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Silk Road Rising Receives ArtPlace America Grant

We have terrific news to share with you: **Silk Road Rising has been awarded ArtPlace America's National Grant to support our civic engagement & new play project, Jamil Khoury's *Mosque Alert!*** Of the 38 recipients this year, we are the *only* ones in Illinois. This \$150,000 grant (the largest we've ever received) will allow us to bring our *Mosque Alert* residency to Naperville, IL. We are so grateful for ArtPlace America's investment in Silk Road Rising and for supporting our efforts to build an inclusive community.



ArtPlace America—a collaboration of a number of foundations, federal agencies and financial institutions—focuses on creative placemaking: projects in which art plays an intentional and integrated role in place-based community planning and development.



What is *Mosque Alert* and why is it needed? *Mosque Alert* is an artistic & civic engagement project that dramatizes the difficulties Muslims face across the country, due to Islamophobia and cultural biases, when attempting to build houses of worship. It began as an online civic engagement project in 2011 to serve as an artistic response to the "Ground Zero" mosque controversy in New York City.

Over the next eighteen months, the ArtPlace America grant will allow us to extend the reach of our work. Last summer, Jamil Khoury and Malik Gillani—the founders of Silk Road Rising—found the ideal site for their fictional mosque: The Old Nichols Library in downtown Naperville. Working with ten community partners in downtown Naperville, we will use *Mosque Alert* to generate community-wide conversations that will examine fears associated with the building of this fictional mosque.

The project also utilizes video plays, community discussions and live stage work. The final artwork will be a production of *Mosque Alert* at Naperville's North Central College in Fall, 2016. The stage play will integrate comments and feedback gathered from upcoming community engagement programs.



Silk Road Rising has been working in Naperville for the past two years on the theme of Muslim American integration. [This video](#), by Naperville Community Television 17 (NCTV17), documents one of our most recent presentations at the Naperville Public Library. You can also [read an article](#) by Susan Frick Carlman of *The Naperville Sun*, discussing one of the presentations we recently conducted in Naperville.



This is the first time Silk Road Rising's artwork is directly being used by a specific neighborhood community. We hope *Mosque Alert* helps people become aware of their biases toward Muslims and will assist allies who wish to extend their support to the Muslim community. Long-term success will have been achieved if in future deliberations, both in Naperville and around the country, conversations about mosque building move away from anti-Islamic rhetoric toward a thoughtful, civic discourse—one that creates a welcoming community for Muslims. We invite you to engage with [Mosque Alert >>](#)

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