

Hello Friend Explore the intersection between LGBTQ and Muslim communities. [View Online](#) Or [Forward](#) to a friend.



From the Desk of Jamil Khoury

Omar Mateen made me gay. Well, not “made,” that honor belongs to God. But the homophobic mass murder Mateen committed on June 12, 2016, at Pulse, a popular LGBTQ nightclub in Orlando, Florida, reintroduced me and many others I know to earlier versions of our gay selves. Amidst the tremendous pain, shock, and anger of these past nine days, a certain phrase has been repeating in my head, “I’m gay again.” Emotions and fears I had long “forgotten,” coddled by the false sense of security evoked by a “safe” urban bubble, have resurfaced with a vengeance. Once again, I’m reminded just how vulnerable and at risk we are, parsing the world between those who hate us and those who do not. And once again, Pride is about the sanctity and dignity of queer lives, not commercialism, not political pandering, not premature victory dances.

“Omar Mateen dragged my husband Malik and I (and countless others) back to the intersection of homophobia and Islamophobia.”

-Jamil Khoury, Artistic Director | Silk Road Rising

49 precious lives, mostly queer, mostly Puerto Rican, mostly young, were taken in what the New York Times called “the largest mass killing of gay people in American history.” May their memory be eternal. It was also the deadliest attack within U.S. borders committed by a single gunman. It is not lost on us that the 29 year old Mateen was of a Silk Road background and that his heritage and religion quickly became “evidence” in explaining his motivations. Frankly, I have no idea what compelled Omar Mateen to massacre innocent people. Radical Islamism? Mental illness? Gay self-hatred? Steroid use? Some toxic combination thereof? To be honest, at this point, I really don’t care. All I know is that 49 lives will never be returned to us and that countless other lives will never be the same; that 53 human beings are fighting to save their lives, their bodies menaced from gunfire (an all too familiar scenario here in Chicago). Our thoughts and prayers go out to each one of them. I cannot even begin to imagine the unbearable pain being felt by the victims’ families and loved ones. How does one ever heal from such devastating loss?

Amidst all the horror arose very personal struggles as well. In a stinging footnote to his trail of blood, Omar Mateen dragged my husband Malik and I (and countless others) back to the intersection of homophobia and Islamophobia. Not a place we wanted to be. Certainly not during the holy month of Ramadan and Pride month. And yet the demands of responding, and kicking into activist mode, were impossible to resist. Malik in particular has been demonstrating critical leadership at this time as a gay Muslim man. In calling on Muslim communities to acknowledge, challenge, and weed out homophobia, and to welcome and affirm LGBTQ Muslims as full members of the Muslim community, Malik has inspired people of all faith backgrounds to hold their communities accountable for hate and intolerance. “If anything, Orlando should bring Muslims, non-Muslims, and gay people closer together, not drive us further apart,” he has said. Vilifying

narrative, but it wreaks emotional and physical havoc on millions of our fellow Americans, to the great detriment of us all. Scapegoating Muslims and ascribing collective guilt is immoral and wrong and it needs to stop!

So okay, I'm gay again and I'm proud, but I'm also really, really sad. Fortunately, my faith in the healing power of storytelling is stronger than ever. There's a lot of catharsis out there just waiting to be staged.



Executive Director Malik Gillani's Advocacy

In an article for [NY Daily News](#), Silk Road Rising's Executive Director, Malik Gillani, speaks out about being a proud, gay, Muslim American and his hopes for action following the tragedy in Orlando. Founded by Gillani and his husband, Jamil Houry, Silk Road Rising's work is a standing testament to the need for art that promotes tolerance, acceptance, and love in America and beyond. Read the full article by clicking below.

“My wish as I mourn the lives lost in Orlando? Let all families hold their loved ones dear; and let our LGBT American Muslims live their lives with dignity, openly and freely.”

-Malik Gillani, Executive Director | Silk Road Rising

DAILY NEWS

Malik continued the conversation in an article for the [Chicago Tribune](#), written by journalist Mary Schmich, where he discusses the humanizing power of storytelling. He also speaks about his obligation to illustrate that it is possible to be both gay and Muslim. Read the full article by clicking below.

“We cannot bring people back from the dead, but wouldn't it be beautiful if we could use this to become better people?”

- Malik Gillani, Executive Director | Silk Road Rising

Chicago Tribune

**Deep Dive Into the Issues of LGBTQ Muslims
The Imam and the Homosexual**



Playwright Jamil Khoury wrote "The Imam & the Homosexual" as part of the development process for his play, *Mosque Alert*. It probes the "strange bedfellows" political alliance between Imam Mustafa Khan (played by Khurram Mozaffar), spiritual leader of a besieged Naperville, IL mosque, and Carl Baker (played by Nicholas Cimino), the gay son of the imam's chief nemesis. As Imam Mustafa struggles to reconcile his support for civil rights with his religious and cultural objections to homosexuality, Carl imagines the Muslim and LGBTQ communities joining forces against their common enemies.

Further Reading

Interested in learning more about the intersections between Muslim and LGBTQ communities? Check out some of the articles below for more information about the prejudices these marginalized people face on a daily basis.



What you should know about being LGBT and Muslim, from a leading LGBT Muslim group Janell Ross | *The Washington Post* [Read More »](#)

LGBT Muslims do exist, and they are grieving | Amunallah De Sondy | *Chicago Tribune* [Read More »](#)

Orlando shooting: It's different now, but Muslims have a long history of accepting homosexuality | Shoib Daniyal | *Scroll.in* [Read More »](#)

Gay Pride, Ramadan, and Solidarity After Orlando | Muneer I. Ahmad | *The Nation* [Read More »](#)

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