

KMarie Tejada: Good morning.

Congregation: Morning.

KMarie Tejada: Welcome to morning prayer. If you'd please stand as you are able and join me in our responsive greeting, which, this morning is Psalm 18 found in your Black Appleton Psalter book on page nine.

KMarie Tejada: "I adore you, oh Lord, my strength."

Congregation: "Oh Lord, my rock, my fortress, my rescuer, my God."

KMarie Tejada: "My rock in whom I seek refuge, my shield, my mighty champion, my heaven."

Congregation: "Ropes of deaths encompassed me, torrents of Belial terrified me."

KMarie Tejada: "Ropes of Sheol encircled me, snares of death confront me."

Congregation: "In my distress, I called on the Lord, crying out to my God. In His Temple, He heard my voice, my cries to Him reached His ears."

KMarie Tejada: "You have given me the cheer of your protection, your right hand has sustained me. Your care has made me great."

Congregation: "You have let me stride on freely, my feet are not slipped."

KMarie Tejada: "For these I sing to your praise among the nations, Lord, and hymn your name."

Congregation: "He accords great victories to His King. He is straight with His anointed, with David and his offspring forever."

Choir: (singing).

Alicia Izharuddin: Good morning.

Audience: Morning.

Alicia Izharuddin: [Arabic 00:04:58].

Alicia Izharuddin: "Oh, mankind, indeed, we have created you from male and female, and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of ye. Indeed, Allah is knowing and acquainted," out of the thirteenth verse of Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt from the Quran.

Alicia Izharuddin: I arrived in this country two months ago. It had been 12 years since I had been in the United States, and the six months before my arrival, I was filled with

trepidation. I was traveling from the Netherlands where my family resides, after many years of working and living in the United Kingdom and Malaysia, and I had become very accustomed to the impersonal nature of immigration bureaucracy that was quite determined to discourage me. I had made sure I had filled out every form, paid every fee properly and promptly, and kept much of the anxiety to myself.

Alicia Izharuddin: I had been very lucky. My voyage and eventual arrival was smooth for it was facilitated by the kindness and warmth of the people I had encouraged and worked with since my arrival here, which helped some slowly open my world to this world. Soon, I learned that the kindness and warmth was the way in which this world opened up to mine.

Alicia Izharuddin: In the often heated and violent discussions about immigration in which people are reduced to statistics, or worse, aggregated masses, or swarms and invasions. Or, if I were to speak more plainly, when we talk about the movement of people, bodies, minds, hearts, across borders, their arrival are met with questions about the assimilation of these bodies into the majority. What this means is that people must obey the law, enter the correct documentation, speak the language and make themselves, ourselves, myself, invisible. Here, assimilation is like drops of rain that disappears into the ocean. I am that drop that falls and disappears into that ocean.

Alicia Izharuddin: To go back to my own experiences of kindness and warmth and support, I took that as a means by which people here tried to assimilate to me, my newness, my foreignness. Somehow, my foreignness is accentuated by how I perceive this place as foreign to me.

Alicia Izharuddin: 12 years is a long time and much has changed since I've been back here. I often say to those women to here that this is like the new and unfamiliar country to me, but of course, for people here who try to assimilate to me and my newness, and me assimilate to them, that occasion is often conditional. Again, with the correct documentation, the right kinds of English, and with a legitimate purpose of my being here.

Alicia Izharuddin: Something happens when I assimilate and people assimilate to me at this meeting point, like the one we have here at this moment. Two worlds meet. They might collide. They might brush against each other. Sometimes they might miss each other. Assimilation of either side is never going to be complete, never going to satisfy.

Alicia Izharuddin: Because I am an academic, I like to introduce a concept coined by Mary Louise Pratt called "Contact Zones, which are social spaces where culture meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in context of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."

Alicia Izharuddin: The Contact Zone could be the meeting point of two people from very different cultures, but those cultures are not equal in power and global recognition. Many people I meet here do not know where Malaysia is, or as I've been actually even asked here in Cambridge, if Malaysians even listen to jazz, or whether I knew what jazz music is.

Alicia Izharuddin: The Contact Zone could be an encounter with an object, maybe a photograph whose prominence is somewhere unfamiliar and unusual, in which we have few cultural points to draw from. It could also be a name that you have never uttered before, maybe my name, and you'll have trouble pronouncing. But from this Contact Zone, something happens, two worlds meet, they may clash and collide, but they may also transform each other. No one is completely unchanged after they encounter at the Contact Zone.

Alicia Izharuddin: I've chosen to recite the 13th verse from the Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt from the Quran because it is the most appropriate one for our reflection this morning. I would like to re-read the verse in English and situate my talk on what the Contact Zone means.

Alicia Izharuddin: "Oh, mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is knowing and acquainted."

Alicia Izharuddin: This particular verse, among the most well-known in the Quran, makes a statement on equality of humankind despite our differences and sheer diversity, how God has purposely made humankind diverse so that they may know each other and find common ground. In the Quran, that common ground is our shared point of origin, whichever way you wish to interpret that. What I take from this verse is that finding that common ground must be hard work, otherwise, why would God need to say it?

Alicia Izharuddin: Meeting at the Contact Zone isn't always a happy encounter. Before one reaches that point, there's often paperwork, fees, waiting times, long queues, interviews, borders, and walls. The Contact Zone is not always a happy place because it destabilizes what you thought you knew about the world and about yourself and your place in the world. You realize that you are no longer the center, at the center, but you are actually placed at one of the many meeting points and Contact Zones for others who are moving along in life. Thank you.

KMarie Tejada: Let us pray the Lord's Prayer. Follow on the reverse of your further worship.

KMarie Tejada: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

KMarie Tejada: Please stand as you are able and join together in singing, Love is Kind and Suffers Long, found on your Crimson Hymnal, Hymn number 331.

Congregation/Choir: (singing).

KMarie Tejada: May the Lord our rock and refuge keep protecting us today and the days to come. Amen.

Audience: Amen.