

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

It's a polycultural world after all.

[View this email in your browser](#)



From the Desk of Jamil Khoury

Co-Founder and Co-Executive Artistic Director

History indicates a certain inevitability that a great idea becomes a living practice. And it is the compelling, sentient, malleable nature of a great idea that invites community, artistry, and societal change. Which is why we at Silk Road Rising are pleased to introduce an ambitious new project called Polycultural Institute.

Defined as a “think and create tank,” or “idea generator,” Polycultural Institute generates discourse and representation that promotes polyculturalism as a catalyst for social cohesion. At present we are building a diverse community of artists, activists, scholars, and creative practitioners who share a commitment to cultural interchange, the production of knowledge and narrative, and politics that advance multiracial democracy.

Additionally, a Polycultural Institute website is currently being developed



be launched in the latter part of 2022.



Polycultural Institute

What is Polyculturalism?

Polyculturalism is the theory that cultures are complex and continuously evolve and transform through dynamic interchange. It assumes that cultures are fluid and flexible, not static and fixed. Polyculturalism promotes the understanding that societies consist of cultural communities that actively intersect and redefine themselves, and that communities are composed of unique individuals who embody multiple cultures and identities at any given time.

What is Multiculturalism?

Multiculturalism is the theory that marginalized and minority cultures within a diverse society best succeed through collective agency and/or autonomy. It acknowledges and affirms the differences between cultures, while challenging the power of the dominant culture. Multiculturalism promotes the understanding that distinct cultural communities must be afforded recognition and representation, often within institutionalized frameworks: the state, the corporation, the university, the theatre company, etc.

For years we've been saying that Silk Road Rising was "born of a

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

revealed that for us the concepts of aesthetic and politic are largely synonymous and best articulated in tandem. If our initial impulses were multicultural (creating space for Asian and Middle Eastern American stories), they evolved into instincts that are decidedly polycultural (exploring connections and possibilities between cultures). Those impulses and instincts remain a synergistic life force within our company.

In 2014, Silk Road Rising released a video play called [Multi Meets Poly: Multiculturalism and Polyculturalism Go on a First Date](#), that dramatizes many of the differences and tensions, as well as points of convergence, between these transformative ideas. In the making of the video play we intentionally avoided “taking sides” (although some may contest that). We didn’t view multiculturalism and polyculturalism as a binary, advancing a “zero sum game” or “either/or proposition.” Instead, we understood the ideas as being in a “proximitous dialogue” with one another.



Gordon Chow and Virginia Lee Marie Martinez in Jamil Khoury's 2014 *Multi Meets Poly: Multiculturalism and Polyculturalism Go on a First Date* (34 minutes)

As a culturally diverse arts organization, Silk Road Rising is greatly indebted to multiculturalism. We honor its milestones and acknowledge its potential as a strategic intervention. But we’re convinced that polyculturalism more effectively challenges the distancing and separation that undergirds systemic racism and inequality. And we’re painfully aware of

[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)

project. which is why we're choosing, in part, to focus time, energy, and resources on building Polycultural Institute.

We're interested in cultural interchange because conversation and collaboration between cultures can create entirely new realities. We're interested in social cohesion because it's essential to healthy democracy in a pluralistic society, and because polarization is quite frankly destroying us. And we're interested in challenging forces of division and fear because when working collectively "a rising tide lifts all boats," because building bridges is always better than reinforcing silos, and because "divide and rule" inevitably leaves us divided and ruled.

If human beings are both tribal and curious, we choose to elevate the curious drive of our humanity. Polyculturalism offers blueprints for artistic innovation, coalitional politics, and cultural transformation. Polyculturalism produces a politics of hope and a politics of interdependence rooted in mutuality. And polyculturalists understand intuitively that preserving culture and changing culture are not mutually exclusive practices but essential parts of the same phenomenon.

After Labor Day, I will begin sharing excerpts of my new essay-in-progress, "The Case for Polyculturalism." I look forward to contemplating a polycultural worldview with you and exploring a vision of America that is about being linked rather than ranked.

Welcome to Polycultural Institute!

**Support a Vision of America that is
Welcoming, Polycultural, and
Dynamic.**

[Subscribe](#)

[Past Issues](#)

[Translate ▼](#)

Open, Willing, and Creative.

Support Silk Road Rising and Donate Today

Copyright © 2021 Silk Road Rising, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).