

KAYLLA PASHA

ARTIST STATEMENT

From a young age, I found freedom and joy in storytelling. As I grew up, freedom and joy grew into fulfillment and purpose. Artistry, for me, has evolved from an art form into an integral part of my identity. At my core, I am deeply empathetic and am innately motivated to make the world a better, more inclusive place. For me, I believe that this change begins with communicating through story.

I stuck out like a sore thumb growing up. I felt most at home onstage because it served as a refuge for me, a place where nobody could judge me for who I am, only by what I do. As I learned more about theatre history, I discovered I am not so different from other theatre makers throughout history, many of whom were also, more or less, outcast from society's "standard." I am inspired by those who defied the odds before me, and I aspire to be an artist who cultivates change.

My approach to theatre is specific to who I am; some of my identities include woman, person of color, first-generation, South Asian, Muslim-raised, ally. My unique lived experiences motivate me to create and collaborate on art that celebrates the diversity of humanity, elevates the voices of historically marginalized groups, and starts conversations about acknowledging and advancing society's most pressing issues.

I am most excited by ensemble-focused works that push the envelope in this way, inspiring the audience to consider the lived experiences of others who may look or live differently than they do. In working to expand the theatre's collective voice, I hope to help change the narrative of underrepresentation in the industry.

In my opinion, it has never been more important to be an artist – especially an artist of color – than right now. In the face of a global pandemic and a (long overdue) reconciliation with systemic racism, our communities need artists now more than ever to evoke empathy.