



**KhushDC**  
SOUTH ASIAN LGBTQ COMMUNITY

## DEAR KHUSHIES,

A new year brings new commitments and goals for us all. Khush DC is committing to another year of fostering safe spaces for South Asians within the LGBTQ+ community and for LGBTQ+ people within the South Asian community. From book club meetings to dance parties, peer support hangouts to theater outings, 2023 promises many avenues for our diverse desi/South Asian communities to be together and celebrate ourselves.

We have already hosted two KhushDC book club meetings this year! In January, Khushies met up to discuss “My Father’s Garden” by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, read more about the book [here](#). In February, staying true to our commitment to center the stories of marginalized members of our community, our book club read “[Coming Out as Dalit](#)” by Yashica Dutt. Yashica borrows the LGBT term of “coming out” to narrate her own struggles to publicly share, or “come out” with, her Dalit background in a world still rife with caste discrimination. Learn more about our book club [here](#).

We also announced a March 16 community outing to Olney Theater to see “A Nice Indian Boy”, a play with LGBTQ+ desi themes. It promises to be a wonderful evening, especially the community mixer that Olney Theater is hosting before the play begins. Lastly, we have kicked off planning our 2023 Jalwa dance party! We will have opportunities for members to take on volunteer roles to help make one of our most iconic annual events a reality, which COVID put on hold for far too long.

Thank you!

Sincerely,  
Travis

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# TOWN HALL MEETING UPDATES

Every year, KhushDC holds a town hall meeting in which we discuss our finances, organizational bylaws and inclusivity statement. We feel it is important to be transparent with our community and to gather feedback and suggestions so that we may serve you better.

Some changes were made to the organizational bylaws and inclusivity statement, both of which can be found on our website.

[Inclusivity Statement](#) [Organizational Bylaws](#)



# JALWA IS BACK!

Jalwa is KhushDC's Annual **Queer South Asian Bollywood Party!** After a few years of not hosting the event due to the pandemic, we have decided to bring it back.

To plan this event, we are counting on you, our community members, to help this event come to life. The following committees have been created to divide up the work, and a KhushDC board member will be guiding you all through our planning process.

We will be holding an interest meeting on March ,2023 at pm. Each committee will meet as needed based on tasks, and there will be a few larger planning meetings that will include all committees and volunteers. Each committee will be lead by a board member. Some committees may not require as many volunteers as others. The committees we will be recruiting volunteers for are:

- Logistics
  - Some throughout the process
  - Some day of volunteers
- Talent
- Promotion
- Security and Ticketing

Fill out this form to attend the interest meeting!



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



**Ashley Baboota (she/her)**

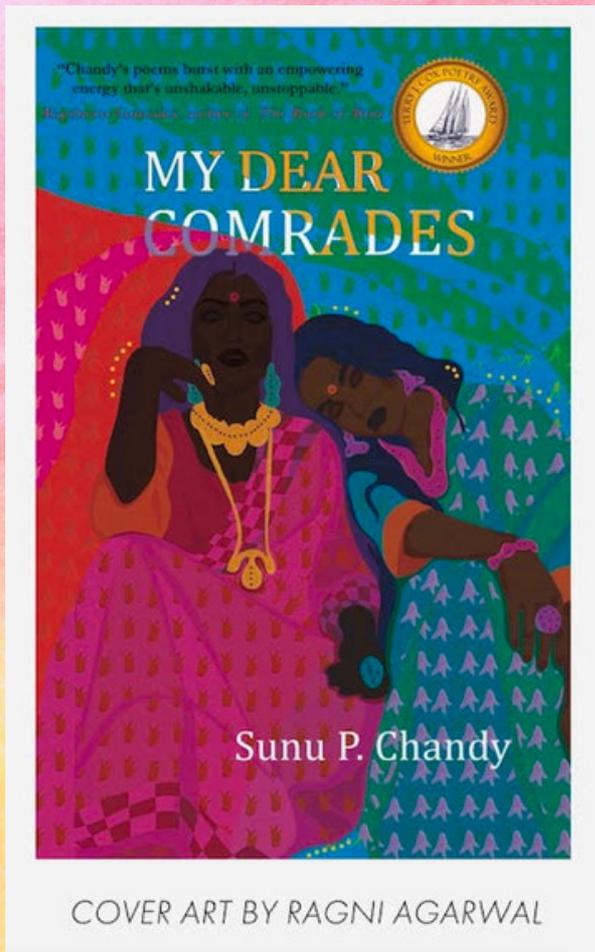
Hey y'all. I joined KhushDC last summer after a few years of hearing about it, but I'm glad I finally went out to one of the happy hour events because I've made some really close friends since! There's nothing like a community that gets you for all your different identities. I was born right outside of Toronto, but I've grown up almost my entire life Fairfax, so I'd consider myself a DMV native. I have a lot of pride for the area so if you need tips on where to go for X, I probably have a Google Maps list for it.

I've always thought I was pretty career-driven, but after working in marketing for a few industries including climate, private equity, and startups, I'm excited for once to take a break and knock out some bucket list items I've always wanted to do.

I like to joke that my hobby is trying new hobbies, but I think I just like learning and novelty so you'll often find me trying out a new random class (bonus points if it's something I never thought I would do). Consistently though I love skiing, kayaking, watching movies and then talking about them after, anything made by A24, dystopian tv shows, eating carbs, dancing bachata, thrifting, building furniture, and sustainability.

I'm exploring more of how being South Asian and lesbian is part of my identity and I've only started reflecting on it more intentionally recently. But as a slight movie snob, I'd love to see more wlw representation! You've got the classic Ek Laadke, but I've also enjoyed movies by Shamim Sarif who directed "I Can't Think Straight" and a few other romcom/dramas.

# MY DEAR COMRADES



In this poetry collection, Sunu P. Chandy includes stories about her experiences as a woman, civil rights attorney, parent, partner, daughter of South Asian immigrants, and member of the LGBTQ community. These poems cover themes ranging from immigration, social justice activism, friendship loss, fertility challenges, adoption, caregiving, and life during a pandemic. Sunu's poems provide some resolve, some peace, some community, amidst the competing notions of how we are expected to be in the world, especially when facing a range of barriers. Sunu's poems provide company for many who may be experiencing isolation through any one of these experiences and remind us that we are not, in fact, going it alone. Whether the experience is being disregarded as a woman of color attorney, being rejected for being queer, losing a most treasured friendship, doubting one's romantic partner or any other form of heartbreak, Sunu's poems highlight the human requirement of continually starting anew. These poems remind us that we can, and we will, rebuild. Click on the cover art to pre-order!



## About the Author:

Sunu P. Chandy (she/her) is a social justice activist through her work as a poet and a civil rights attorney. Sunu's collection of poems, *My Dear Comrades*, was selected for the 2021 Terry J. Cox Prize, and will be published by Regal House on March 28, 2023. Sunu's work can also be found in publications including *Asian American Literary Review*, *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, *Poets on Adoption*, *Split this Rock's* online social justice database, *The Quarry*, and in anthologies including *The Penguin Book of Indian Poets*, *The Long Devotion: Poets Writing Motherhood* and *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. Sunu also serves as the legal director for the National Women's Law Center and is on the board of the Transgender Law Center. Sunu was included as one of the 2021 Queer Women of Washington and one of *Go Magazine's* 100 Women We Love: Class Of 2019. Sunu is incredibly grateful to all who give of their time and energy to organize new and old ways for South Asian LGBTQ+ communities to gather together and support each other and work for the liberation of all. Sending a sincere vote of thanks to all Khush leaders, past and present, and to SALGA in NYC, and MASALA in Boston as just a few examples of these beloved community organizations.

## Who are you hoping this book will reach?

I'm hoping this book will reach a variety of audiences. There are many poems that pose social justice or ethical questions that we must all struggle with. And also, I want to make sure to reach out to LGBTQ+ folks and particularly queers of color, AAPI communities, and South Asian communities who may be struggling with acceptance (or not) including from their families. Another group that might be interested is those who are interested in, or who have gone through, family building or parenting through fertility treatments and/or adoption. Similarly, law students or those considering the law as one tool for social change, and public interest lawyers may find community in some of these pieces too. While these are some of the specific groups that might be reflected more directly in the poems, the power of poetry is that it can often land more universally and speak to one's condition whether or not the person is from these communities. I would love to learn what resonates for a range of readers both inside and outside of our shared identities. As we know, sharing our stories is one way that hearts can begin to shift towards greater acceptance.

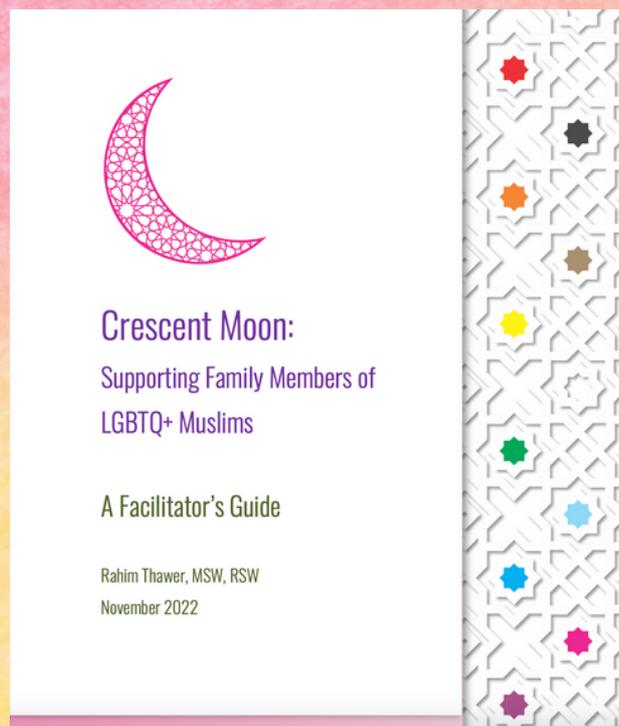
## Can you tell us about who or what has influenced your writing?

Thank you for a chance to share just a handful of my favorite poets. I'll give a sample piece of their work that folks can look up too. I love the work of Naomi Shihab Nye ("Gate A4"), Meena Alexander (Fault Lines is her book), Camille Dungy ("Frequently Asked Questions No. 7"), Aracelis Girmay ("For Estefani, Third Grade, Who Made Me a Card."), June Jordan ("Poem about My Rights"), Marge Piercy ("For the young who want to", and Mary Oliver ("The Summer Day"). This list is endless though, and I urge folks to look up Split This Rock's on-line social justice poetry database where you can filter and find social justice poems for every community/occasion.

## Do you have any tips for aspiring writers or poets?

- Name it and claim it. Stop saying I'm sort of a writer, or I sort of write poems. Be audacious enough to call yourself a writer, and know that this gets a little easier with practice. Make time for writing.
- Seek out writing workshops if you like structure or feedback to support your creative work. I started out by taking a college class on creative writing (shout-out to Professor Barb Caruso at Earlham College), and leading a women of color writing group as my senior project. I later completed an MFA in poetry at Queens College, CUNY.
- Find a community of writers to cheer you on, especially if you're interested in publishing by submitting to literary journals or poetry book contests. I was part of Unicorn Authors group during the early part of the pandemic. At other times, I've created my own groups who have come together in real life or virtually to write in response to prompts together, or to just ensure that we are making time for our creative work.
- Get the hard copy of Poets & Writers magazine and check out the many congrats and related deadlines toward the back. That's how I pushed myself to submit, by selecting some of these journals and contests.
- Yes, sure, some people may get mad if we tell our truths. But that's okay. You got this. I'm cheering you on.

# CRESCENT MOON:



This facilitator's guide was developed in response to multiple requests from Salaam Canada's community partners. Given that Salaam Canada is no longer in operation, service providers and community organizers are invited to adopt and adapt this guide to meet the needs of their communities. Please let them know if you decide to run this group!

- Group Sessions Outline
- Common Questions Family Members Ask When Someone Comes Out
- Common Questions, Part II
- Grief, Loss & Fear
- The Community
- My Islam
- The Acceptance Spectrum
- LGBTQ+ People "Back Home"
- Ally Pressures

## Funding & Acknowledgements

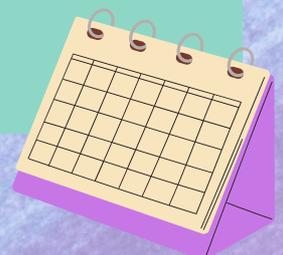
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# UPCOMING EVENTS

## KHUSHDC & PARTNERS

- **Jalwa Interest Meeting**
  - March 15th @ 7:30pm via Zoom
  - [Sign up here](#)
- **A Nice Indian Boy - Arts Night Out!**
  - March 16th @ 6:30pm at Olney Theater
  - Email for ticket information
- **KhushDC Virtual Peer Support**
  - March 18th @ 1:30pm via Zoom
  - Email board.khushdc@gmail.com for Zoom Link
- **KQTDC March Potluck/Movie Night**
  - March 18th @ 5PM in Herndon
  - [RSVP HERE](#)
- **KhushDC Queer South Asian Book Club**
  - March 23rd @ 7:00pm via Zoom
  - [Sign up here](#)
- **Queerblossoms**
  - March 25th @ 3:00pm starting at Jefferson Memorial
  - [Sign up here](#)
- **Sunu P. Chandy DC Book Launch**
  - March 28th @ 7:00pm at Politics and Prose
- **Trans Empowerment Boxing**
  - March 17th, 31st, April 14th, 28th @ 6:15pm in Healey Family Student Center
  - No need for RSVP



Have an idea for an event?  
Contact the board to get things started!