

“A UNICORN IN ALL THE SPACES”

FOR LESSON

*Growing Up
and Fitting In*NARRATOR **Baseera Khan**

KHAN I didn't really have a childhood. I was — I worked a lot. I was, like, helping my mom sew. Or I was, like, you know, being the person who cleaned the house and, like, helped make the food, mowed the lawn, did the laundry. I di— I was just sort of, like, a part of a — a big working system. So I didn't have friends. People thought I was weird. People thought I smelt weird. It was — it was a lot of bullying. And I was bullied primarily by girls. And teachers, who were usually female. So I had to overcome that in and of itself, of being othered by my own kind. And then being othered by people who looked the opposite of me, or, like, looked American. And — like, even though I probably looked just — just American and fine, but I didn't — I wasn't given a space of inclusion. And so I kind of, like, was a unicorn in all the spaces.

And I still feel that way. I still feel like there isn't a place for me. There's, like, no there there. But I feel, like, truly independent and like I have a voice, so — I realize, like, I am the there there. And, like, people find homes in the spaces I make. So. That's kind of what I'm trying to think of now is like, “Oh, I'm — I'm the space.” [laughter] So people find — find a space here. And that's why I think the work I do's so important. But I have to think that the work I do's important; otherwise [laughter] it's, like — it makes no sense! [laughter]

RUN TIME **1:55**

BIO Baseera Khan was born in 1980 to Indian immigrants in Denton, Texas. She became involved in the arts as a young adult, earning a bachelor of fine arts from the University of North Texas in Denton and a master of fine arts from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Her artwork often focuses on the intersection of identity, politics, and culture. She has participated in art shows and performances at various New York cultural institutions. Her solo exhibition, *iamuslima*, was first shown at the Participant Inc. gallery in New York City and later had installments in Texas and Colorado. As a teacher, Khan has worked to create safe spaces for self-expression and encouraged others to think critically about how a creator’s identity informs their work.

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