

Simon Says

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Qais Essar: Artist Reflection for American Muslim Futures

FULL TRANSCRIPT (without timecode)

Hello. I appreciate you taking the time to listen to my work. My name is Qais Essar, currently living in Payson, Arizona in the heart of the Tonto National Forest.

A just future is one where all people have the opportunity to live with dignity. Where all can thrive in society and have access to the same inalienable rights and opportunities regardless of race, creed, or nationality.

This piece featuring sarod maestro Alam Khan envisions a new global genre of music. By blending elements of Indian classical music, jazz, and hip-hop, this composition speaks to a diverse demographic of people.

As music is a common thread shared amongst all, by dissolving barriers that exist, art can serve as a bridge. To gap the divide that may endure between peoples. Music is permeable, and can serve as a method to penetrate walls that may exist between neighbors in a way and at a level where pure semantics may fail.

Proper representation of the Muslim community is important. Now more so than ever as deceptive media attention has led to severe polarization within communities. Focusing on violence and unrest has led most people to have a skewed perspective about the Muslim community.

By learning about one another we can dispel misconceptions that may be held. Appreciating and valuing culture is an important part of valuing the people behind that culture. Through knowledge we can focus on the numerous similarities that unite us, rather than the few differences that divide. In this manner artists serve as cultural ambassadors. Exposing people to beauty they have not yet imagined.

At the end of the day, we are all human beings. Sharing a human experience on shared soil.