

PAKISTANI-MUSLIM FILMMAKER FROM MISSISSAUGA TALKS ABOUT RELEASE OF NEW DOCUMENTARY: 'ABU'

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In a stunningly honest depiction of his life, Canadian-Pakistani filmmaker Arshad Khan, takes audiences on a heart-wrenching journey through his past, his family and the perils of being a gay-identifying Pakistani-Muslim Canadian in his new documentary, ABU.

The documentary follows his story as a boy gridlocked in a tussle between the rules of being "a good Pakistani boy" and being true to himself and the strained relationship between his family's conservative notions of life, and his aspiring liberal and modern ones.

With powerful themes of religion, migration to Mis-

sisauga, Canada, sexuality and colonialism, told against the backdrop of childhood innocence and old home movies from Pakistan, Khan strings together a story that will undoubtedly disarm and leave audiences from every walk of life overwhelmed with compassion.

"I just finished film school, so I was thinking of telling a story, and my father died," Khan says, recounting the inspiration behind the film. "This was sitting in my gut and I couldn't get rid of it."

Khan's relationship with his father was one of deep love and deep resentment. His father's passing led him to unpack his harrowing past, taking him closer to reconciliation.

"I had a very difficult re-

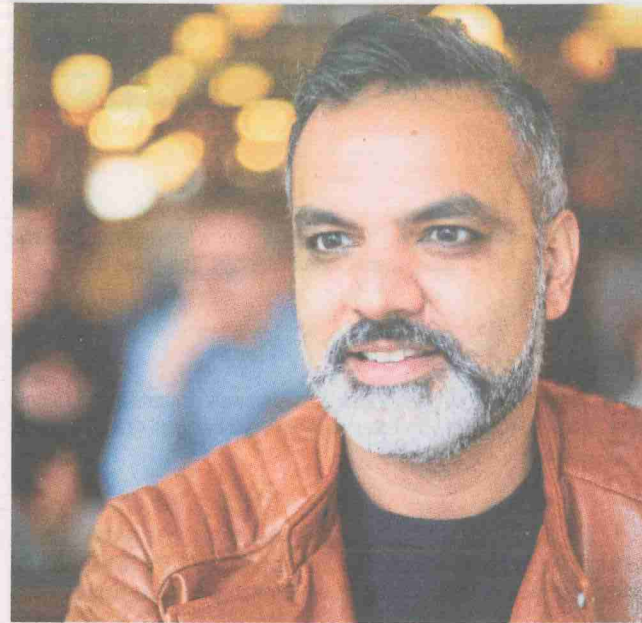
lationship with him, I hated him most of my life," he said. "But after he died, I couldn't understand why it just completely turned my world upside down. I wanted to examine that."

Historically and presently, LGBTQ rights and issues have been long-contested in the Pakistani-Muslim community within Pakistan and around the world.

"Homophobia is a big problem in our community here," Khan said. "And the erasure of queer people and the pressure to conform and be like others."

With the sharing of knowledge through social media, however, information is flowing much faster, he said.

"This sharing of information is preventing the



Arshad Khan photo

Pakistani-Canadian filmmaker from Mississauga, Arshad Khan, releases his new documentary, ABU, a love story of father and son. The film will play at the Courtney Park Cineplex on Aug. 29 at 7 p.m. in Urdu (with English subtitles) and 9 p.m. in English.

stagnation that used to happen before the internet in our community around these issues, Pakistani's want to uplift," he said. "Even in Pakistan, a lot more discussion is happening around LGBTQ issues,

freedom of speech and other issues. I'm hopeful."

Since the film's release, Khan says the reaction from the Pakistani-Muslim community has been primarily indifferent, but those that have seen the

film have had positive things to say.

"I hope this film helps our community to see the beauty in us - South Asians, brown people, Indian, Pakistani. I hope this community remembers that reconciliation is so important, it can happen," Khan said. "I hope it helps the western audience understand themselves better, helps them understand us better. I hope it helps people realize the value of truth, community of love, the value of family, making it easier for each other rather than more difficult. But also, I hope this film empowers parents to prepare their children and strengthen them rather than weaken them so they can stand up for themselves."

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For tickets and more information visit www.facebook.com/events/936727696517354/.

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