Multiple independent polls over the past several years have all found that nearly half of Americans don’t know a Muslim.

- 62% of Americans seldom (26%) or never (36%) have conversations with Muslims. 83% say they know a little (57%) or nothing (26%) about Islam. (PRRI, 2015)
- 55% of Americans say they do not know a Muslim. (YouGov and Economist, 2015)
- 7 in 10 Americans said they have seldom or even never had a conversation with anyone who is Muslim in the past year. (2011 PRRI)
- 62% of respondents say they don’t personally know a Muslim American. (Time, 2010)
- “Nearly half of U.S. adults (47%) say they do not personally know a Muslim, while a similar share (52%) do know at least one person who is Muslim.” (Pew, 2016)

Personal knowledge and relationships make a huge difference in how people perceive others. If more Americans personally know a Muslim, those people will be less likely to believe anti-Muslim propaganda. This proposition is backed up by data and by the experience of other communities in America.

- Americans who interact with Muslims hold more positive views of Muslims. (PRRI 2015)
- “The more likely a person is to know a Muslim, the more likely she is to express positive feelings toward Muslims as a group.” (FiveThirtyEight)
- Those who know LGBT individuals have substantially lower levels of discomfort and prejudice. (GLAAD, 2015)
- “Those who know a Muslim personally are much more likely to regard them as good neighbors and as hard-working.” (YouGov and Economist, 2015)

Mere exposure is not sufficient, but data clearly indicates that personal knowledge makes a real difference. Political Scientist Ashutosh Varshney refers to this as “everyday forms of engagement.” These interactions can be found in most towns and cities across the country, where neighbors greet each other warmly or make pleasant small talk in the grocery checkout line. Varshney and other scholars like Social Scientist Robert Putnam argue that a deeper form of engagement comes from associational ties (Varshney) and norms of reciprocity (Putnam).

In other words, when we join the parent-teacher association, attend club meetings, or organize an annual community service project with our neighbors, these interactions strengthen our relationships with each other and allow us to create peaceful and productive communities that live up to the American ideal.

At America Indivisible, we believe that all of these approaches, (a) promoting knowledge of Muslims and other diverse communities in a neighborhood, (b) building every day relationships between these folks, and (c) cultivating associational ties across these groups is the formula that will make us truly an America, indivisible.
WHAT DOES CIVIC NEIGHBORLINES LOOK LIKE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

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