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This is my Silk Road Story



MALIK'S STORY

"The stories we share act like stents used in heart surgery. They unblock the arteries of our heart."

When I walk down the street, I don't always feel safe.

When I was young, I was afraid of bullies who could attack me for any reason—didn't have to be a good one.

The day after 9/11, I felt like a child again, about to be mauled because of mass hysteria. I was standing in Daley Plaza, close to my office, hearing thousands of people chant in unison: USA! USA!

Such a beautiful word: USA.

My parents came to the USA to give us chances that Pakistan could never afford us. I received a home, education, and the opportunity to come out in the USA.

But in that rally, "USA" took on a connotation that would scare me. Am I sufficiently American looking enough? American acting? Behaving?

I wasn't.

It didn't matter what was in my heart. What mattered was what

I returned to a client site where they walked me to a room with a poster of Osama bin Laden. They would throw darts at Osama; these darts represented bullets. I don't know why they needed to show me that poster. Another client told me they were uncomfortable with me visiting their data center.



A nice client called me at home to let me know he knew I wasn't personally involved with the attacks on World Trade Centers.

An employee quit my office and during our exit interview said he could not work for a Muslim. Not after what happened.

I can't say I didn't have choices. I did.

I could choose to ignore or justify behavior of those around me. I could even join them in denouncing Muslims. Maybe even start to lie and say I'm really a Hindu.

Or, I could respond to the solemn duty each American citizen is called to: to defend the heart of our democracy.

That heart says I'm an American not because of what I look like but because of who I am, thanks to protections offered by the US Constitution.



That's why I co-founded Silk Road Rising with my husband Jamil Khoury.

In developing and sharing stories of America's Asian and Middle Eastern communities, each day I go to work to protect America from its worst inclinations.

The stories we share act like stents used in heart surgery. They unblock the arteries of our heart. Hate, fear, and lack of understanding paired with lack of curiosity, have blocked our ability to be citizens.

Our stories are the ideal prescription for today's civic ailments.

Complex problems don't always need complex solutions.

Sometimes, the most effective prescription is the easiest.

Stories are the solution. Stories help us overcome bias, fear, and hatred.

As Mr. Rogers said it so well, "There isn't anyone you couldn't love once you've heard their story."

Help us tell stories of people who are not given a chance to tell us about themselves.

Please make a gift today.

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Prefer to give by mail? Send your donation to: Silk Road Rising, 150 N Michigan Ave # 1970, Chicago, IL 60601

Prefer to give by phone? Contact executive director Malik Gillani at 312-857-1234 x202

Watch Rumana's Silk Road Story



Silk Road Rising board member and donor Rummana Hussain reflects on the need to tell stories that is representative of America's diverse communities. She talks about the impact of Silk Road Rising on herself and on artists we work with.

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