

# ‘Own the Moon’ Tells Story of South India Immigrant in Segregated U.S. South

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Each year, [Represent! A Multicultural Playwrights Festival](#) at ACT Theatre present readings of new work by playwrights of color. One of the plays to be featured at this year’s event is the working product of a coast-to-coast collaboration. Vikas K. Menon’s *Own the Moon* tells a story in which a black woman encounters an immigrant woman from South India in the segregated U.S. South. These two women and their husbands later form an unlikely friendship, negotiating family and race issues into the 1970s.

This concept behind the play originated from Menon’s own family’s history.

“It really came out of stories that my father told me about his early years in the U.S., including negotiating the South as a brown man before segregation ended,” Menon said. “And that initial image haunted me, of a woman in a sari drinking from a white water fountain.”

Menon decided to explore the home life behind that image.

“I was most interested in limiting the setting to the domestic and how those intimate family spaces register the world around them,” he said.



Playwright Vikas K. Menon. • Courtesy Photo

For this presentation, Menon received the sponsorship of the **Pratidhwani Drama Wing**, which is led by Agastya Kohli.

“We sent out an announcement to various South Asian theatre-related mailing lists, inviting plays for this year’s Represent! Festival,” Kohli said. “A group of Pratidhwani actors then gathered and read through some of the submissions, and *Own the Moon* was our favorite entry for this year.”

Kohli will direct the reading, and the actors include Dhigha Sekaran and Vineetha Menon, who will play the roles of the Indian immigrant couple, along with Sonya Harris, Kimaya Mahajan, Marshall Simon and Corey Spruill rounding up the ensemble.

The collaboration has been a long-distance challenge, as Pratidhwani is located in Seattle, while Menon is based in New York.

“We have been working together over the phone and via email since early August,” Kohli said, “and [Menon] has revised the script significantly over the last couple of months.”

Menon said that the advice and support of Kohli and Pratidhwani has been very helpful.

“I really needed the sparks of support and constructive criticism to further develop the play,” Menon said. “Pratidhwani has given me an opportunity to do just that.”

Kohli agrees that the partnership has been fruitful.

“Although we’ve never met in person, the working relationship has been very cordial and collaborative,” he said. “Vikas is always very open to receiving feedback, both criticism and suggestions, and is able to incorporate that feedback in very effective ways.”

And Menon plans to continue doing more of that. “Writing, rewriting, revision!” is how he describes his future plans for *Own the Moon*. He hopes to pursue a full production.

“I expect that, after the staged reading and audience feedback at Represent!, I’ll be able to take *Own the Moon* to the next level.”

*Own the Moon will be presented on October 3 at 7:30 p.m. at ACT Theatre, 700 Union St., Seattle, WA as part of Represent! Multicultural Playwrights Festival. For tickets and more information, visit [acttheatre.org](http://acttheatre.org).*