalizing community-wide problems.

**The survey suggested that Muslims who attend the mosque once a week were the most likely to have volunteered in the past year (48%).** Muslims who rarely or never attend the mosque were the least likely to volunteer (10%), whereas those who attend the mosque once a day or more were somewhere in the middle: 24 percent of them indicated that they had volunteered in the past year.

**Respondents were informed about politics, and there was strong agreement that American Muslims must be actively involved and politically engaged.** Muslims in the study increasingly vote and are engaged in addressing local and national social problems, as well as protesting U.S. domestic and foreign policies since 9/11.

## Challenges

The Muslim community faces many internal and external challenges. While these challenges were strongly conveyed in the focus groups and interviews, they are not unique to the Bay Area; rather, they are representative of the various challenges being experienced by Muslims nationwide.

*The external challenges include:*

**The Challenge of Islamophobia.** Participants identified Islamophobia, defined as the rising tide of discrimination directed against Muslims, especially school-aged children, as a major challenge. A full 60 percent of respondents said they knew someone who had been discriminated against; 40 percent said that they had experienced personal discrimination. About half reported knowing a victim of a hate crime, and 23 percent indicated that they had been victims of a hate crime.

**Conflict in Muslim-Majority Countries.** American involvement in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and other areas has placed local Muslim community members at the forefront of the ensuing discussions and debates. They are asked to respond on a regular basis to issues and events that are beyond their immediate control and circle of influence. In addition, as the United States begins to withdraw from Afghanistan and possibly other Muslim-majority areas, we expect a continued wave of immigrants. This external challenge, which was described as “ever present,” must be understood and planned for by humanitarian organizations and the community.

**Media Portrayals of American Muslims.** A strong theme in the research was that the community sees itself as the target of various media outlets, with everyone developing their own particular negative representation of Islam and Muslims. Respondents expressed frustration that the intermittent inclusion of a positive representation is often lost. This was held to have a profound impact upon the community’s – especially its young people’s – self-image and well-being.

**Muslims as “Double Minorities.”** Many Muslims face a double minority status due to their racial/ethnic and religious backgrounds. Many respondents described the community as not yet socially connected to the broader Bay Area society. In other words, its members are living within very narrowly constructed immigrant or community enclaves. Many participants described facing exclusion from the social, religious, and political space in that they were not actively sought out, even though they had experienced some inclusion in ceremonial events or were consulted about foreign policy considerations. We recommend further research to explore and understand the specific needs and challenges of those who face other “multiple minority” identities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) Muslims, Muslims with disabilities, etc.

*The internal challenges include:*

**Lack of Broad Vision and Planning.** Respondents pointed to a lack of an integrated long-term plan for the community, even though the number of successful groups, organizations, and centers is constantly increasing. Leaders admitted that strategic and resource planning is needed in all areas, as the existing community-wide framework has been reactive, due to a negative operating environment, rather than proactive and strategic. The interviews showed that even in areas of common concern (e.g., Islamophobia), organizations have neither developed a strategic unified response nor located the necessary resources to address this serious problem. In part, the problem arises from the community’s relative youth, wide diversity, and its members’ cultural and knowledge gap of how to operate institutions in the United States.

**Leadership Concerns and Limited Resources.** Participants indicated a major overlooked challenge: limited professional staff and the high reliance on volunteers present in Muslim institutional settings. They also cited the constant depletion of resources due to relief efforts for crises in the Muslim world and remittances sent abroad. Bay Area Muslim institutions, which are heavily dependent on regular donations from community members, have few alternative or diverse sources of financial resources. Leaders claimed that this forces the organizations to focus more on short-term planning and feel pressured to concentrate on raising the needed annual operating funds.

**Regional Socioeconomic Disparities.** While the Muslim community nationally and in the Bay Area is often described as generally middle to upper class and well-educated, survey results show the existence of clear regional socioeconomic disparities. For example, outside of Silicon Valley, income levels for immigrants and converts alike trail considerably behind those of their South Bay counterparts. Indeed, participants remarked that this economic disparity has brought about a certain level of tension among various segments of the community and a feeling that the more affluent Silicon Valley and immigrant business owners in the inner city are immune to the needs, concerns, and real pain felt by those struggling at the lower end of the economic ladder. A final complexity to this dynamic, according to respondents, is that women in families facing economic challenges run the risk of getting caught up in an endless race to make ends meet – sometimes without a supportive spouse, community, or religious institution.



**Challenges Related to Bay Area Muslim Women.** Participants in several focus groups pointed to distinct challenges faced by a number of Muslim women. For example, the mosque's basic architecture and layout often provides only a small interior space for women, including those with children. The lack of physical space and programs tailored for women, families, and children, not to mention their minority status, were reported as negatively impacting their sense of belonging, self-worth, and leadership potential. The lack of women in leadership roles or on institutional boards, which is both a result of, and an exacerbation of, these internal challenges, was the subject of several focus group discussions. The presence of female role models can contribute to change within the broader community. For example, respondents cited measured progress and positive examples within several Muslim and non-Muslim organizations that have made Muslim women's voices and Muslims' voices in general, part of their organizational framework.

**Lack of Engagement with Non-Muslims.** Even though Muslims have been in this country since its founding, they have had only limited strategic engagement with non-Muslim communities. The respondents stated that this self-imposed isolation was the norm and that meaningful relations outside of this socially constructed box are the exception. Yet this research also indicates that some level of civil society-led community cohesion and partnerships have emerged due to the crises affecting American Muslims. At the same time, some respondents asserted that various Muslim community-oriented groups and organizations had developed an isolationist attitude before 9/11, and even more so after 9/11, which made the possibility of coalition building and relations a non-issue for them. On a more structural level, this research strongly suggests that Muslim community organizations lack the necessary skills, institutional knowledge, and resources to develop long-term and meaningful relations with non-Muslims.

**Cultural and Religious Obstacles.** The evidence from this study suggests the ethnic and cultural norms for many Bay Area Muslims take precedence over those required by Islamic tenets (e.g., basic social guidelines for upholding universal brotherhood and sisterhood irrespective of particular creed, color, or language). These combined cultural, ethnic, and sectarian divisions have perpetuated a widespread lack of intra-Muslim community communication, coordination, and cooperation. Taken as a whole, it seems the Bay Area community has been unable to harness its diverse sets of talents into a functional unity; rather, more time is spent on the particular sub-group and only a limited effort is being made to form intra-Muslim community relations.

**Lack of Professional Development and Training.** More often than not, each immigrant group uses the organizing methods learned in, or imported from, back home, all of which were developed within a specific cultural, political, and social setting. Once deployed in the United States, they have limited viability and are non-transferable to the next generation. According to the focus group interviews and other follow-up research, basic skills pertaining to office management, record keeping, employee development, and operating manuals are a novelty for many institutions. Considerable resources would be required to change this dynamic. Even

institutions that have developed a certain level of knowledge have not transferred this knowledge to their broader memberships or shared it with other groups and organizations. We found little to no evidence of training for non-profit staff. Furthermore there was very limited mention by the participants, of basic activities such as regular retreats for setting institutional agendas and establishing strategic goals and objectives.

## Strengths

The preceding discussion on weaknesses must not overshadow an equally important acknowledgement and assessment of the Bay Area community's strengths.

### *The Un-harnessed Potential of Islamic Norms and Values*

**Community building and community cohesion.** A deeply held faith resonates across all layers of the community, as reflected by the 92 percent of respondents who expressed some level of religiosity. At the individual level, faith has served as a place of comfort for community members and helps many of them deal with the difficulties they face at the present time; however, it also calls upon them to act and be agents of positive action in the world. Family structures, which include a very low divorce rate, are another identified strength. This evidence suggests that families foster a generally cooperative spirit, a fact that may hold un-harnessed potential for community-building efforts. The high level of volunteerism and spirit of giving are directly connected to faith and family, as reflected in the survey results.

**Activism and resilience.** Despite the challenges faced by immigrant and minority communities, and more recently the post 9/11 context, these Muslim communities were able to grow and in many cases thrive. The subtext here is another important, if somewhat less-acknowledged, strength- resilience. Looking at the data as a whole, Muslims' resilient community-building efforts largely appear to be the product of a strong faith-based tradition of building institutions and a society that has – and continues to – contribute positively to bringing about a better world. This faith-based civic ethic is perhaps best reflected in a narrated saying of the Prophet Mohammed, whose guidance and life is a model for Muslims: "If the end of time comes upon you while you are planting a seed, continue planting it."

### *Additional Strengths to be Recognized and Researched Further*

**Women.** No discussion of community strengths can be complete without recognizing that Muslim women have built a critical number of Muslim institutions. The existence of their efforts proves their ability to overcome both internal as well as external cultural, religious, and gender barriers.

**Diversity.** As the survey shows, a solid segment of community members are highly educated, have cosmopolitan attitudes and behaviors, and have a certain linguistic prowess (66% speak between two and five languages). As noted above, this emerging community has made strides in

terms of partnering with other faith and minority communities and in terms of civic and political engagement. These should be built upon and celebrated. Finally, the Muslim youth and university students play a key role and are often on the front lines of representing their Islamic identity with dignity, innovation, and in collaboration with other student groups and communities.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the primary source data conducted during the course of this study's research, surveys, and focus groups. They are directed to community leaders and institutions, philanthropic and charitable foundations, and academic and policymaking circles.<sup>1</sup>

### *For Muslim Community Leaders and Institutions*

**Strengthen the community's institutional infrastructure.** Most organizations rely heavily on volunteers. The respondents emphasized that Muslim leaders should prioritize investing in people and organizational capacity rather than land, buildings and property. The emphasis on physically building mosques and schools should be balanced with efforts to staff and manage these and other institutions serving the community. This includes hiring skilled professional managers and staff to oversee proper management, administration and financial oversight.

**Empower women institutionally.** Community leaders should prioritize supporting woman-run organizations and expanding women's access to, and inclusion in, their institutions. Women should have an equal footing as partners in the ongoing process of community building and their involvement will increase the diversity of ideas and solutions to address community challenges.

**Share existing knowledge and resources.** This research paints a picture of a Bay Area community that is diverse but also divided and resource-depleted. Developing an intra-Muslim dialogue and relations across diverse segments in the community is needed to leverage the existing diversity for proactive and impactful projects. The leadership and trail-blazing work of the African American Muslim community should be analyzed. Members' linguistic abilities should be used in international business, disaster relief, translation services for immigrant and refugee communities, and in other areas. In this context, there should also be a heavy emphasis on developing partnerships with other populations facing similar immigration challenges.

**Develop the skills and capacities for increased civic engagement and consistent external community engagement.** Institutions should continue to support political participation, such as voter education drives, and "Get Out The Vote" efforts. Therefore such efforts should be expanded and supported in a concerted fashion. This should also include media training for community-based organizations that emphasizes effective messaging, outreach to allies, and developing strategies to counter the media's negative portrayal of Muslims.

**Reach out to disenfranchised/disenchanted Muslims.** The focus groups and interviews revealed that an unknown number of Muslims have opted to stay away from the mosque or community center. Many Muslims in this category are highly religious and spiritual, pray and fast during Ramadan, and yet feel ignored by the broader Muslim community. In some cases, this may require developing non-judgmental and less formal spaces focused on specific needs, such as including youth and addressing their concerns.

### *For Foundations and Philanthropists*

**Commit to long-term investment in empowering the community.** Projects directed at institution building and supporting new or continuing staff positions should be given the highest priority.

**Facilitate opportunities for coalition building and collaboration with non-Muslim civic organizations.** Funding should be directed toward specific programs and projects that have detailed and measurable outcomes over the period of the grant or funding cycle. In this regard, the work of One Nation Bay Area and its funding partners is a major step in the right direction.

**Support education and training programs on how to manage not-for-profit organizations, with special emphasis on successful models.** Non-Muslim partners can be very instrumental in providing appropriate educational and training materials that can serve as templates for the community.

**Train Muslim women seeking leadership positions in the non-profit sector.** Provide leadership development for executive directors and board chairpersons, especially for those who are women. This would be analogous to how certain underserved/disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups receive empowerment training based on their particular needs and capacities. Grant applications should seek information from funded groups about their male-female ratios concerning leadership and decision-making positions. Best-practice guidelines should be developed along with funding cycle workshops. Partnering with current female Muslim leaders in developing this area is highly recommended.

**Support social and legal services for American Muslims.** Such services include, but are not limited to, refugee counseling, immigration and naturalization services for documented and undocumented Muslims, job and language training, literacy services for adults, anti-domestic abuse services, and civic literacy programs.

**Pay special attention to immigration issues.** These can be divided into three large areas: 1) undocumented Muslims, 2) documented but facing delays due to normal immigration processes, and 3) documented and facing delays due to security-related issues. Foundation resources should direct funding toward each of these areas and provide grants to groups and organizations that can provide needed services to refugees, undocumented, and legal permanent residents facing challenges associated with attaining legal status and citizenship.

**Study Islamophobia in the context of other forms of bigotry and racism.** Unlike other forms of bigotry, anti-Muslim prejudice and hate currently have more mainstream acceptance than anti-Black or anti-gay attitudes. This mainstreaming of anti-Muslim bias has arguably seeped into society's cultural, political, and legal power structures. Foundations and grantees should support efforts by community organizations and allies seeking to create and sustain a counternarrative. Also, grants should be made to encourage academic institutions to sustain engagement with the study, documentation, and examination of Islamophobia. Finally, grants should focus on informing the public, law enforcement, and other civic institutions about Islam and Muslim cultural practices in order to reduce discrimination, improve services, and bring about long-term changes in how they respond to Muslims' needs.

**Facilitate Intra-Muslim dialogue.** Funding should target organizations that want to pursue dialogue by working on joint projects that can lead to long-lasting relations. This recommendation mirrors the one provided to community leaders above.

**Leverage high level of religiosity among community.** Foundations should take advantage of the strong faith within the community and provide opportunities to leverage the deeply held faith across all layers of the community.

### *For Educators and Academics*

**Foster research and work focused on Muslim communities.** Research priorities should include understanding Muslims as part of American society and not through the narrow lens of regional studies, eastern religions, and/or newly emerging security studies. We encourage educators and academics to look at them through the lenses of American studies, ethnic studies, sociology, political science, journalism, and similar disciplines. Educators should avoid or abandon the "othering" conception and one that views Muslims through a security lens.

**Deepen understanding of Islam and Muslims among educators.** This is especially important at the primary and secondary school levels where there are concerns over bullying. Teachers should be aware of any bullying directed toward Muslim children and be ready to deal with it both properly and effectively. Local school boards should partner with Muslim institutions that specialize in education and anti-bullying strategies. Educators should attempt to provide accurate information to their students about Islam and Muslims including the often biased literature in schools.

**Connect with communities outside the classroom.** Many college and university professors engage in "Community Engaged Scholarship" which focuses on research in underrepresented and vulnerable communities. Direct exposure to these communities can also serve to move academic institutions' research agendas beyond the above-mentioned narrow areas of focus. Partnerships should focus on providing access to the relevant training and resources in order to remedy those areas in which the community is highly underrepresented. It is part of each college/university's mission to address and bridge this gap and help communities facing discrimination and racism.

### *For Policymakers*

**Facilitate platforms to generate ideas.** Policymakers should hold workshops and sessions to exchange views, support emerging research, and seek expert opinions on a host of issues confronting the Muslim community and its partner organizations. Partnering with existing academic programs at local universities as well as community-oriented think-tanks can accomplish this goal.

**Challenge anti-Muslim narratives.** Policy makers, civic and elected officials should challenge anti-Muslim narratives and leverage their leadership in the community to stand with the Muslim community as allies in ensuring the rights of Muslims. Elected officials should enhance their understanding and engagement with the Muslim community to better serve the needs of the community they represent. This engagement is likely to affirm the community’s sense of belonging, foster greater civic engagement and ultimately counter—by deed—the process of “otherization.” This does not imply agreement with or supporting Islam; however it is an affirmation of community and shared values as Americans.

## About The Authors

**FARID SENZAI** is a fellow and the director of research at ISPU, as well as an assistant professor of political science at Santa Clara University. Dr. Senzai was previously a research associate at the Brookings Institution, where he studied American foreign policy toward the Middle East, and a research analyst at the Council on Foreign Relations, where he worked on the Muslim Politics project. He served as a consultant for Oxford Analytica and the World Bank. At the present time, Dr. Senzai serves on the advisory board of The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, where he has contributed to several national and global surveys on Muslim attitudes. He is a co-author of *Educating the Muslims of America* (Oxford University Press, 2009). His most recent book is *Political Islam in the Age of Democratization* (Palgrave, 2013). Dr. Senzai earned an M.A. in international affairs from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in politics and international relations from Oxford University.

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