

# AMCLI ADAPTS

Unlocking Leadership Potential during a Crisis

October 2020



**USC**Dornsife  
*Center for Religion  
and Civic Culture  
American Muslim Civic  
Leadership Institute*



# 2020 OVERVIEW

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute (AMCLI) and the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC) have continuously evaluated this dynamic situation and made the necessary decisions to protect the health, safety and well-being of our community. By April 2020, all in-person programming was put on pause. **AMCLI hopes to resume in-person programming in 2021**, pending public health realities and University regulations that allow for safe conditions to meet.

The strong relationships and connections built among fellows within the **AMCLI network played a significant role during the early months of the pandemic**. The network is like a building with many rooms, each with different needs. Some rooms needed brighter light, some

dimmer. Others had their light turned off. As the caretaker of the building, AMCLI seeks to ensure that the various needs of our fellows are met.

AMCLI fellows struggled with the impact of the quarantine on their personal/professional lives, as well as the future of their organizations when organizations are already tasked to do more with less. It is easy to keep working and forget about the breaks needed for one's physical, mental and emotional well-being. AMCLI realized that **our fellows needed a ritual and routine that would offer support, friendship**, a space to reflect together and make sense of the current situation.

As in the River of Life module in the AMCLI curriculum, sometimes joy and accomplishments are not obvious until participants pause and reflect back at where they have come from. Only then, they realize and **appreciate how much they have grown and become more resilient**.



The initial plan for AMCLI in 2020 was to hold our signature Regional Program retreat, the second Designing Your Strategy for Social Impact workshop, and 4-5 regional networking programs for our fellows.

Once the decision was made to pause in-person programming, AMCLI notified applicants to the regional program and workshops. With so many organizations embracing the pivot to online platforms wholeheartedly, AMCLI took a different approach and reevaluated our programs and curriculum, assessed the needs of our communities and **determined what we have to offer to strengthen and complement their skills** as leaders striving to lead during this crisis.

AMCLI decided to offer bite-sized workshops, which are refreshers for our fellows and appetizers for civic leaders who are new to our program. **We offered five AMCLI Online workshops**, ranging from leadership in online spaces, learning to approach conflict with less fear, fine-tuning strategy and leading with presence.

These workshops **reflect core concepts in AMCLI's four part model of leadership development**, which includes culture, strategy, leadership and management systems.

# AMCLI ONLINE WORKSHOPS

Leadership is critical more than ever as communities face unprecedented challenges during this pandemic. This time of crisis has required specific skills.

# 132

attendees in the  
AMCLI Online workshops

# 50%

participation in AMCLI Online  
workshops are from non-  
AMCLI Fellows

## LIST OF AMCLI ONLINE WORKSHOPS

- Leader, Know Thyself Online
- How to Design and Facilitate Meetings that Work
- Dealing with Difficult Conversations
- Designing Your Strategy for Social Impact During Times of Crisis
- Leading with Presence

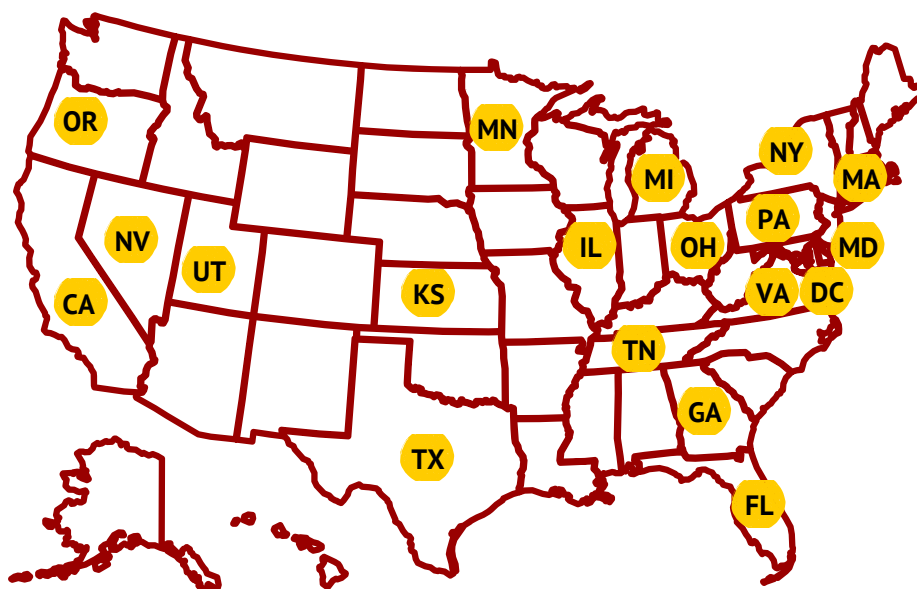
# \$5K

revenue from online  
workshops

AMCLI created an additional revenue stream from the online workshops.

## GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

Participants across the country were able to join AMCLI with virtual access to our programs and activities.





# PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS FROM AMCLI ONLINE SESSIONS

*"I used to think... and now I think..."*

"I used to think meeting leaders only think about agenda proficiency, but now I feel empowered to think about information, emotions and behavior."

"I used to think the truth can sometimes hurt, but now i know that it can also be a GIFT."

"I used to think people were outcome focused. Now I think people are both process-oriented and outcome-focused."

"I used to think that it was okay to 'off ramp' but now I understand that it is a distraction and has the potential to create an unnecessary issue for a person to have to try to resolve. I think it 'muddies the water.'"

"I used to think designing strategy is an unsurmountable process but thinking about it in terms of telling a coherent story really spoke to me and it seems much more doable now."

"I used to think emotions are important and now I think it requires a deliberate structured way to address them."

"I used to think being less than honest may be better in handling difficult conversations, but I now feel that being tactfully honest is better."

"I used to feel overwhelmed creating new programs/strategy, but now I feel like I have a good roadmap to guide me through it."

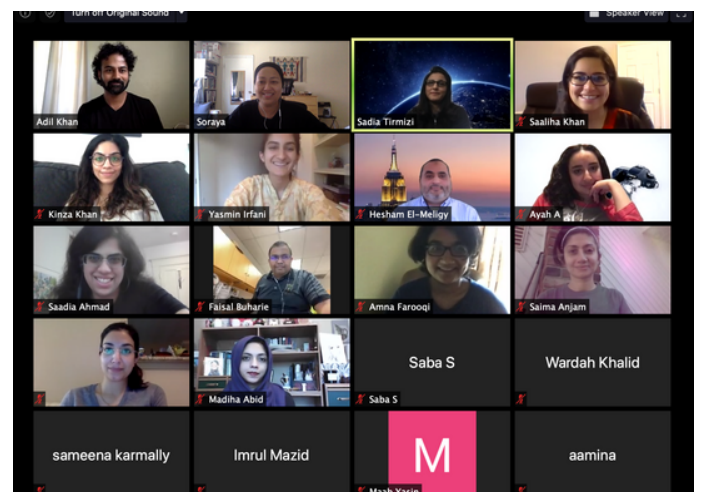
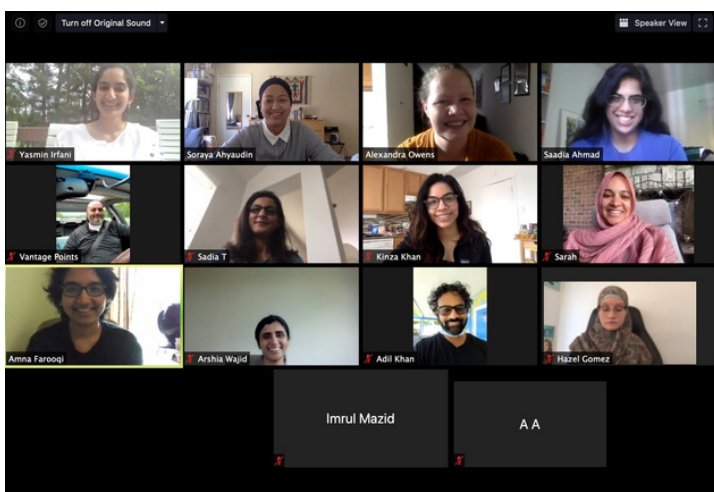
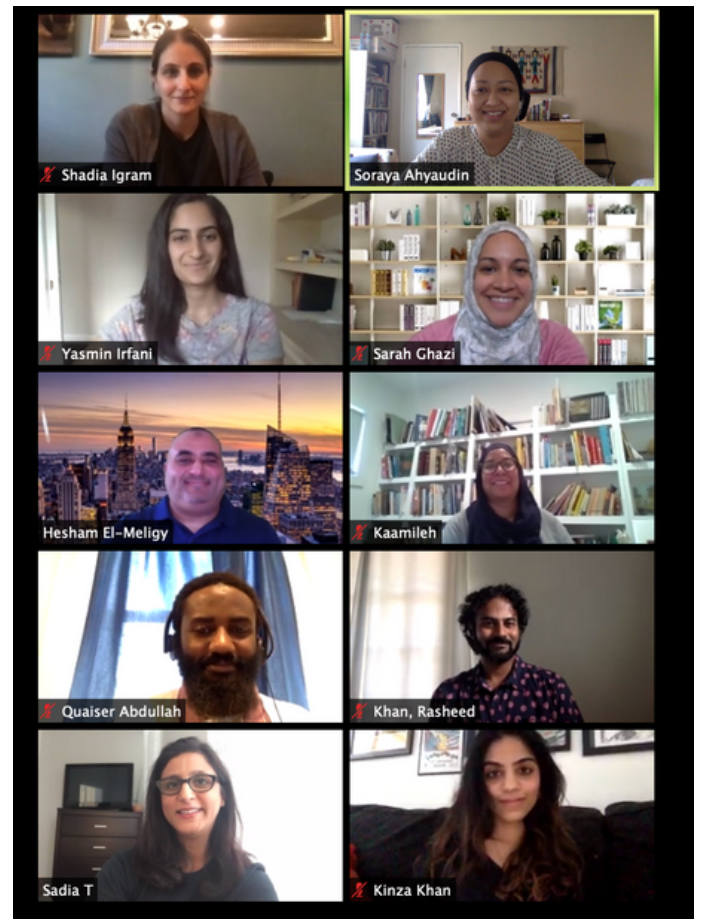
"I used to think that the wider the audience the better chance at success, but now I think focusing on a more defined audience is key"

"I used to think that strategy was something I could develop myself, but now I know that I need feedback from those I serve and my team."

# ENGAGEMENTS WITH AMCLI FELLOWS

## #MYPEOPLE HANGOUTS

AMCLI responded to fellows' feelings of frustration, isolation and even grief in 2020 by initiating #MyPeople Hangouts. Since March, AMCLI has hosted 16 hangouts for connection, support and grounding during this time of disruption. They have evolved to include participant programming, where fellows can learn from each other on topics such as communication, dealing with grief, self-care, and burnout.



## AMCLI LISTENS: TOWARDS RACIAL JUSTICE IN MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

The police-involved killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor this year sparked a wave of demonstrations and civil unrest across the world to demand an end to police brutality and racial injustice. **AMCLI responded to the pain in our community around racial justice issues** that surfaced and developed *AMCLI Listens: Towards Racial Justice in American Muslim Communities*.

The AMCLI Listens sessions are **intentionally curated to allow fellows the opportunity to share and reflect on the impact of racism on them and their communities** while creating discussions around the emerging and existing needs of communities fighting for racial justice. These sessions are co-facilitated by our fellows, *Hind Makki (AMCLI 1)* and *Quaiser Abdullah (AMCLI 7)*.

The programming for the series was **developed based on feedback from AMCLI fellows** received through two listening sessions. The sessions themselves are designed to hold space for Black Muslim identifying fellows, creating **safe spaces** where they are free to be vulnerable. The series also works to be clear about **brave spaces**, where marginalized groups are guaranteed support or



safety when discussing issues of importance.

The sessions that have been completed between the months of July and September are:

- AMCLI Listens: Towards Racial Justice (Listening Session 1)
- AMCLI Listens: Towards Racial Justice (Listening Session 2)
- AMCLI Listens: Wudu Film Discussion
- *Disrupting Muslim Issues: American Electoral Politics*
- *Repairing Harm in the American Muslim Community*

Several AMCLI fellows experts presented at these sessions sharing their expertise with the network. The AMCLI fellow experts who came on the present were *Sumbel Aurangzeb (AMCLI 12)*, *Youssef Chouhoud (AMCLI 6)*, *Imam Makram El-Amin (AMCLI 5)*, *Hazel Gomez (AMCLI 16)*, *Mohamed Gula (AMCLI14)*, and *Sana Syed (AMCLI 16)*.

# 2021 PROGRAMS



As AMCLI plans for 2021, we learned that **when all of the oars are rowing in the same direction, we rise to the challenge and adapt to changes that once seemed improbable.** We embraced discomfort together. We even learn that some online programs could be desirable for what it affords our participants. If we hold on to these learnings beyond a crisis, we will be less fragile in an already uncertain and changing context.

As we move through this crisis a quote from Maya Angelou reminds us that we are witnessing servant leadership in action:

*“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”*

## AMCLI COACHING FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

From our AMCLI Listens session, which provides the deep-dive discussions for our fellows, AMCLI will kick off 2021 with **AMCLI Coaching for Racial Justice**. The training will provide fellows with coaching skills and an understanding of coaching in contrast and relationship to other capacity building methodologies. It will have beneficial application immediately as **fellows will be able to use the coaching skills to enhance their work on promoting racial justice** within American Muslim communities. This program will enable fellows to use coaching skills to deepen personal, interpersonal and organizational development on race-equity issues.

## RELAUNCH AMCLI REGIONAL PROGRAM

For 2021, the signature AMCLI Regional Program will relaunched with a virtual flair.

Reflecting on the lessons learned from holding online workshops in 2020, AMCLI's current curriculum is being reviewed and redesigned for a virtual retreat.

Holding a retreat in a virtual platform presents a challenge for developing strong connections. This transition requires an active and dynamic process to design the structure and incorporate the right tools in order to ensure that the online program is as impactful as it is in-person.



# SUPPORTERS

**AMCLI THANKS OUR MAJOR SPONSORS FOR THEIR  
CONTINUED SUPPORT AND BELIEF IN THE WORK THAT WE DO.**

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*Center for Religion  
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*American Muslim Civic  
Leadership Institute*

American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute  
Center for Religion and Civic Culture  
University of Southern California  
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0520

PHONE (213) 743-1624

FAX (213) 743-1644

EMAIL [amcli@usc.edu](mailto:amcli@usc.edu)

FACEBOOK [facebook.com/amcli](https://facebook.com/amcli)