

Obstacle Course

A Video Play
by Jamil Khoury

Adapted from Jamil Khoury's stage play *Mosque Alert*

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DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Obstacle Course was first workshopped in January of 2018 at Tufts University's Department of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies culminating in two public staged readings directed by Irem Secil Reel Sen.

In April of 2018, *Obstacle Course* received a professional staged reading, directed by Michael Mendendian, as part of the Raging Issues of Today Conference, hosted by the InterReligious Institute at Chicago Theological Seminary.

THE CAST

(in order of appearance)

DALILA KHAN	Alka Nayyar
LAYLA NASER	Noha El Ganzouri
NASREEN QUDSI	Annalise Raziq
OMAR QABBANI	Fouad Teymour
IMAM YUSSEF BAIG	Kamal Hans
DONNA HILL	Gabrielle Lott-Rogers
ROSE GOODWIN	Molly Lyons
KIMBERLY JONES	Rachel Sledd
SALLY GILLESPIE	Megan Storti
PAUL SCHMIDT	Steve Merle
JEFFREY BAKER	Luke Daigle
CARTER THOMAS	Kaelan Strouse
REVEREND TINA CALHOUN	Robin Chaplik
MOHAMMAD GHAZALI	Sami Ismat
WILL PARK	David Rhee
HADIYA YAQUB	Anu Bhatt
ZAIN BADAWI	Revon Yousif
IRAQI CHRISTIAN WOMAN	Adrienne Cury
JAPANESE AMERICAN WOMAN	Cheryl Hamada
DISSIDENT MUSLIM WOMAN	Annelise Ahmad

EXTRAS

(in alphabetical order)

Yusra Al-Shawaf, Jaclyn Amber, Francesca Atian, Danny Au, Bryan Bosque, Cathleen Brumback, Bonita Bryant, Brandon Campbell, Gordon Chow, Meg Collins, Kate Cuellar, Chelsea David, Jill Dempsey, Charlie Diaz, Henrietta Dombrovskaya, Tina El Gamal, Carol Emmons, Chuck Emmons, Brent Ervin-Eickhoff, Jessica Ervin-Eickhoff, Al Gillani, Malik Gillani, Mabel Guzman, Mary Lou Haddad, Harrison Hapin, Melissa Hubbert, Aayisha Humphrey, Heidi Katz, Michael Kocken, Sophie Hernando Kofman, Vanessa Kucera, Teresa Kuruvilla, Andrea Lee, Hind Makki, Ina Marks, Cookie Marks, Jeanne Martineau, Michael Mead, Evemarie Moore, Rosalind Morris, Cody Pariset, Joanna Riopelle, Dr. Elaine Ades Sachnoff, Lissa Schwartz, David Morgan Shaw, Brian Sheridan, Rachel Silvert, Linda Smedberg, Ian Michael Smith,

Toma Lynn Smith, Susanna Souza, Tracy Strimple, Carol Ann Tan, Krishna Tateneni, Tiffany Taylor, Priyank Thakkar, Anne Thompson, Kate Wulle-Dugan, Xu

THE PRODUCTION TEAM

Executive Producers	Malik Gillani
	Jamil Khoury
Director	Dale Heinen
Director of Photography, First Camera Operator	John Wesley Norton
Editor, Color Correction	Brittany Alsot
First Assistant Director, Second Camera Operator	Nicole DePue
Second Assistant Director, Properties Designer	Andy Lynn
Line Producer, Script Development Dramaturg	Corey Pond
Post-Production Script Editing Support	Malik Gillani
Set Designer	Milo Bue
Costume Designer	Marci Rodriguez
Original Composition	Ronnie Malley
Foley Artist	Jeffrey Levin
Location Sound Mixer	Jacob Brown
Post-Production Sound	Nate Green
Gaffer	Alexander Andro
Grip	Jack Gonsa
Hair and Make-Up Artist	Dora Kwak
Hair and Make-Up Assistant	Patrick McKay
Hair and Make-Up Assistant	Matt Johnson
Script Supervisor	Sharon Pak
Technical Director	Johnnie Schleyer
Charge Artist	Zhanna Albertini
Production Assistants	Brittany Alsot
	Adia Clark
	Samia Malik
	Ashley Mister
	Nadya Naumaan
	Bryce Parsons-Twesten

SETTING

Naperville, Illinois. Sometime before the 2016 US presidential election.

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

DALILA KHAN
LAYLA NASER
NASREEN QUDSI
OMAR QABBANI
IMAM YUSSEF BAIG
DONNA HILL
ROSE GOODWIN
KIMBERLY JONES
SALLY GILLESPIE
PAUL SCHMIDT
JEFFREY BAKER
CARTER THOMAS
REVEREND TINA CALHOUN
MOHAMMAD GHAZALI
WILL PARK
HADIYA YAQUB
ZAIN BADAWI
IRAQI CHRISTIAN WOMAN
JAPANESE AMERICAN WOMAN
DISSIDENT MUSLIM WOMAN
VARIOUS AUDIENCE MEMBERS

CHAPTER ONE - REHEARSING

In a conference room at an architectural firm in Naperville, Illinois. Images of the proposed Al Andalus Library and Community Center are projected behind architect Dalila Khan, who is stylishly dressed and wearing a headscarf. Three of Dalila's friends, Layla, Nasreen, and Omar, are seated as she speaks.

DALILA

It's an honor and a privilege to be standing here today before Naperville's esteemed Planning and Zoning Commission. I'm Dalila Khan, an architect with extensive national experience designing houses of worship. I'm also a proud member of Naperville's Al Andalus Mosque. As you know, our community has outgrown our existing mosque. Although it's a building we're all very fond of—as modest and non-descript as it may be—the time has come for us to enter the next phase of our story—the proposed Al Andalus Library and Community Center, a magnificent new complex we hope to build in the heart of downtown Naperville.

Our dream resides at the much beloved, though long defunct, Old Nichols Library. We envision a full restoration of the original 1898 Old Nichols, as a first-of-its-kind, community-wide library dedicated to the study of Islam and world religions. In addition, we'll tear down the library's annex, and construct an entirely new one—a modern, eco-friendly, state-of-the-art prayer hall and community center, blending traditional Islamic design elements within a sleek, contemporary American aesthetic.

It is neither imposing nor overwhelming, it is elegant and subtle, a handsome, forward thinking, clean design that pays tribute to the past and projects confidence on to the future.

And with that, ladies and gentlemen, I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

LAYLA

Dalila, darling, that was fabulous.

(speaking to the group)

Now here's the scenario, people. Dalila has just introduced our project. The notoriously deadpan members of the planning and zoning commission are beginning to warm up to her. *(imitates three different members of the commission)* "Oh, what an impressive design. Brava." "It blends in so seamlessly with its surroundings. Beautiful and refined, yet so unobtrusive." "Who knew that a woman in a headscarf could be so creative, so expressive?" But (!) — it's still a Moslem mosque! So let's help a sister out and start channeling our inner white person. We'll pretend we're them. The floor's now open to questions, ladies and gentleman.

Nervous pause.

We're immigrants. We know how to role play.

The scene continues with the friends playfully imitating various "white people" in a highly stereotypical manner.

NASREEN

Right. Okay. Excuse me, Ms. Delilah-la...Delala. Now you know I have nothing against Moslems, in fact, some of my best friends are Moslems. It's not about y'all being terrorists.

LAYLA

I think you mean terrorist sympathizers. It sounds more polite.

NASREEN

This isn't about religion. I'm simply concerned about traffic.

DALILA

I share your concerns. We've done exhaustive studies on traffic flow and the estimated number of cars [and our conclusions are]-

OMAR

Of course I'm not worried about them blowing us up. I'm worried about parking.

DALILA

Thank you for bringing that up. Downtown Naperville has thousands of free parking spaces within blocks of our proposed masjid.

LAYLA

But what about garbage disposal?

OMAR

Yeah, do you Mohammedans even recycle?

DALILA

The plans we've submitted are certifiably sustainable and eco-friendly. Ours will be the greenest building in all of DuPage County.

NASREEN

But it's the height! Too, uh...

LAYLA

I know, I know. It's the setback!

NASREEN

The setback, yeah.

OMAR

No! It's the building materials!

NASREEN

Exactly!

LAYLA

By golly, it's the color scheme!

OMAR

An atrocious color scheme. And even worse, heaven help us, the landscaping!

LAYLA

Yes! Way too much...grass!

OMAR

Grass...

DALILA

Are you folks doing alright? You seem confused.

NASREEN

Personally, I have been losing sleep worrying about their drainage plans.

LAYLA

Yuck, sewage. So filthy and smelly.

OMAR

The real issue is overdevelopment and overcrowding.

LAYLA

Precisely! Do we really need another building in Naperville? I say return that patch of land to the buffalo.

OMAR

And what's wrong with sitting in pews? They take up so much space, those Moslems, prostrating all over the floor.

DALILA

It is true that the practices of Islamic worship require more square footage per person [than Christian]-

NASREEN

Now I'm not a Freudian or anything but I had this dream last night that I turned my TV on to the scary movie channel and what was playing? "The Mosque that Ate Naperville."

OMAR

Oh my God. What do you think it meant?

NASREEN

It was definitely an omen.

LAYLA

Bad zoning karma.

NASREEN

Hey, you, woman in burka. What's the difference between a Muslim, an A-rab, a terrorist, and a towel head?

DALILA
Excuse me?

LAYLA
It's those darn pejoratives. They keep evolving.

OMAR
Is it true that Moslems broadcast their call to prayer five times a day? From loudspeakers!

NASREEN
Why that's noise pollution! You'll wake up the babies and frighten the elderly.

DALILA
Rest assured, my good people, in a predominantly non-Muslim environment like downtown Naperville we would never broadcast [our call to prayer]-

LAYLA
(to Nasreen)
Yoohoo! Pardon me, hillbilly white trash woman...with money.

NASREEN
Who, me?

DALILA
Not a Southern accent, please!

LAYLA
(to Nasreen)
Yes, you. Do you belong to a church?

NASREEN
Why, of course.

LAYLA
In Naperville?

NASREEN
Well, yes.

LAYLA
By any chance does your church ring bells on Sunday mornings?

NASREEN
It does.

LAYLA
Well then, Friday noontime prayers, we'll broadcast our call to prayer, but only at sound levels equal to your church bells. Not a decibel higher.

NASREEN

But bells don't ring in Arabic.

DALILA

Cut! Time out. I appreciate the coaching, my friends, but as white people, you're way over the top.

OMAR

We're the warm and fuzzy white people, Dalila.

CHAPTER TWO - EXPRESSING

DALILA

Slam dunk unanimous approval! Our proposal sailed right through planning and zoning. City Council vote, here we come.

YUSSEF

We're heading into the city council vote with a groundswell of public support. The coalition we're building is unbeatable.

DONNA

They're extremely intelligent, my Muslim friends, and yet they have this naive, almost childlike belief that, "in the end, the American people will always do what's right." What America are they living in? I haven't found that place.

ROSE

If a for-profit business operating at Old Nichols, the city would be collecting property taxes and sales taxes. It's revenue we desperately need.

KIMBERLY

All that foot traffic on Friday afternoons? You know how those Muslim women love to shop. And it'll be a bonanza for restaurant owners. Friday afternoon halal lunch specials.

SALLY

Just who's funding their mosque? Who's footing the bill? Any foreign governments? Any overseas organizations?

OMAR

Frankly, I resent what's being implied here. We're supported by our local Muslim community one hundred percent.

PAUL

Never underestimate sentimental value. Almost every person in this town has memories of that library. Fond memories.

JEFFREY

Growing up, my mom used to take us to Old Nichols every week for Storybook Saturday. She had a difficult life, my mom, but those Saturday's with her boys brought her tremendous joy. This mosque desecrates all of that.

NASREEN

This is my religion we're talking about. My spirituality. My relationship to God. A prayer hall has real meaning for real people. It's not some theory to be debated.

CARTER

It's all part of one big, American story. People used to get riled up about Catholic churches, Jewish synagogues, Mormon temples. First we hate you, then we give you a TV show, then you're fine.

TINA

A town hall meeting is a start. We make sure the right people attend. We manage the overall tone. We keep it positive. Eyes on the prize. We come out sounding entirely reasonable, the other side sounds completely out-of-touch.

LAYLA

Personally, I'm a bit skeptical. The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

MOHAMMAD

Town hall meetings and mosques are like matches and gasoline.

WILL

Their alleged "community center" will be a magnet for radicalization and extremism.

HADIYA

You want a Muslim extremist? I'm a Muslim extremist. Me. I'm an extremist for equality. I'm an extremist for feminism, for inclusion, for democracy, for art, poetry, literature. That's Muslim extremism.

WILL

I don't want a mosque in my downtown. Why? You really have to ask? Well, let's see, the World Trade Center, San Bernardino, Orlando, Boston, London, Paris, Madrid.

ZAIN

Yeah, man, I get it. You're afraid of terrorism. We all are. You think Muslims don't die in terrorist attacks? You think we have an advance warning app on our cellphones?

KIMBERLY

Sure there are things about Islam that make me uncomfortable. There are even things that frighten me. But, I will not allow my irrational fears to obstruct people's fundamental rights.

SALLY

I have every right to question Islam. Islam is anti-woman, it's anti-gay, anti-Jewish, anti-freedom. Why am I being forced to tolerate the intolerant?

HADIYA

When you indict Islam as "patriarchal," or "anti-liberal," you throw Muslim feminists, Muslim queers, and Muslim progressives all under the bus!

ZAIN

We're always telling people what we're not. How about telling people what we are?

LAYLA

I'm Muslim because I believe in God's love, in his mercy and compassion. And in the written word of our Holy Koran.

OMAR

I'm Muslim because I stand with the poor and the downtrodden,

NASREEN

I'm Muslim because I believe in righteousness,

DALILA

I'm Muslim because I work for peace,

OMAR

We enter the town hall with two great assets. Logic and truth. Not to mention we have God on our side.

CHAPTER THREE - APPEALING

In an auditorium at Naperville's North Central College. For the sake of simplicity, the various audience members who speak up during the town hall are unnamed. This is not meant to imply that one singular person is shouting out all of the comments but rather that a variety of people from all races, genders, and religions are speaking out.

TINA

Ladies and gentlemen, family members and friends, I'd like to welcome you all to the beautiful campus of North Central College for this evening's much anticipated town hall meeting. As many of you know, I'm Reverend Tina Calhoun, Senior Pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church and Chairperson of Naperville's Interfaith Leadership Council. We're a dynamic coalition of Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and Sikhs united in our devotion to religious pluralism and interfaith cooperation. How wonderful it is to see so many old faces and new. Together, we represent the richness of Naperville's diversity, the Naperville mosaic, beautifully apropos of why we are here tonight—to discuss the proposed Al Andalus Library and Community Center. At this time, I'd like to welcome to the stage, my dear friend and colleague, Mr. Omar Qabbani, Chairman of Al Andalus Board of Directors.

OMAR

Thank you Reverend Calhoun. Salaamu alaykum.

(a few audience members respond with "wa alaykum al salam.")

Salaamu alaykum!

(many more audience members respond with "wa alaykum al salam!")

What a tremendous honor it is to be speaking to you all at tonight's historic gathering. If there is one thing that unites the Muslims of Naperville, it is our love for Naperville. For what is Al Andalus Library and Community Center if not a love letter, our way of giving back to the town that has given us everything. Opportunities, great schools, beautiful parks, a safe environment in which to raise our children, and the ability to live and flourish, in peace and with dignity.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

You don't look Muslim!

OMAR

Neither do you.

(to general audience)

Now I know some of you are thinking "Omar, why in God's name do you want to build downtown?" Because building downtown is our way of demonstrating that our roots are here. Because downtown belongs to us all. Ladies and gentlemen, we are home. We are your friends, your neighbors, your colleagues, and your classmates. And we call on all of you, especially our town's honorable City Council, to help us be the active, visible, dynamic part of this city's downtown that we aim to be. Thank you.

TINA

Thank you. Thank you Omar. You're an energizing spokesperson for this community.

I want us to think of this town hall meeting as a living tribute to the First Amendment. Everyone here has a right to express their opinions and a responsibility to do so with courtesy and respect. Let us live up to the greatness of our community and pay homage to the promise of these United States.

At this time, it is my distinct honor and pleasure to introduce Imam Yussef Baig, spiritual leader of Naperville's Al Andalus Mosque. Imam Yussef is a cherished friend, colleague, and mentor to so many of us gathered here this evening. Please join me in welcoming the man I refer to as Naperville's Imam.

YUSSEF

Thank you Pastor Tina. Thank you for your kindness, your generosity of spirit, and your inspired leadership. We are blessed to be sharing this evening with you.

(to audience)

Bismallah Al-rahman Al-rahim.

AUDIENCE MEMBER
Terrorist!

TINA
(to general audience)
What? Who said that?

YUSSEF
(without acknowledging the outburst, Yussef attempts to maintain composure and continues)
In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. It is a gift being here with all of you this evening. A gift from God. I am Imam Yussef Baig-

AUDIENCE MEMBER
Invader!

YUSSEF
(again Yussef ignores the outburst and continues)
-of Naperville's Al Andalus Mosque.

HADIYA
We love you Imam Yussef!

NASREEN
Preach Brother Yussef!

YUSSEF
(Yussef attempts to continue, unabated)
One question that inevitably gets asked of me is what does Al Andalus mean. Al Andalus refers to a once great Muslim territory in the Iberian peninsula, covering large parts of what is today Spain and Portugal.

For Muslims, Al Andalus evokes an era of profound scientific discovery and scholarly achievement, critical thinking and artistic accomplishment.

Imagine a space that can recreate that glorious spirit right here in Naperville. The restoration of the Old Nichols Library as a thriving, living library is [an idea] deeply rooted in Islam. For us, it is an authentic exercise of our faith.

AUDIENCE MEMBER
Islam is a cult!

YUSSEF
Islam is an Abrahamic faith, just like Judaism and Christianity.

OMAR
(to Tina)
Who let these people in?

TINA

It's an open forum, Omar. Fringe elements come out of the woodwork.

YUSSEF

(continues speaking to general audience)

Please, please. Without knowledge, without education, a Muslim is incomplete. I am a new American. I'm a naturalized American citizen.

SALLY

(to Yussef)

Tell us what you do to infidels!

MOHAMMAD

Show some respect!

TINA

(to Yussef)

Do not take their bait, Yussef. Keep holding the moral high ground.

YUSSEF

(continues speaking to general audience)

I'm an American by choice and I choose to be an American Muslim. Because Islam is found in American institutions and in the American way of life.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Remember 9/11!

TINA

If you can't control yourselves, I'll have security remove you from this hall. Do not push your luck.

YUSSEF

(continues speaking to general audience)

I'm very much at home in America as a Muslim, because the ideals that we have as Americans are the same ideals we have as Muslims. If you have concerns, if you have doubts, if you are simply seeking knowledge, please know that I am available to you. Here tonight or at any other time.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

We don't want you here! Go back to Iran!

MOHAMMAD

He's not from Iran, he's from Pakistan.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

(to Yussef)

Go back to Pakistan!

DONNA

How about you go back to the cave you crawled out of?

TINA

How about we all stay put here in Naperville and learn how to behave?

YUSSEF

(continues speaking to general audience)

I am happy to come to your churches, your schools, your synagogues, your social clubs, wherever you want me. You needn't be a Muslim to think of me as your Imam! I am here for you. Thank you.

DALILA

You're our hero, Imam Yussef!

TINA

(to Yussef)

Thank you, Imam Yussef, for your very eloquent and inspiring words. I want to apologize for all the hate speech you've just been subjected to, and I want to assure you that the few bad apples in this audience represent no one but themselves.

(to audience)

I'd like to remind everyone that graciousness and civility are what characterize the people of Naperville. There is to be no name calling, no outbursts, that is unacceptable. We're a welcoming, tolerant community. Let's not betray our values any further. If we're to open up the floor to questions and comments, as originally planned, we'll need to follow basic rules of protocol. We're interested in hearing from those of you who have something constructive to say. Be sure to raise your hand and wait to be called on.

A few hands shoot up in the audience. Tina points to the first commentator.

Let's see. Yes, you.

CHAPTER FOUR - SHARING

CHRISTIAN MIDDLE EASTERN WOMAN

I have no problem with what is being proposed here. I grew up with Muslims. Many of them are very fine people. Wonderful people. But if we're talking about religious persecution, what about the persecution of Christians?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Oh, please!

CHRISTIAN MIDDLE EASTERN WOMAN

I'm sorry. The vast majority of people in this world who are tortured and murdered for their religious beliefs are Christians,
(MORE)

CHRISTIAN MIDDLE EASTERN WOMAN (CONT'D)

not Muslims. And I live in constant fear for my Christian family in Iraq.

TINA

I deeply appreciate your concerns, sister. Solidarity with those who suffer, with those who are vulnerable, is our solemn duty, it is our Christian call to action.

YUSSEF

Our Holy Koran tells us "Whoever kills one man, it is as though he has killed all of mankind." Any Muslim that harms a Christian is violating the tenets of Islam.

More hands shoot up in the audience. Tina points to a second commentator.

TINA

You, yes, there, in the second row.

JAPANESE AMERICAN WOMAN

It pains me that there are people in this town who would rather scapegoat a defenseless population than stand on the right side of history. Who are we? And what have we become? I'm Japanese American. My community knows scapegoating. They know what it means to be labeled a national security threat. My American parents were incarcerated in American concentration camps. Not because of any crime they committed, or any act of disloyalty, but because of state-sanctioned racism. That's right. Hateful, cruel racism. The US Constitution did not apply to us. Our US Citizenship was erased. We were Japs!

WILL

Bad call! It's not the same thing.

OMAR

Seriously? That's your response?

JAPANESE AMERICAN WOMAN

I want every Muslim in this room to know that the Japanese American community has your back!

YUSSEF

(to Japanese American Woman)

I am deeply moved by your testimony and enormously grateful for your solidarity. Let us resolve to forever have each others backs.

TINA

Amen brother. If one of us is oppressed, we are all oppressed.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

(singing sarcastically)

Kumbaya, my lord, kumbaya.

TINA

Not funny.

(points to a third commentator)

Yes, you, please.

YOUNG MUSLIM WOMAN

Imam Yussef, before building a new mosque, how about addressing the problems in your existing mosque? The one you've supposedly "outgrown?"

(to audience)

I'm Muslim, and I've been to Al Andalus, and I ran the hell out of there. Women can't lead prayers. Men and women can't even pray together. We're stuck in the back behind a partition. It's degrading. Would you want that for your daughters?

(to Yussef)

For me, walking into Al Andalus means entering a space in which my body is a provocation. My hair is a provocation. My voice is a provocation. My very presence distracts men from their relationship to God. I want a feminist, egalitarian masjid.

YUSSEF

Young lady, I hear you, I can see that you've been hurt. I invite you to come back to Al Andalus. Now, can we be doing better? Absolutely. Communities evolve. Evolve with us.

YOUNG MUSLIM WOMAN

Yeah, right. Whatever.

CHAPTER FIVE - INCITING

SALLY

What are you going to say?

JEFFREY

I'm going up.

SALLY

Ok, good luck.

Jeffrey walks up to the stage. Yussef, Omar, and Tina look at each other, confused.

TINA

Excuse me. Sir? What are you doing? Can't you see we're having a town hall meeting. You can't just-

JEFFREY

This is a public forum and I'm entitled to speak. I'm here to address the town hall.

TINA

That's not how it works. We're following basic rules of order. You raise your hand and wait to be called.

JEFFREY

I notice you're only calling on women, and such exotic women to boot. Not terribly representative of this town.

HADIYA

Exotic? Is he for real?

JEFFREY

This is America. You yourself said we have a First Amendment. I refuse to be silenced.

OMAR

Turn around and get back to your seat.

JEFFREY

You're not from this country. Do not tell me what to do.

OMAR

I am telling you. Leave the stage now.

KIMBERLY

Throw the bum out!

JEFFREY

I'm an American citizen. We're on American soil.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Yeah, I want to hear this man!

OMAR

(to Jeffrey)

You want to settle this outside, you little punk?

TINA

Omar, get a grip, would you.

YUSSEF

(in hushed tone to Omar)

We don't need an "angry Muslim man" stoking their worst stereotypes.

OMAR

He called me a foreigner!

JEFFREY

(to Tina)

I have a right to be heard, Pastor Calhoun. This isn't about you playing favorites. That needs to stop.

Tina relinquishes the podium to Jeffrey.

TINA

(to Omar and Yussef)

We'll let him ramble for a minute or two. He'll say his piece, then I'll call on someone more palatable.

OMAR

A white man seizes the stage and we suspend all the rules?

TINA

Better we be accused of censorship?

Tina, Omar, and Yussef engage in animated, though inaudible conversation as Jeffrey begins his speech.

JEFFREY

Friends, my name is Jeffrey Baker. I'm an attorney here in DuPage County. I've dedicated my law practice to defending American freedoms and American values. America is a sacred trust.

ROSE

God bless America!

JEFFREY

Land of the free.

(to general audience)

Unless we wake up and start implementing plans to save our civilization, you had better believe the Muslims are going to destroy us. Can't you see that the Muslims here in Naperville are laughing at us. This Old Nichols Library is nothing but a victory mosque for them. A much beloved local landmark that they're trying to conquer for Islam.

DONNA

Where's your white hood?!

JEFFREY

I think you liberals need new talking points. It's getting old!

(to general audience)

So while they're here petitioning to build a mosque, we can't build a church or synagogue in Saudi Arabia. It's against the law. In fact, you can be arrested for bringing a Bible into the country!

OMAR

(to Jeffrey)

You want us to become Saudi Arabia?

JEFFREY

(to Tina and the general audience)

I wonder how Pastor Calhoun would fare in Saudi Arabia? As a Christian and as a woman.

TINA

I don't fall for that ruse. My ministry is here.

JEFFREY

Smart choice.

(to general audience)

Meanwhile, we Americans, we're so naive, so gullible, so well-intentioned, that we're giving these radical Islamists a public forum to convince us how wonderful it is to plop a great big mosque smack dab in the center of our town.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Islamophobe!

JEFFREY

You're goddamn right I'm afraid of Islam!

(to general audience)

Look at their history. First, it was the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Turned into a mosque. Then it was the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. Turned into a mosque. Then it was the birthplace of Lord Rama in northern India. Turned into a mosque. Are we detecting a pattern here?

ZAIN

Yeah! That you suck!

YUSSEF

Let's not stoop to his level.

JEFFREY

(continues speaking to general audience)

But hey, don't take my word for it. Ask the Coptic Christians of Egypt about Muslims. Ask them about the hundreds of Coptic churches burned to the ground by Muslim mobs. Ask the Jews about Muslims.

OMAR

(to general audience)

This is incitement, folks! Do not be fooled by this man. He's trying to pit us against each other.

JEFFREY

I'm not the one who picked this fight. You are.

(to general audience)

In the late 1940s there were one million Jews living in the Islamic world. Today, there are less than 15,000. One million to less than 15,000? How does that happen?

LAYLA

They moved to Israel!

JEFFREY

(to general audience)

Ask the Yazidis suffering genocide in Iraq as I speak. They know Muslims.

CARTER

Ask me about the Crusades. Ask me about the Spanish Inquisition.

HADIYA

(to Jeffrey)

Ask me about Palestine, Bosnia, Iraq, Libya-

JEFFREY

(to general audience)

Ladies and gentlemen, we have our very own "historians" in the house.

Jeffrey offers a few mocking claps.

TINA

(to general audience)

The man's clearly not well. He needs help.

JEFFREY

Pot calling the kettle black, perhaps?

(to general audience)

Good people of Naperville, you think it can't happen here? It's too frightening to even contemplate? You'd rather not listen to what I have to say? Fine. Ask the victims of Islam.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Funny. I'm more scared of Christians.

JEFFREY

I bet you don't utter a peep when Muslims honor kill their daughters and gay sons.

YUSSEF

(to himself)

Does he not see there are Muslims in this room?

(to Omar and Tina)

He's speaking as if we're invisible, as if we don't have feelings.

(to Jeffrey)

Hello! Flesh and blood human being here. Can you see me?

JEFFREY

Sadly, I see you perfectly well.

OMAR

That's a man of God you're talking to.

TINA

(to Jeffrey)

You do realize you're risking disbarment? I know people at the Illinois State Bar Association.

JEFFREY

Really? So do I.

(to general audience)

(MORE)

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

Somebody, please, prove me wrong. Muslims demand special rights in Western countries while they actively deny people rights in their own countries.

DALILA

Special rights? We ask for equal rights, you hatemonger.

JEFFREY

(to Dalila)

Hatemonger?

(to general audience)

Ask the Muslims about hate. They wrote the book on it. It's called the Koran.

YUSSEF

(to Tina)

He's blaspheming the word of God! Someone stop him!

TINA

(to Jeffrey)

Okay, Mr. Baker, this needs to stop. Come on. You've had your say. You've been heard. We all get the point.

JEFFREY

Do you, Pastor? I'm not so sure.

(to general audience)

They come off all charming and well spoken. Imam Yusef swoons over the US Constitution. He and Omar Qabbani adore our Bill of Rights. Can you blame them? What other nation grants free speech and assembly to its sworn enemies?

OMAR

Have you even read the US Constitution? I'm happy to buy you a copy.

JEFFREY

Are you threatening me with bodily harm again? You need to stand back.

OMAR

Wow, what a coward you are. Wrap it up!

TINA

This meeting is officially over.

JEFFREY

(dismisses Tina and continues)

And when, on the rare occasion, we take notice and stand up for our civilization, the Muslims play the victim card. They play the race card. They play the America owes us card. When they're finished, we're so browbeaten that we just roll over and play dead. Where's our resolve, people? Our will to survive?

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Muslims to Guantanamo! Lock 'em up!

MULTIPLE AUDIENCE MEMBERS

Lock them up! Lock them up! Lock them up! Lock them up!

JEFFREY

(to chanting audience members)

Exactly, my friends. Before it's too late.

(to general audience)

They want to build mosques. Go ahead, be my guest. Build all the mosques you want. In Pakistan, in Saudi Arabia, in Iran. Build a mosque at every corner of every intersection of every village, town, and city you can find. But not in my country certainly not in my hometown.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

U.S.A.!

Other audience members boo and motion thumbs down with both hands.

JEFFREY AND OTHER FOES

U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

Soon the Muslims and their allies begin a counter chant.

MUSLIMS AND ALLIES

Justice! Justice! Justice! Justice!

CHAPTER SIX - RECALIBRATING

NASREEN

Justice prevails and the truth always wins! Oh America, how you lie.

LAYLA

How do I talk to my children about what just happened? How do I tell them "put on a brave face," when I'm having a hard time leaving the house?

HADIYA

Jeffrey Baker and his goons managed to sow enough doubt in enough people's minds. "Hmm? Maybe my Muslim neighbors do want to kill me after all." It's an ugly strategy and it works.

WILL

Jeffrey Baker wasn't appealing to our base fears. He was appealing to our intelligence.

DONNA

Why is anyone surprised? The DNA of this community is racism. Let's not kid ourselves about the ugly history of DuPage County. Naperville is what it is because of white flight from Chicago.

TINA

Is it any wonder so many people have lost faith in our system? This isn't democracy. This is spite.

MOHAMMAD

We're not some football you can just kick around. We're tax paying, law abiding, contributing members of society. This is our community too!

ROSE

The Muslims overreached. Why Old Nichols? Why downtown? Build in an industrial zone or a warehouse district or a corn field. Had they proposed a less high-profile location, no one would have cared. Or at least, not like this.

SALLY

They repeat these things as if we have no say. Whites are becoming the minority. Spanish is overtaking English. Islam is the fastest growing religion. If Al Andalus proves anything, it's that we real Americans, we do control our destiny, thank you very much.

ZAIN

If I've learned one thing about zoning and development, it's that emotions rule the roost. If we had proposed to build on the moon, they'd still be objecting.

PAUL

Anti-mosque arguments have legs. At the end of the day the city council listened to the voice of the people. It's how democracy works. Not that I endorse mob rule.

CARTER

This was a referendum on Muslims. On their religion. On their American citizenship. On their very humanity. And the Naperville city council voted no.

LAYLA

We've been reminded of just how powerless we are. They not only took away our dream of Al Andalus. They took away our dignity.

KIMBERLY

It's shameful! We are inflicting so much hurt and so much pain on a whole segment of our community. For what? They're devastated, my Muslim friends. I can barely look them in the eye.

DONNA

I'm an ally through and through. But I'm sorry, this campaign was not without flaws. A lot of the immigrant Muslims made me feel
(MORE)

DONNA (CONT'D)

like I was less valued than their white allies. A second class ally. Okay. I said it.

OMAR

The lies that were told about us got repeated as facts. We didn't have the time, the resources, the platform, or the mental stamina to counter it all.

ROSE

Not in my backyard. I own my home, just three blocks from Old Nichols. It's my investment. It's my safety net. It's my children's inheritance. Property values matter!

WILL

We're the grassroots resistance, the shock troops, the infantry brigade. We're the real men in this saga, because our cause is honorable. We're going to stop the Islamification of America.

DALILA

I can forgive all the nasty stares, the suspicious looks, the vile comments now being directed at me. It's the price of being visibly Muslim, I suppose. But, it's the taunts my children are enduring at school that break my heart.

NASREEN

Imagine trying to raise your children to feel good about their religion, their faith, to be proud of their heritage, in a community, no, in a country that tells us unequivocally that we are despised. It's not easy.

OMAR

We need to sue the City of Naperville. If we can prove that there were city councilmen who acted out of anti-Muslim animus, then we can haul their asses to court.

TINA

I know this town. Most Naperville residents are fair-minded, big-hearted, well-meaning people. We're the majority. What happened with Al Andalus...that's not who we are. We're going to get this right.

JEFFREY

We're in a clash of civilizations here. This battle will be fought on multiple fronts for decades to come. Someday you'll be thanking me. Even if you can't see it now, I'm the hero of this story.

HADIYA

No way are we allowing haters to define who we are. No way are we ceding our testimony to those who wish us harm.

YUSSEF

No one has license to bully us or deny us our rights. Enough of licking our wounds already. We need to regroup. We need to be steadfast.

HADIYA

It's our story and we get to tell it. We own our narrative!

YUSSEF

We'll build an even stronger coalition, one that's nimble and quick to respond. With facts.

HADIYA

We have more power than any of us even know.

YUSSEF

We're going to demand a re-vote.

HADIYA

I say we march on City Hall!

YUSSEF

And Al Andalus is going to win.

CHAPTER SEVEN - RESISTING

At a rally outside of Naperville City Hall.

YUSSEF

American Muslims under attack! What do we do?

GROUP

Stand up, fight back! Stand up, fight back!

TINA

Hey hey, ho ho, Islamophobes have got to go!

GROUP

Hey hey, ho ho, Islamophobes have got to go!

YUSSEF

Two-four-six-eight, no more anti-Muslim hate!

GROUP

Two-four-six-eight, no more anti-Muslim hate!

TINA

Religions united can not be defeated!

GROUP

Religions united can not be defeated!

YUSSEF

Whose mosque?!

GROUP

Our mosque!

YUSSEF
Whose mosque?!

GROUP
Our mosque!

TINA
Say it loud, say it proud. We are all Muslims now.

GROUP
Say it loud, say it proud. We are all Muslims now.

YUSSEF
Show me what community looks like!

GROUP
This is what community looks like.

TINA
Show me what democracy looks like!

GROUP
This is what democracy looks like.

YUSSEF
What do we want?

GROUP
Al-Andalus!

TINA
When do we want it?

GROUP
Now!

END OF PLAY