

# Wajahat Ali Speaks About the Power of Acknowledging Hard Truths and the Need to Form a Coalition of Ethnic Avengers

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**Wajahat Ali**, *Daily Beast* columnist and author of the bestselling memoir, “Go Back to Where You Came From: And Other Helpful Recommendations on How to Become American,” shared his trademark wit and incisive political commentary with Winston & Strawn attorneys and staff as part of the firm’s celebration of Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month. The illuminating and insightful conversation with Wajahat was moderated by Houston associate **Imad Khan**.

Speaking about the power of authenticity, Wajahat said that at the age of 19 he felt exhausted from trying to fit in and policing his ambitions. So, he decided to just be himself and it was only then that he truly felt comfortable and became popular.

He acknowledged that one can often neuter and defang racism with humor but stressed that some situations require “sober, righteous rage.” Still, he noted that anger is privileged in this country and only white men are truly allowed to express it without being mischaracterized as “bossy,” “uppity,” or even worse.

He called on all of us to be “Ethnic Avengers: a multicultural coalition of the willing” and to focus on awareness, attention and action—with an emphasis on action. He acknowledged that for a time he was blind to his privilege as a man but now refuses to be on a “manel” and will only appear on panels where women are also represented.

When asked about his own struggles with OCD, he said it is important to let go of the shame and guilt associated with mental health challenges and allow ourselves to be vulnerable. He also encouraged us to make time in our lives for joy and self-care.

Wajahat left us with the inspiring call to action to “invest in hope even in hopeless times.” He said we have no time to wait for the 30% of the population that are victims of a radicalized disinformation ecosystem, and we must move forward with the remaining 70% while leaving the door open for the 30% left behind.

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M. Imad Khan



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