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Kal Penn

Star of *The Namesake*, and the *Harold and Kumar*
Movies
Changing the Racial Landscape of Hollywood

THE LATEST: Kal Penn has been named associate director at the White House's Office of Public Liason, where he will help President Obama reach out to both the Asian-American community and the arts community.

Kal Penn is the star of *The Namesake*, the *Harold and Kumar* franchise, and a co-star on Fox's *House*. He's a rising star in Hollywood -- but what sets him apart is his off-screen eloquence, his depth of intention, and his passion for the intersection of popular culture, politics and race. Named "the world's most famous Indian-American actor" by *New York* magazine, Penn is leading a new wave of performers who are subverting stereotypes and changing the racial and ethnic landscape of Hollywood.

Drawing massive crowds of fans, Kal Penn is a campus speaker who delivers both the buzz of celebrity *and* intellectual conversation. He looks at the intrinsically political nature of pop culture. He also gives us a glimpse into the darker side of the entertainment industry, full of prejudices and comically misguided casting agents ("Where's your turban?"). One of the few Indian-American actors -- so far -- to break into Hollywood, he looks at how pop culture can reinforce, but also challenge and overturn, racial stereotypes. With an actor's grace and an activist's unbridled passion, Penn shows us the visionaries working to broaden the racial and cultural experience in movies and on television.

Kal Penn has starred in both indie movies and blockbusters, like *Superman Returns*. His breakthrough role came in *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle*. (He also stars in the sequel, *Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay*.) In *The Namesake*, he turned in what *The New York Times* called "a crackling star-making performance." Named one of *People's* Top 50 Bachelors, Penn teaches two courses at the University of Pennsylvania: on Asian-Americans in pop culture, and on the history of teen movies.