



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Who's telling authentic stories about Muslim Americans?

Kashif Shaikh

In This Episode...

Kashif Shaikh is the founder of the Pillars Fund, a Chicago-based philanthropic institution financed by Muslims to support Muslim organizations, research and art. Shaikh speaks with Eboo about what inspired this ground-breaking fund, why he supports Muslim artists and what impact Pillars is having on projects in Hollywood, Arkansas, Brooklyn and beyond.

Episode Guest: Kashif Shaikh

Kashif Shaikh is co-founder and executive director of Pillars Fund, a philanthropic organization that amplifies the leadership, narratives, and talents of American Muslims. He currently serves on the board of directors of the Peabody Awards (East Coast division), Chicago Humanities Festival, Donors of Color Network, and Mortar, and has written for The New York Times, Vice, and NPR, Variety, among other outlets.

Suggested Discussion Questions

- Kashif talks about how he saw philanthropic institutions for other religious groups and sought to emulate them with the Pillars Fund. Is there a time you've looked to a different faith tradition and admired their institutions? What do you think stuck out to you?
- Eboo and Kashif talk about how, as the American narrative has made progress in fighting Islamophobia, awareness of Islamophobia has become more discursively prominent than Islamic faith, joy, or celebration. How do you think we can center marginalized communities' joys and achievements as well as their difficulties?
- Eboo and Kashif discuss the importance of representation and how it has changed the landscape for Muslim Americans. Can you recall a moment when you first saw a Muslim American portrayed positively in media? What about that moment stuck out?
- Eboo and Kashif discuss the ways in which the landscape for Muslim Americans has changed since 9/11. Eboo fears that Muslim youth are coming of age in an environment that encourages them to identify with their victimization instead of their strengths. Kashif agrees that this is affecting Muslims' perceptions of themselves, but points out that many Muslims are still affected by prejudice and stigma, and says that both things need to be held.
- What was one of Eboo's points on this issue that resonated with you? What was one of Kashif's?
- Eboo says that Kashif's initiative is a case study of someone bringing the best of their tradition to the American potluck. What is your contribution to the American potluck?