

The Robey Theatre Company Presents "Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Unity" to Open on the First Day of Kwanzaa, Dec. 26, 2021

The Virtual Dramatic Play, Directed by Ben Guillory and Written by Marie Y. Lemelle and Barbara Bullen, Explores Whether the Seven Principles of Kwanzaa Can Change the World.



THE ROBEY THEATRE COMPANY
PRESENTS

A LIVE READING
DEC 26 - JAN 1

Kwanzaa

A Celebration of Unity

BY MARIE Y. LEMELLE AND BARBARA BULLEN
DIRECTED BY BEN GUILLORY

Umoja Ujima Nia Imani
Kujichagulia Ujamaa Kuumba

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Los Angeles, California Dec 20, 2021 (IssueWire.com) - During the global pandemic and civil unrest, devastation, and aftermath, can the guiding seven principles of Kwanzaa offer change to the

world? "[Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Unity](#)," presented by [The Robey Theatre Company](#) and directed by [Ben Guillory](#), was conceptualized by Playwright [Marie Y. Lemelle](#) to explore the possibilities of how Kwanzaa can unite people on a global level and help them embrace their differences.

"In the late 60s, during the aftermath of the Watts riots, Dr. [Maulana Karenga](#) created Kwanzaa, an African American celebration of culture and tradition," said Lemelle, the creator and lead writer of the play with co-writer Barbara Bullen. "As an activist and writer, my vision was to amplify the purpose and re-visit the intention about Kwanzaa and its seven principles (unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith), especially during the pandemic, the deadliest time in modern history, and the civil unrest sparked by the horrific public murder of George Floyd. I am thankful for the Robey Theatre Company's platform."

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The virtual performance opens on the first day of Kwanzaa on Sunday, December 26, 2021, at 3 p.m. PST and runs from December 27, 2021, through January 1, 2022, at 7 p.m. PST. The runtime is 110 minutes with one (1) intermission. Q&A with Guillory, Lemelle, and Bullen to follow the opening day on the Dec. 26th performance.

Warning: Strong language and intense discussions that may not be suitable for young children.

To watch the free performance, register in advance at <http://therobeytheatrecompany.org/our-events> to receive Zoom links. Subscribe to The Robey Theatre Company YouTube Channel to receive notifications regarding the play's availability on YouTube.

Sign up at www.youtube.com/c/TheRobeyTheatreCompany

The Robey, a nonprofit developmental theatre organization, encourages a voluntary \$10 donation at <http://therobeytheatrecompany.org/donate>

The playset during the global pandemic and civil unrest, devastation, and aftermath, a resolute Afrocentric history professor, Dr. Agu, challenges a multi-national group of college students during virtual classroom sessions while quarantine-stranded in Ghana on his own personal journey to uncover his roots.

To address current world events of social injustice and amplify Black awareness, Dr. Agu sublimely changes the narrative to dig deeper into civil rights history and how Kwanzaa values could be the solution to our racial divide. On the other hand, his U.S.-based pupils are not quite ready for the truth about prejudice, racism, and inequality or how life lessons based on the Kwanzaa celebration can be a solution and change the world.

The lectures erupt during intense discussions. Dr. Agu and his students are in for an eye-opening revelation that upends the life of one of the "privileged" students.

"Marie Lemelle and Barbara Bullen were commissioned to write the play that was developed and produced by The Robey Theatre Company," said co-founder Guillory who served as dramaturge to the

playwrights. “Marie and Barbara did a wonderful job in writing the play and creating the characters. We assembled 14 diverse actors,” said Guillory in an interview on the “Our Society Show with Allen Shay.”

“Kwanzaa’s seven principles end up being a part of the lives of these students. The students put the principles into practice, not just academically but walk away with these principles, as part of their consciousness; however, there is a huge conflict in the class because racism rears its ugly head as so often does in the classroom,” he said.

“My character is Penny Jones who is into civil rights and Kwanzaa and wants to learn more. It’s really interesting to watch the evolution of the characters from different backgrounds to have intense discussions and at times come together. Some people have different intentions than others in this beautifully written play,” said actor Christina Childress is originally from Memphis, Tennessee.

“This play brought me back to that place of how hateful the world can be.” In a recent interview with Shay, Childress talked about how she related to her character. “Penny is a part of me because she’s a strong part of me. I had a rough experience at a predominately white college; somebody wrote the N-word on my dormitory door. I acted, got the campus involved, and led a grassroots outreach campaign on the campus to raise awareness and let them know that this is not okay and will not be tolerated. This role and play reawakened that fire in me to be more vocal about ending racism.” This play is her first production with The Robey Theatre Company.

Guillory, the Producing Artistic Director and Co-Founder of The Robey Theatre Company, directs a cast that includes **Jermaine Alexander, JC Cadena, Childress, Garret Davis, Matt Jennings, Nate Lovell, Terry “Tes” Scott-Mitchell, Mona Mohamed, Crystal Nix, Amara Phelps, Ke Shi, Kyle Sparks, William Warren, Jess Weaver,** and **Guillory** as Maulana Karenga.

Producer: Ben Guillory. Associate Producers: JC Cadena, Jermaine Alexander. Writers: Marie Y. Lemelle and Barbara Bullen. Video Production: Jermaine Alexander. Narrator/Stage Manager: Crystal Nix. Graphic Design: Jason Mimms. Music Director: Cydney Wayne Davis.

About the Playwrights

Marie Y. Lemelle, a native of Southern California, earned MBA from the University of La Verne. A journalist, casting director, film producer, and screenwriter, this is her first play. Lemelle has produced several feature films with the most recent, “Flint Tale,” about a struggling family during the ongoing Flint Water Crisis. Lemelle has several projects in development. She is the CEO and Founder of Platinum Star Public Relations, Inc., a consultant agency, and Platinum Star Media Group, Inc., a production company and talent management firm. She is a board member of the YWCA Glendale/Pasadena that focuses on empowering women and ending racism. For more information, go to www.imdb.com/marieylemelle or **Instagram: @platinumstarpr**

Barbara Bullen, a graduate of Cal State LA, is the author of 49 books and 15 screenplays. This is her first produced work. Bullen is the owner of Andersons Screenplays and Dreamworld Literature

About The Robey Theatre Company

Founded by Veteran Actors Ben Guillory and [Danny Glover](#), The Robey Theatre, a federally designated 501 (c) 3, fosters a community of artists whose purpose is to develop and produce plays written about

the global Black experience. At its core, the organization is committed to effecting social change and to the preservation, production, and reinterpretation of celebrated “Black Classics.”

For a quarter-century, The Robey Theatre Company has been known for its award-winning plays. Told from the lens of a global Black experience, the organization is dedicated to high-quality, socially conscious, and authentic work. **www.therobeytheatrecompany.org**



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