

Hello Friend, Read "An opening to a better understanding of Islam." [View Online](#) Or [Forward](#) to a friend.



Last week, Silk Road Rising's founders, Malik and Jamil, attended the 2017 Theatre Communications Group national conference in Portland, OR. While there, the "March Against Sharia" was taking place in cities across the United States.

In reflecting on the impact of these two disparate events that took place simultaneously, Malik wrote an OpEd which was published in today's [Chicago Sun-Times](#).

We hope you'll have time to read it. It is copied below.

Read: "An opening to a better understanding of Islam"

On June 10, as anti-Muslim rallies were held in 28 cities ("March Against Sharia") across the United States, I stood before hundreds of theater makers of diverse backgrounds and recited Surah Al-Fatiha.

Al-Fatiha ("The Opening") is the first chapter of the Holy Quran. For Muslims, each of our prayers begin with Al-Fatiha. Islamic scholars have referred to this chapter as Umm Al-Kitab, meaning "Mother of the Book."

Bismillaah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem (In the name of God, the infinitely Compassionate and Merciful) ...



Malik reciting the Surah Al-Fatiha at the TCG convening. Photo by Artists Repertory

After reciting "The Opening," the assembled gathering shared with each other the ideas and strategies gleaned from 25 breakout sessions that occurred over three days at the Theatre Communications Group (TCG) 2017 national conference held in Portland, Oregon, from June 8 through June 10.

In a courageous stand against Islamophobia, the leadership of TCG invited me to invoke God at the conference; to practice my faith openly in a space made safe by its very inclusiveness.

We often say that art heals. In reciting the prayer before my colleagues, my heart was healed from the pain I was experiencing on that very dark day. Reciting "The Opening" flooded my soul with light.

Afterwards, people came up to me to say thank you. I told them it was a privilege to be able to share my faith. One said that it was his privilege to witness my sharing.



Attendees at the TCG conference in solidarity. Photo by Portland Center Stage at The Armory.

As a theater producer, I've often said there is no theater without an audience experiencing the art. At the conference, reciting a prayer before a majority non-Muslim audience allowed me to experience Islam's essence: submitting myself to God's will, his divinity, and the space his creations made for me to live my faith openly. As a gay Muslim, the idea of being out and open resonates on multiple levels.

This is the holy month of Ramadan. From sunrise to sunset, Muslims across the globe fast from eating food and drinking water. We're not just abstaining from nutrition. Instead, we are reminding ourselves of the bounty of God's compassion in giving us access to food and water at the end of each day. We are bearing witness as a community against hunger, against hate, against a society that torments the weak.

How does the United States, a nation where in the first six months of 2017 more than 35 mosques have been attacked, vandalized, and burned to the ground, reconcile with the guarantee of full equality for all? How do we as a people resist hatred while anti-Muslim rallies are being held during the holy month of Ramadan?

Perhaps we invite Muslims into our homes and workplaces and ask them to share their faith with us, allowing us to bear witness to the commitment that practicing Muslims have made to live their faith openly and proudly.

I join Muslims across the United States to thank our allies and friends for coming out in full force against the so-called "March Against Sharia" rallies. But why not take advantage of Ramadan and its time of reflection to get to know us personally? When we recite Al-Fatiha in your presence, we're also creating an opening for you to bear witness to America's core promise of freedom of religion.

Al-Fatiha

Bismillaah ar-Rahman ar-Raheem

Al hamdu lillaahi rabbil 'alameen

Ar-Rahman ar-Raheem Maaliki yaumid Deen

Iyyaaka na'abudu wa iyyaaka nasta'een

Ihdinas siraatal mustaqeem

Siraatal ladheena an 'amta' alaihim

Ghairil maghduubi' alaihim waladaaleen

Aameen

[Subscribe](#)

[Past Issues](#)

[Translate](#) ▼

[RSS](#)

in the name of God, the infinitely Compassionate and Merciful.

Praise be to God, Lord of all the worlds.

The Compassionate, the Merciful. Ruler on the Day of Reckoning.

You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for help.

Guide us on the straight path,

the path of those who have received your grace;

not the path of those who have brought down wrath, nor of those who wander astray.

Amen.

Al-Fatiha translated by Kabir Helminski.

Malik Gillani is the co-founder of Chicago's Silk Road Rising, a theater company that produces plays about Asian, Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans.

Let's Stay Connected:



You are receiving this email because you are a Silk Road Rising supporter.

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update your profile](#) | [Forward to a friend](#)

Copyright © 2017 All rights reserved.

Silk Road Rising 150 N Michigan Ave Ste 1970 Chicago, IL 60601 USA