



WEST RIDGE STORY FESTIVAL

DECEMBER 14-17, 2019

New Plays Written by **WEST RIDGE COMMUNITY MEMBERS**
Directed by **COREY POND**


SILK ROAD RISING
UNLEASH CURIOSITY

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully recognize the Potawatomi, Miami, Peoria, and Sioux Peoples, who have stewarded this land throughout the generations. We acknowledge that we are on occupied land that was forcibly taken from its original owners. And we affirm that while we cannot change history, we can work for justice, and that justice begins with recognition and acknowledgement.

CREATIVE & PRODUCTION TEAM

Malik Gillani | Founding Executive Director

Jamil Khoury | Founding Artistic Director

Corey Pond | Director and Associate Producer

Tracy Strimple | Assistant Director

Bassam Abdelfattah, Deveon Bromby, Luke Daigle, Alyssa Fantel, Ayssette Muñoz, and Annalise Raziq | Actors

Spencer Fritz | Stage Manager

Vanessa Kucera | Impact Manager

Michael Mead | Community Engagement Coordinator

Christian Walker | House Manager

Andy Lynn | Production Manager

EPIC TEAM

Tracy Strimple | Director of Education

Janyce Caraballo, Levi Holloway, Lindsay Hopkins, Jarrett King, Víctor Maraña, Lexi Saunders, and Steph Vondell | Teaching Artists

Jaclyn Gessert and Shaina Toledo | Teaching Artist Assistants

ABOUT SILK ROAD RISING

Silk Road Rising is a community-centered art making and arts service organization rooted in Asian, Middle Eastern, and Muslim experiences. Through digital media, arts education, and live performance we challenge disinformation, cultivate community voices, and create entirely new narratives.

At Silk Road Rising we understand that representation matters—it molds perceptions, informs conversations, and influences policies. We view our work as an intentional strategy to shift and expand our communities' narratives, and to assist other organizations in their efforts to include Asian, Middle Eastern, and Muslim stories.

FEATURED PLAYS

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 1 | <i>Be Gone Turkey</i> By Abbas Abdulamir | Daniel Boone Elementary Teaching Artist Víctor Maraña |
| 2 | <i>Heart Connection</i> By Naomi Sufiran | Indian Boundary Park Teaching Artist Lindsay Hopkins |
| 3 | <i>Two Travelers</i> By Evelyn Miks | Warren Park Teaching Artist Lindsay Hopkins |
| 4 | <i>End of Innocence, Death of a Friend</i> By Kathleen Kelly | Indian Boundary Park Teaching Artist Lindsay Hopkins |
| 5 | <i>Other People's Children</i> By Halle Quezada | Teacher at Daniel Boone Elementary Teaching Artist Lexi Saunders |
| 6 | <i>The Separation of Sally</i> By Sophia Awuzie | After School Matters Mather High School Teaching Artist Janyce Caraballo and Víctor Maraña |
| 7 | <i>Welcome Home</i> By Colette Martin-Wilde | Warren Park Teaching Artist Lindsay Hopkins |
| 8 | <i>Casey's Fight for Equality</i> By Leila Harris | Daniel Boone Elementary Teaching Artist Lexi Saunders |
| 9 | <i>Bundle of Joy</i> By Supie Dunbar | Warren Park Teaching Artist Lindsay Hopkins |
| 10 | <i>Friends</i> By Linda Hendelman | Indian Boundary Park Teaching Artist Lindsay Hopkins |
| 11 | <i>A Beautiful Path</i> By Bina Mangattukattil | Warren Park Teaching Artist Lindsay Hopkins |

WEST RIDGE EPIC PARTICIPANTS

EPIC AT INDIAN BOUNDARY PARK

Elaine Bachman
Ester Hanna
Linda Hendelman
Kathleen Kelly
Barry Lipa
Naomi Safiran
Saturn
Jeanne Trumbo
Richard Trumbo
Garnet Wind

EPIC AT WARREN PARK

Ruth Baerman
Supie Dunbar
Irv Loundy
Bina Mangattukattil
Colette Martin-Wilde
Evelyn Miks
Tamara O'Leary
Osama Siddiqui
Robert Taylor
Jenn Trautvetter

EPIC AFTER SCHOOL MATTERS AT MATHER HIGH SCHOOL

Priscilla Akpan
Emmanuel Amisu
Abdullah Atrakchi
Sophia Awuzie
Dorothy Craven
Neshia Davis
Najah Etefia
Nevaeha Forbes Jackson
Derrick Ford
Amy John-Miller
Daulath Khan
Daniel Mend
Lenai Murray
Lorea Murray
Tooba Naqshab
Delight Obidare Kolade
Eugene Pope
Madeline Ren
Morgaine Rivera
Allen Robinson
Meghana Sharma
Khizra Sultana
Anas Tafazzul Hassan
Anna Tran
Ali Umardeen

Sierra Usmani
Ibrahim Wehbi
Dominique Wilkens-Hays

EPIC AT DANIEL BOONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students of Sweetlana Israel

Abbas Abdulamir
Khadeeja Ahmed
Soha Ali
Brianna Avila
Insha Baig
Michelle Bucio
Milka Carmona
Yudanis Chacon
Christina Cin
Zev Cohen
Aaron Garcia
Melissa Garcia
Lilian Gonzalez
Tyler Hensel
Charbel Hermez
Ramisha Iqbal
Hamza Kabir
Paw Kapru
Amar Kulasic
Daniel Labra
Tyler Madourie
Nathaniel Manewith
Alondra Mendoza
Natalia Moreno-Garcia
Justin Morris
Olayinka Olorunoje
Bushra Qazi
Jose Santamaria
Jesus Soto
Valeria Tello
Daniel Tinoco
Muhammad Usamah

Students of Halle Quezada

Ubaidah Abdul Malik
Sania Ahmed
Mahirah Alam
Abdulsalam Aro
Umaiza Arsheen
Mauricio Basulto
Maritza Bautista
Jaqueline Bernabe
Ismita Biswa
Maura Bucaro
Michelle Bucio
Milka Carmona

Evelyn Carreto
Kayla Cedeno
Brandon Chavez
Edwin Cortes
Filip Cosovic
Faven Dagne
Natividad Delgado
Javier Diaz
Eliana Ebert
Kazi Eshrar
Jasmine Espinosa
Asfia Farheen
Janet Flores
Bryan Gonzalez
Leila Harris
Mohamad Nor Hasan
Sara Imad
Maryna Isho
Nathaly Islas
Angel Irizarry
Madisen Johnson
Dylan Kaczocha-Paddy
Bilal Khan
Danish Khan
Matuos Korkees
Daniel L.
Denzel Lockhart
Christian Lopez
Alondra M.
Laiba Majeed
Yousif Saif Ali Maliki
Jaden Martinez
Muhamad Anif
Mohamed Ismail
Nancy Morquecho
Nevaeh Ocasio
Noe Ocasio
Tennyson Pham
Anthony Rebolledo
Giovanny Rebolledo
Ayesha Rehman
Idalia Rizvic
Mariam Rufai
Jose S
Aylin Salazar
Ramzan Ali Bin Shajez Ahmed
Ishaaq Syed
Maira Syed
Valeria Tello
Emily Uribe
Titilayo Usman
Edgar Valleza
Sebastian Vargas
Swaleha Yunus

ABOUT WEST RIDGE STORY

Jamil Khoury & Malik Gillani, Co-Founders of Silk Road Rising

West Ridge is more than just a neighborhood on Chicago's far north side. In a city known for its distinct neighborhoods, it is a work-in-progress, uniquely situated at a crossroads of immigration, cultural preservation, and what some might call integration interrupted. We like to think of West Ridge as both an American experiment and an exciting reboot of the American dream. Depending on whom you ask, and how you frame the question, West Ridge is a destination, a refuge, a way station, a launching pad, a window, a bridge, a laboratory, a microcosm, a metaphor, a history, and a home. Undoubtedly a place where people have interesting stories to tell. No wonder we're so drawn to it.

With roughly 72,000 residents inhabiting 3.5 square miles, stretching from Howard Street on the north, Devon and Bryn Mawr Avenues on the south, Kedzie Avenue and the North Shore Channel on the west, and Ridge and Ravenswood Avenues on the east, West Ridge is one of the most ethnically, racially, religiously, linguistically, and economically diverse communities in the United States. It is a mosaic of first and second generation immigrants, replete with all the triumphs and hardships associated with immigrant experiences, a bellwether of our ever-evolving notions of Americanness.

The community's visible South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Orthodox Jewish communities, and arguably less visible Latinx, West African, and East African communities, along with East Asian, Eastern European, and white American communities, reveal the sort of cultural and religious pluralism that aligns quite beautifully with the historic Silk Road and the various metaphors we mine from it, as well as with our mission of rooting stories within the communities from which our storytellers hail.

Yet, perhaps not surprisingly, the richness of a community's diversity does not always translate into social cohesion and cultural interchange. That's why collaborative art-making like the West Ridge Story Festival is so

(continued on page 8)

**WEST RIDGE STORY IS MADE POSSIBLE
THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH
THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS:**



ASIAN **HUMAN** SERVICES



JCCchicago

Bernard Horwich JCC



DEVON BANK



Indian Boundary Park
& Warren Park



GIRLFORWARD



Daniel Boone Elementary School
& Mather High School



High Ridge YMCA



**CHICAGO
PUBLIC
LIBRARY**

Northtown Branch



Jewish Neighborhood Development
Council of Chicago

Park Plaza
a jewish senior living community



Warren Park Advisory Council



Middle Eastern Immigrant and Refugee Alliance
اتحاد المهاجرين واللاجئين من الشرق الأوسط



West Ridge Community Organization

ABOUT WEST RIDGE STORY *(continued from page 5)*

critical. It is an artistic arena for building relationships that didn't previously exist and for promoting awareness and empathy among neighbors who may otherwise feel isolated from each other.

Silk Road Rising chooses to be active in West Ridge because we believe in the community and its potential for building solidarity through storytelling. Therefore, we are adapting EPIC (Empathic Playwriting Intensive Course), our acclaimed arts education program, to the multicultural, multireligious, and intergenerational landscapes of the community. As artists, our role is to pose questions, not provide answers. As activists, our role is to propel movement towards desirable and achievable goals.

To those ends, we ponder many challenges. What sort of cultural sharing and learning do we hope to inspire? Can a multicultural/multiracial community create collective narratives that are authentic and representative? Should the community even try? What can the Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh communities of West Ridge teach us about religious pluralism, religious freedom, and the state of being secular, or non-religious? How do concepts of community, home, place, and belonging inform and complicate a writer's voice?

Sit back and enjoy the plays!

ABOUT EPIC (EMPATHIC PLAYWRITING INTENSIVE COURSE)

Tracy Strimple, Silk Road Rising Director of Education

Good afternoon and welcome to the West Ridge Story Festival! For eight years Silk Road Rising has been working with 6th-12th grade Chicago Public School students on the Empathic Playwriting Intensive Course, EPIC. Last year we expanded our reach to the adult community and, for the first time, offered EPIC+ at senior living communities. With the successful amplification of the stories of young people and lifelong learners, we wanted to continue to expand into a neighborhood that has long deserved to have their stories heard.

Over the summer and throughout the fall, Silk Road Rising has been working with students of all ages at Mather High School, Boone Elementary School, Indian Boundary Park, and Warren Park. At Mather, high school students participated in EPIC through a partnership with After School Matters. Boone was host to two Silk Road Rising teaching artists who taught EPIC to the entire 7th grade. Indian Boundary Park and Warren Park hosted multi-generational students who opted in to participate in this community building version of EPIC.

Over the course of EPIC, students work with a Silk Road Rising teaching artist, who is also a professional actor and/or playwright, to discover how to tell stories and practice empathy through the writing of a short play or monologue. The students make connections and build trust through theatre games and activities that encourage them to think outside themselves and look at the world through other perspectives. This showcase is the opportunity for Silk Road Rising to highlight some of the creative, brilliant, and savvy students we had the pleasure of working with this summer and fall.

EPIC guides students to self empowerment by giving them the tools to become confident storytellers and creative problem solvers through the act of writing a play. Additionally, through the EPIC process the students meet and build relationships with new people they may have never otherwise met. The West Ridge community was given the opportunity of finding commonalities through stories and to build social cohesion through the act of creating art together. Come with us on a journey of community fellowship as we give space for our students' voices to rise.

We would like to thank the more than 130 students who participated in EPIC this summer and fall, and to congratulate the playwrights who have been selected for the West Ridge Story Festival. They are proudly representing the amazing West Ridge community and the Chicago Public Schools Mather High School and Boone Elementary School.

WHAT'S NEXT WITH WEST RIDGE STORY?

Today's festival is a result of the hard work and commitment of our supporters, donors, volunteers, and community members throughout 2019. While we celebrate the culmination of this year's work, we're looking forward to what's to come next year. In 2020, West Ridge Story will continue building social cohesion through diverse arts engagement events and programs.

We are working with local partner organizations to deliver workshops featuring screenings of digital work followed by professionally facilitated community conversations. We are bringing EPIC to more community members and organizations, ensuring that more people have a chance to craft their stories through empathic practice and newfound artistry, and for their voices to be heard. Next year, we are developing a documentary film about West Ridge Story, featuring neighborhood leaders, residents, and maybe even you!

These programs ensure that neighbors see each other, hear each other, and discover connections across differences in ethnicity, culture, religion, and more. When we come together in celebration of all that we share with our neighbors, we champion the central idea of West Ridge Story: **you belong here, and so does your story.**

WEST RIDGE STORY CONTINUES WITH YOU

With your support, West Ridge Story will continue to provide quality arts programming that inspires, entertains, and builds social cohesion throughout the neighborhood. Your gifts make these important programs possible. Please consider making a contribution or pledge of support today.

All donations and pledges for West Ridge Story made this year will be matched dollar for dollar thanks to the generosity of The Reva and David Logan Foundation.

To support West Ridge Story, please call associate producer Corey Pond at 312-857-1234 x205, or email him at corey@silkroadrising.org, or visit our website at www.silkroadrising.org/donatewr

SPECIAL THANKS

To **Malik Gillani**, whose passionate vision created West Ridge Story and whose steady leadership continues to shape its direction and growth.

To **Alan Bresloff** who sparked this project by introducing Silk Road Rising to Irv Loundy.

To **Irv Loundy**, who identified a need for the arts in West Ridge and who made Devon Bank available to Silk Road Rising for classes and organizing.

To the **West Ridge Community Organization** and the **West Ridge Chamber of Commerce** for inviting us to the neighborhood and championing West Ridge Story.

To **Evelyn Miks**, who opened up her home to the Silk Road Rising staff, and who gave her time, energy, and enthusiasm to cultivate important partnerships that made West Ridge Story possible.

To **Andrew Rowlas**, whose involvement in the project helped us establish crucial partnerships.

To **Debra Silverstein**, Alderman of the 50th Ward, for her enthusiasm, keen interest and support.

To **Andre Vasquez**, Alderman of the 40th Ward, for his encouragement and support.

To **Eden Seferovic, Mirko Popadoc, Howard Rieger, and Beverly Siegel**, for their support, enthusiasm, hospitality, and outreach work.

To **Indian Boundary Park, Warren Park, Mather High School, and Daniel Boone Elementary School** for being gracious hosts of our EPIC program.

To **Asian Human Services, Bernard Horwich JCC, Christ Church of Chicago, CJE SeniorLife, Devon Bank, GirlForward, High Ridge YMCA, Indo-American Center, Libenu Foundation, Middle Eastern Immigrant & Refugee Alliance, Misericordia Home, Park Plaza, Warren Park Advisory Council, West Ridge Chamber of Commerce, and West Ridge Community Organization** for hosting the 16 storytelling workshops that began EPIC in West Ridge.

We wish to thank all of our donors for their generous support. Due to space restrictions, we are not able to thank everyone publicly. Please know that you are valued and celebrated for your generosity.

GRATITUDE TO OUR HOSTS

West Ridge Story Festival is hosted by the Northtown Branch (Chicago Public Library), Indian Boundary Park (Chicago Park District), and Music House. We thank **Phil Martini**, **Catherine Wilson**, and **Jeanne & Richard Trumbo** for providing time and space for the Festival.

**CHICAGO
PUBLIC
LIBRARY**

**NORTHTOWN LIBRARY
MEETING ROOM**

6800 N Western Ave
Chicago, IL 60645

Saturday, December 14
3:00pm

FREE PREVIEW PERFORMANCE



**INDIAN BOUNDARY PARK
CULTURAL CENTER**

2500 W Lunt Ave
Chicago, IL 60645

Sunday, December 15
3:00pm

Monday, December 16
7:30pm



**MUSIC HOUSE SCHOOL
OF PERFORMING ARTS**

2925 W Devon Ave
Chicago, IL 60659

Tuesday, December 17
7:30pm

MEET OUR WEST RIDGE STORY SPONSORS

The following donors made today's new play festival possible. Their support allows us to continue building social cohesion through West Ridge Story.

THE
REVA & DAVID LOGAN
FOUNDATION

ROBERT R.
McCORMICK
FOUNDATION

THE
ALBERT PICK, JR.
FUND

JOIN US FOR NEXT YEAR'S WEST RIDGE STORY EVENTS

Want to participate in EPIC? Excited for the next community conversation? Wondering what else is in store?

Subscribe to our weekly newsletter to stay up-to-date on all our work in West Ridge and beyond!

Go to bit.ly/emailwr to sign up or email michael@silkroadrising.org for more information.

See you soon!