

= Disgraced =

Disgraced is a 2012 play by novelist and screenwriter Ayad Akhtar . It premiered in Chicago and has had Off @-@ Broadway and Off West End engagements . The play , which won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama , opened on Broadway at the Lyceum Theater , with previews that began on September 27 , 2014 . Disgraced has also been recognized with a 2012 Joseph Jefferson Award for New Work ? Play or Musical and a 2013 Obie Award for Playwriting . It is Akhtar 's first stage play . The 2014 Broadway transfer earned a Tony Award for Best Play nomination in 2015 .

The play is centered on sociopolitical themes such as Islamophobia and the self @-@ identity of Muslim @-@ American citizens . It focuses on a dinner party between four people with very different backgrounds . As discussion turns to politics and religion , the mood quickly becomes heated . Described as a " combustible powder keg of identity politics , " the play depicts racial and ethnic prejudices that " secretly persist in even the most progressive cultural circles . " It is also said to depict the challenge for upwardly mobile Muslim Americans in the post @-@ 9 / 11 America . Productions have included performances by Aasif Mandvi and Erik Jensen .

= = Plot = =

In the 90 @-@ minute , one @-@ act play , lawyer Amir Kapoor and his wife Emily host an Upper East Side dinner . Amir is an American @-@ born , Muslim @-@ raised Manhattan mergers and acquisitions lawyer , while Emily is an up @-@ and @-@ coming artist who focuses on Islamic themes in her art . Amir has cast aside his Muslim heritage for the sake of his career , but is at times drawn toward it nonetheless . Emily , who has an affinity for Islamic artistic traditions , serves as his muse and an influence on his Islamic connection . Prior to the dinner , Amir , who is on the partner track , becomes involved in a controversial case . Amir 's assimilated nephew , Abe (born Hussein Malik) , has concerns regarding the propriety of the arrest of a local imam who is imprisoned on charges that may be trumped @-@ up of financing terrorist @-@ supporting groups , leading him to question whether it is religious persecution . Emily encourages the reluctant Amir to appear in court in support of the imam , in an unofficial capacity that gets mentioned in The New York Times . The case becomes dinner conversation when he hosts Jory , a colleague from work , and her husband , Isaac , who is Emily 's Jewish art dealer . In all , the dinner table assembly includes an ex @-@ Muslim , an African @-@ American , a Jew and a WASP dining over the topic of religious faith . The conversation touches upon " Islamic and Judaic tradition , the Quran and the Talmud , racial profiling and September 11 and the Taliban and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Benjamin Netanyahu " as tensions mount .

= = Cast = =

On November 2 , 2011 , the Chicago cast was announced . It included Usman Ally , Alana Arenas and Behzad Dabu . Ally played Amir , Arenas played Jory , Dabu played Abe , Benim Foster played Isaac and Lee Stark played Emily , starting with previews on January 27 , 2012 , and then the official debut on January 30 . The Chicago production creative team included fight choreographer David Woolley , set designer Jack Magaw , lighting designer Christine Binder , costume designer Janice Pytel , prop designer Nick Heggestad , sound designer Kevin O ? Donnell and production stage manager Katie Klemme .

On July 26 , 2012 , the Off @-@ Broadway cast was announced as Aasif Mandvi , Heidi Armbruster , Adam Dannheisser , Omar Maskati and Karen Pittman . At the time , Mandvi was a correspondent for Comedy Central 's The Daily Show with Jon Stewart . Other creative team members were sets designer Lauren Helpert , costume designer Dane Laffrey , lighting designer Tyler Micoleau and sound designer Jill BC DuBoff . The show began previews with Dannheisser on October 7 , but Erik Jensen replaced him on October 10 after an illness with opening night scheduled for October 22 . It was directed both at the American Theater Company in Chicago and at LCT3 / Lincoln Center Theater in New York by Kimberly Senior , who is also set to direct its Broadway run in 2014 . The

New York production opened at the Claire Tow Theater at Lincoln Center in New York on October 22 , 2012 , with the following cast : Heidi Armbruster as Emily , Erik Jensen as Isaac , Aasif Mandvi as Amir , Omar Maskati as Abe , and Karen Pittman as Jory . The Off West End cast , which was directed by Nadia Fall , consisted of Danny Ashok , Kirsty Bushell , Hari Dhillon , Sara Powell and Nigel Whitmey .

The Broadway production was originated by Hari Dhillon and Danny Ashok reprising their Off West End roles as Amir and Abe , respectively , Karen Pittman reprising her Off @-@ Broadway role as Jory as well as Josh Radnor as Isaac and Gretchen Mol as Emily . Kimberly Senior , who directed the Chicago and Off @-@ Broadway productions signed on to direct . She was joined on the creative team by John Lee Beatty (set) , Jennifer von Mayrhauser (costumes) , Ken Posner (lighting) and Jill DuBoff (sound) .

The following tables show the casts of the principal original productions :

= = Production history = =

Akhtar is a first generation Pakistani @-@ American born in New York City and raised in Milwaukee . He had previously written and starred in the 2005 film *The War Within* , in which he portrayed a Pakistani engineering student who became a terrorist . He has studied at Brown University and Columbia University . He had also written the 2012 novel *American Dervish* , which studies " the Muslim religious experience in America " . The son of two foreign @-@ born doctors , he had spent a decade exploring dual identity before writing this play . In order to write this play , Akhtar decided to write from his own experiences . He stated that at a metaphorical level to write this play he had to " turn and look over my shoulder at what I was running away from . And at that moment there was an explosion of creativity . "

Disgraced was originally scheduled at the American Theater Company in Chicago , Illinois , to run February 3 ? March 4 , 2012 , with an official debut of February 6 . Eventually the run was moved forward one week to January 27 ? February 26 , 2012 , with an official January 30 debut . On February 21 , its run was extended in Chicago until Mar 11 , 2012 .

It made its New York debut of its Off @-@ Broadway run at LCT3 / Lincoln Center Theater with an October 22 , 2012 , premiere and was scheduled to run until November 18 before being extended until December 2 . Hurricane Sandy caused the cancellation of the October 28 and 29 evening performances but not the October 28 matinee . On November 1 , it was extended again until December 23 .

On February 6 , 2013 , the London premiere of the play was announced as an Off West End opening at the Bush Theatre , beginning in May 2013 under the direction of Nadia Fall . Its previews were scheduled to begin on May 17 before opening on May 22 and running until June 15 . On March 15 , *Disgraced* was extended until June 22 . The play opened as scheduled on May 22 . That July , the producer Matthew Rego announced that the show was being considered for a Broadway run during the 2013 ? 14 season . On June 10 , 2014 , was announced to have a Broadway run starting on October 23 , following previews beginning September 27 at the Lyceum Theatre .

= = On Broadway = =

Disgraced began its limited run on Broadway at the Lyceum Theatre with preview performances on September 27 . Opening night was October 23 , 2014 with an original announced run lasting until February 15 , 2015 . In January , the closure of the engagement was announced for March 1 . Direction is by Kimberly Senior , sets by John Lee Beatty , costumes by Jennifer von Mayrhauser and lighting by Ken Posner . The cast includes Danny Ashok , Hari Dhillon , Gretchen Mol , Karen Pittman , and Josh Radnor .

= = Critical commentary = =

Charles Isherwood of *The New York Times* , who saw the Off @-@ Broadway production in 2012 ,

said it was " a continuously engaging , vitally engaged play " that " bristles with wit and intelligence " and " puts contemporary attitudes toward religion under a microscope , revealing how tenuous self @-@ image can be for people born into one way of being who have embraced another . " Isherwood selected the play as one of his year @-@ end Ten Best Plays of 2012 . David Rooney of The Hollywood Reporter also selected it as among his Ten Best in New York Theater 2012 , writing that Akhtar " staked a claim as one of the boldest voices to appear on the playwriting scene in recent years with this stinging swipe at the fallacy of the post @-@ racial nation . "

Of the Chicago production at American Theater company , Chicago Tribune theatre critic Chris Jones praised the show as " intensely arresting . " Time Out Chicago 's Kris Vire called the play " a compact , stunning gut punch addressing the cultural affinities some of us are allowed to escape and those we aren 't . " However , Chicago Sun @-@ Times critic Hedy Weiss noted that the plays five characters were all " identity @-@ warped " , and the show was a " minefield ... that feels all too deliberately booby @-@ trapped by the playwright . " The play won the Jeff Award ? honoring excellence in Chicago Theater ? for Best New Play in Chicago 2012 .

Entertainment Weekly critic Thom Geier suggested that the ending was underdeveloped , but that the play was well @-@ executed : " Akhtar packs a lot into his scenes , in terms of both coincidence @-@ heavy personal drama and talky disquisitions on religion and politics , but he usually manages to pull back from the edge of too @-@ muchness . There is an admirable restraint to director Kimberly Senior 's well @-@ paced scenes . Mandvi , best known for his comedy , has a surprisingly commanding stage presence and captures the full range of his character 's internal conflicts . "

= = Themes = =

National Public Radio describes the play thematically as one that " tackles Islamophobia and questions of Muslim @-@ American identity " . Isherwood noted : " As two couples exchange observations about faith and politics in the modern world , the intellectual thickets they find themselves in become increasingly tangled . " More specifically he said , it is a play " about thorny questions of identity and religion in the contemporary world , with an accent on the incendiary topic of how radical Islam and the terrorism it inspires have affected the public discourse . " Kapoor has " rejected his Muslim upbringing (and even his surname) to better assimilate into his law firm , but he still feels the occasional tug of Islam " . Geier wrote : " Disgraced offers an engaging snapshot of the challenge for upwardly mobile Islamic Americans in the post @-@ 9 / 11 age . " According to The Guardian ' s Stephen Moss , the play comes to a head as the protagonist " tries to come to terms with his multiple identity ? American v Asian , Muslim v secularist , passive observer of injustice v activist " . Although Amir has an affinity for \$ 600 shirts with obscenely high thread counts , his home dinner party is set in his apartment which is " spare and tasteful with subtle flourishes of the Orient " .

During interviews following the Pulitzer announcement , Akhtar said that the play 's title has both a literal and a metaphorical meaning . Literally , Amir plays out his disgrace in almost real time before the audience . Metaphorically , Akhtar says " There are ways that the colonial history of the West is still playing out in the Muslim world . The events that comprise that history ? a disgrace of native peoples , as it were ? is still very much a part of our contemporary moment . "

= = Awards and nominations = =

The Chicago production received four Joseph Jefferson Awards nominations for the August 1 , 2011 , and July 31 , 2012 , theatrical productions season on August 21 . Disgraced was recognized as the Best New Work ? Play or Musical on October 15 , 2012 .

In its description of the play , the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama committee described it as " a moving play that depicts a successful corporate lawyer painfully forced to consider why he has for so long camouflaged his Pakistani Muslim heritage . " The Pulitzer jury was headed by The Washington Post 's theater critic Peter Marks . Playwright Donald Margulies , Princeton University

professor Jill Dolan , critic John Fleming and critic Alexis Soloski were also on the jury .

On April 3 , Aasif Mandvi earned a 2013 Lucille Lortel Award nomination for Outstanding Lead Actor . On April 22 Ayad Akhtar received an Outer Critics Circle Award nomination for the John Gassner Award . Akhtar won a 2013 Obie Award for Playwriting on May 20 . On May 8 , the production was nominated for a 2013 Off @-@ Broadway Alliance Award for Best New Play . It lost to Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike on May 21 .

On April 28 , 2015 , the Broadway production was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Play at the 69th Tony Awards .

= = = Chicago production = = =

= = = Off @-@ Broadway production = = =

Disgraced 's Off @-@ Broadway premiere competed in the 2012 @-@ 13 season for Off @-@ Broadway awards such as Drama Desk , leaving only new actors and technical staff eligible in the Broadway transfer in 2015 .

= = = Broadway production = = =

= Ælfhelm of York =

Ælfhelm (died 1006) was the ealdorman of Northumbria , in practice southern Northumbria (the area around York) , from about 994 until his death . An ealdorman (or earl) was a senior nobleman who governed a province ? a shire or group of shires ? on behalf of the king . Ælfhelm 's powerful and wealthy family came from Mercia , a territory and former kingdom incorporating most of central England , and he achieved his position despite being an outsider . Ælfhelm first appears in charters as dux (" ealdorman ") in about 994 .

Most of Ælfhelm 's subsequent historical appearances record him as a witness to charters , although one notable exception is the will of his brother , Wulfric Spot . According to a 12th @-@ century tradition , Ælfhelm was murdered and his sons blinded in 1006 , by Eadric Streona with the connivance of King (Æthelred II) . Ælfhelm 's daughter , Ælfgifu , married Cnut the Great , King of England between 1016 and 1035 , as a result of which Ælfhelm became the grandfather of future English king Harold Harefoot .

= = Origins = =

Ælfhelm was a Mercian , son of Wulfrun , a rich noblewoman who founded Burton Abbey . His father is unknown , but it is thought that he was of lower rank than Wulfrun as Wulfric Spot , Ælfhelm 's brother , is called " Wulfric son of Wulfrun " , suggesting that his status derived mainly from his mother . Wulfric Spot founded Burton Abbey , but little is known about Ælfhelm 's sister , Ælfthryth .

Wulfrun also founded the Minster of St Mary 's at Wolverhampton , a settlement which took her name (" Wulfrun 's chief settlement ") . Her earliest association is with Tamworth , when she is mentioned as the only hostage taken after Amlaíb mac Gofraid , Norse @-@ Gael King of Northumbria , captured that city in 940 . It is thought that her lands were mostly in Staffordshire , while most of Wulfric Spot 's lands were in Staffordshire , Derbyshire , and western Warwickshire .

= = Ealdorman of southern Northumbria = =

Ælfhelm begins witnessing charters as dux , i.e. ealdorman , in 994 . He was thought by historian Simon Keynes to have been the same as Prosopography of Anglo @-@ Saxon England (PASE) "

Ælfhelm 15 " , who witnesses charters as minister , i.e. thegn , from 982 to 990 . Charter appearances earlier , during the reign of Edgar the Peaceable , are possible , but it is impossible to show definitively that earlier thegns with the name Ælfhelm are the same as the future ealdorman of southern Northumbria , the latter only being positively identifiable by his title , dux .

Ælfhelm 's apparent promotion in 994 is thought by some historians , for instance Richard Fletcher , to have been due to the Scandinavian attack on Northumbria in 993 . Under the year 993 , the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle relates that Vikings had invaded Northumbria and sacked Bamburgh , whereupon the southern English raised an army :

Bamburgh was sacked and much booty was captured there , and after that the army came to the mouth of the Humber and did great damage there , both in the Kingdom of Lindsey and in Northumbria . Then a very large English army was collected , and when they should have joined battle , the leaders Fræna , Godwine and Frythegyst , first started the flight .

Fletcher speculated that Ælfhelm 's predecessor Thored , who disappeared from the records at this time , was removed from office and replaced by Ælfhelm by King Æthelred II as a result of his failure against the Scandinavians . Another historian , William Kapelle , believed Thored was removed because of his Scandinavian descent , an argument based on the Worcester Chronicle 's claim , added to the text borrowed from the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle , that Fræna , Godwine and Frythegyst fled because " they were Danish on their father 's side " .

= = Wulfric Spot 's will = =

Ælfhelm 's brother , Wulfric Spot , left a will written in Old English , which provides many of the details we know about Ælfhelm . For instance , it gives the names of his two sons , Wulfheah and Ufegeat . It dates to between 1002 and 1004 , and survives in a 12th @-@ century manuscript .

Wulfric granted the lands " between the Ribble and the Mersey , and in the Wirral " to Ælfhelm and his son Wulfheah , on condition that they each pay Burton Abbey 3 @,@ 000 shad at shad season . Wulfric left Ælfhelm Rolleston (Staffordshire) , Harlaston (Staffordshire) , and Conisbrough (Yorkshire) , the last on condition that he gave Burton one third of the fish there . Wulfheah received Barlaston (Staffordshire) , Marchington (Staffordshire) , and Alvaston (Derbyshire) , while Ælfhelm 's other son Ufegeat was given Norton (Derbyshire) " in the hope that he may be a better friend and supporter of the monastery [of Burton] " . Ælfhelm is asked to protect Burton Abbey and the possessions of Wulfric 's daughter .

= = Death and legacy = =

Little else is recorded about Ealdorman Ælfhelm 's career before his death . Notice of the latter , with the blinding of his two sons , comes in the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle , which related under the year 1006 :

In this year Archbishop Ælfric died and Bishop Ælfheah succeeded him to the archiepiscopal see . In the same year Wulfgeat was deprived of all his property , and Wulfheah and Ufegeat were blinded and Ealdorman Ælfhelm killed .

The Worcester Chronicle , which for this period consists of entries taken from the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle supplemented with extra information , gives an expanded saga @-@ like version of this account , attributing Ælfhelm 's death to Eadric Streona :

The crafty and treacherous Eadric Streona , plotting to deceive the noble ealdorman Ælfhelm , prepared a great feast for him at Shrewsbury at which , when he came as a guest , Eadric greeted him as if he were an intimate friend . But on the third or fourth day of the feast , when an ambush had been prepared , he took him into the wood to hunt . When all were busy with the hunt , one Godwine Porthund (which means the town dog) a Shrewsbury butcher , whom Eadric had dazzled long before with great gifts and many promises so that he might perpetrate the crime , suddenly leapt out from the ambush , and execrably slew the ealdorman Ælfhelm . After a short space of time his sons , Wulfheah and Ufegeat , were blinded , at King Æthelred 's command , at Cookham , where he himself was then staying .

This material in the Worcester Chronicle seems to have been part of a lost saga about Eadric Streona , not extant but used by various surviving 11th- and 12th @-@ century sources . Kapelle thought Ælfhelm 's murder , conducted without King Æthelred 's displeasure , was the result of suspect loyalty in the face of Scandinavian invasions .

The sources appear to indicate that Ælfhelm 's successor was Uhtred of Bamburgh , the first magnate in decades to govern northern and southern Northumbria together . The text known as De obsessione Dunelmi (" On the siege of Durham ") , relates that Uhtred took power after defeating a Scottish invasion .

As well as his two sons Ælfhelm left a daughter , Ælfgifu of Northampton , by a woman named Wulfrun ; Ælfgifu 's territorial appellation is taken as further evidence that Ælfhelm had territory in the eastern Danelaw . She is perhaps more famous than her father , because at some time between 1013 and 1016 she married Cnut , son of Sweyn Forkbeard , future King of the English . Her son was Harold Harefoot , King of the English .