



**newground** | A Muslim-Jewish  
Partnership for Change



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2019**

## ***Dear Friends and Supporters,***

A defining characteristic of the NewGround community is our consistent commitment to constructive discomfort. It can be uncomfortable to engage with people we disagree with. It can be uncomfortable to offer words of comfort in the aftermath of a tragedy. It can be uncomfortable to remain silent and listen.

That's why NewGround emphasizes relationship-building as the critical foundation to turn disquiet into constructive discomfort. When we become invested in understanding one another, listening becomes a responsibility, and our interactions become a source of productive dialogue rather than of contention.

As you'll see in our Annual Report, this year brought with it the opportunity to engage in this productive dialogue with new partners, communities, and audiences.

We're excited for all that is to come in the 2019-20 fiscal year. Through your generosity and support, we will continue to build lasting partnerships and maintain our trajectory toward a pluralistic society.

On behalf of the NewGround team, thank you for investing in our work – especially when it can be uncomfortable. Such is a sign of your courage.

***With gratitude,***

**AZIZA HASAN**, Executive Director

**RACHEL ANDRES**, Board Chair



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# FINANCIALS

REVENUE	Actuals 2018-2019
Individual Contributions	\$164,942
Board Contributions	\$64,500
Foundation Grants	\$161,650
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$391,092</b>

EXPENSES	Actuals 2018-2019
Programs and Services	\$259,424
Community Partners Admin Expenses	\$35,198
Fundraising	\$95,101
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$375,341</b>

# STATISTICS



100% board and staff giving



NewGround was featured 48 times in the press and media, including PBS, the Huffington Post, the Atlantic, the Jewish Journal and ABC 7 News.



22,945 Impacted through our programs, thought leadership, and public events.

# PROFESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP 2018-19 COHORT

In May 2019, NewGround brought to a close our 11th Professional Fellowship Cohort. Each year, NewGround selects 10 Muslim and 10 Jewish professionals, ranging in age from 25 to 55, to participate in a year-long intensive community-building fellowship. Through the program our fellows build connections and trust, learn conflict mediation skills, and use dialogue to engage in differences and disagreements. This process leads to self-awareness of personal biases, replaces assumptions and fear with understanding, and creates empathy for “the other.”



**20** change-makers graduated



**10,272** touched by our change-makers



# PROFESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP 2018-19 COHORT

## PROFESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP CHANGE-MAKER PROJECTS:

### ***Cooking Up Connections: Muslims and Jews Supporting Refugee Chefs***

One group of this year’s fellows supported TIYYA’s “*Flavors From Afar*” program and chefs. Released on World Refugee Day, they created a video project that spotlighted the ways in which TIYYA chefs, who are recent immigrants and refugees, used their culinary skills as a means of empowerment. While their project reaffirms that refugees and immigrants enrich our communities, and lifts up narratives that counter the bigoted rhetoric surrounding refugees.

### ***A Muslim-Jewish Conversation on Mental Health***

From the Pittsburgh Tree of Life Synagogue, the Christchurch Mosque shootings, to the Passover Poway attack, this year’s NewGround Professional Fellowship cohort has been bookended by tragedies. With these events as a backdrop, another group of fellows decided to address mental health issues for their Change-Maker project. Their video explores the unique challenges Muslims and Jews face as we work to address mental health issues in both of our communities.



# MAJIC HIGH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

April 30, 2019 marked the 7th graduation of our Muslims and Jews Inspiring Change (MAJIC) Cohort. MAJIC, a 10-month intensive program for high schoolers, offers a select group of Jewish and Muslim students the opportunity to build their leadership skills, create lasting relationships across faiths, and have an impact on important social issues in Los Angeles.



change-makers graduated



touched by our change-makers

## MAJIC CHANGE-MAKER PROJECT:

Created in partnership with The Righteous Conversations Project, this year's project centered on the story of Abdol Hossein Sardari, the "*Iranian Schindler*" and his friend Ibrahim Morady. Together, these two Muslims saved thousands of Jewish lives from the threat of Nazi persecution.

The video was released on Yom HaShoah-Holocaust Remembrance Day. Our hope is that this story, and our telling of it together as Muslims and Jews, serves as an example of the power relationships have to heal and transform our communities – and even to save lives.



## TESTIMONIALS



To this day, I am constantly asked what the best part about MAJIC was. People often assume it was producing our own films or being recognized by the city of Los Angeles, but for me, it was the friendships we formed.

**KATE, MAJIC ALUMNA**



NewGround has been a pivotal part in my personal transformation. Through our conversations, I recognize that to assume or make judgments on someone's character, before initially listening and asking what their personal narrative is, is to only read the spark notes on a person's character without truly understanding their soul. I welcome vulnerable conversations, in fact, they have become my favorite, I'm thankful for my new Muslim-Jewish community.

**SHEREEN, FELLOWSHIP ALUMNA**



While there is no silver bullet to repair the deep fractures evident in our society today, I believe that NewGround's work is an essential element to moving the needle towards healing. Building person-to-person relationships, listening deeply, communicating clearly and honestly and not shying away from conflict is the only path forward, in my mind. That is why I could not be more proud to be a NewGround board member and support its important work.

**TZIVIA SCHWARTZ GETZUG, NEWGROUND BOARD MEMBER**



Our Dinner and Dialogue group not only shared good food and much learning about our respective cultures and religions, we have become trusted friends who speak from our hearts. And surprisingly quickly. We have shared anguish when our communities have been attacked, and joy at an Iftar at Nabeela's house and Rosh Hashanah at Judy's.

**JUDITH GLASS, DINNER AND DIALOGUE HOST**



## OUR SIGNATURE EVENTS

The hate and violence that we feel surrounded by are a strong indicator that our community events are opportunities for us to break the boundaries of "us" and "them" and to make clear that we have each other's backs.

We thank everyone who sponsored, created and attended our events! Your generous support empowers NewGround's mission, and helped make this one of the most successful years in our organization's history.

### ***Breaking Bread and Building Bridges: Community Iftar***

Over 400 people convened in an intentional display of communal solidarity for our 10th Annual Community Iftar, at which we broke fast with those of our Muslim community who were observing Ramadan. The night of shared stories, prayer, and connections served as a reminder that during these difficult times, the relationships we build are key to transforming the communal life of our city.

The NewGround Iftar is one of the largest gatherings of Muslims and Jews, and allies at a Jewish synagogue in the country.



## OUR SIGNATURE EVENTS

### ***Honoring Our Trailblazers & Change-makers***

This year's NewGround's Suzy & Wally Marks, Jr. z"l Trailblazer Awards Luncheon honored Malala Fund CEO Shiza Shahid, and Rabbi Reuven Firestone, Regenstein Professor of Medieval Judaism and Islam at Hebrew Union College. The NewGround Fellowship alumni who created the "***Two Faiths, One Prayer***" project were honored for their poignant video seen over 300,000 times on Facebook and YouTube. The event served as a reminder that groundbreaking community work begins with relationship-building, and that, sometimes, that relationship-building itself is groundbreaking.

The NewGround community, in all our diversity, proudly celebrated our honorees. Fittingly, all of our speakers and honorees spoke to a common theme: the capability of relationships to connect and transform communities, both here in Los Angeles, and throughout the world.

### ***The Power of a Single Story: Spotlight Storytelling Event***

To be at our Spotlight Event was to know that in Los Angeles there exists a diverse group of Muslims, Jews, and allies ready to take risks together, ready to show up together for each other.

For our Muslim and Jewish storytellers, "***Taking Risks***," was both the theme they spoke to and what they actively wrestled with to harvest their stories and expose their own vulnerability to all of us. Every seat filled was by Muslims, Jews, and allies who listened deeply to our storytellers and came away with a better understanding of our common struggles and achievements.



## THROUGH IT ALL, WE STAND TOGETHER

Throughout this past year, it has often felt as though our communities moved from one tragedy to the next without having time to fully heal from the last. Our communities persistently continued to show up for each other.

On the night of March 13, 2019, our program co-directors, Andrea Hodos and Tasneem Noor brought together our Fellowship alumni to share how they were feeling about the controversies surrounding accusations of antisemitism from Congresswoman Ilhan Omar.



### ANDREA HODOS

At the same time alumni were arriving at my house, Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand were beginning to arrive at their mosques for Jummah Prayers.

Back in Los Angeles, the room was populated with Change-maker alumni from various cohorts ready to talk about the past week's current events. Many hadn't met each other before, but people spoke honestly about what was bothering them. People were able to hear and see the different ways their compatriots felt about antisemitism and Islamophobia. At the end of the evening, there had been multiple "Aha!" moments in which many participants were able to understand the perspectives of others. There was no full agreement, but there was compassion, acknowledgment, and curiosity.

In the midst of our conversations, one of our alumni checked her phone and realized what was happening in New Zealand.



### TASNEEM NOOR

When tragedies such as the one in New Zealand occur, numbness often arises. I ask myself questions such as, will this hatred ever stop? Who else will it engulf? And yet, I know numbing is not the answer.

I woke up and the texts started coming in — my Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim friends checking in on me sharing their love.

I arrived at the Islamic Center of Southern California at 12:30 pm, expecting the scheduled press conference to be over — maybe a few cameras and a few people giving speeches of solidarity would be left. I had been to press conferences before, it would be just another. But there were hundreds of people.

I saw one familiar face after another sharing support. Personally, though, the folks that penetrated my numbness the most were my Jewish friends — they had a look in their eyes that said, "we know how it feels. We are here for you." Without me saying anything, they knew the pain, the fear, and the questions that plague you when your community is hit by something painful and incomprehensible. In that moment they held space for me, and they were there for me.

Both of our hearts were lifted at the press conference. People convened in this sacred space in much-needed solidarity, and it was uplifting.

## MISSION IN ACTION

As part of our commitment to thought leadership and spreading our mission throughout Los Angeles, *NewGround* board and staff participated in a variety of panels, events, and programs throughout Los Angeles this year, directly reaching

**3,975 people**

- Aziza Hasan Delivered the invocation at Mayor Eric Garcetti’s National Day of Prayer at Getty House.
- *NewGround* staff and board participated in Religious Day of Pluralism at Los Angeles City Hall.
- Nurya Shabir, *NewGround* Board member was invited by Mayor Eric Garcetti to deliver the State of the City invocation address with Rabbi Jocee Hudson of Temple Israel of Hollywood.
- "White Nationalism and Nazism in the U.S.: Muslim and Jewish Insights and Responses" event organized by Repair featured Aziza Hasan, *NewGround* Program Co-Director Tasneem Noor, and Change-Maker alumni Marium F. Mohiuddin.
- Aziza Hasan spoke at at LA Voice event along with California Governor Gavin Newsom.

