

Who's Who: Cast, Producing Team, Writers!

READINGS, RESILIENCE, AND REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

May 7 at 7 pm Et on Zoom

RSVP or INFO: reprofreedomarts@gmail.com

Repro Freedom Arts and
the National Institute of Reproductive Health

Performers and Presenters:

Dr. Grisel Y. Acosta, writer/presenter, is an associate professor at the City University of New York–BCC. She is the editor of the recently published Routledge anthology, *Latina Outsiders Remaking Latina Identity*, and her book, *Things to Pack on the Way to Everywhere*, is a finalist for the Andrés Montoya Poetry Prize. Select works can also be found in the *American Studies Journal*, *VIDA: Women in Literary Arts*, *The Lauryn Hill Reader*, and the forthcoming sci-fi anthology, *Speculative Fiction for Dreamers: A Latinx Anthology*. Dr. Acosta is a Macondo Fellow and a Geraldine Dodge Foundation poet.

Cait Cortelyou, actor, is a Brooklyn-based actress and producer. Her first feature film *Ask For Jane* is based on the true story of the Jane Collective, an underground abortion network in the 1960s. Cait has also appeared as Nurse Monk in Steven Soderbergh's *The Knick*, and as Delilah in the fashion week episode of CBS's *Bull*. On stage, Cait originated a role in *Sleep No More*, and serves as the Director of Community Outreach for The Shelter, a long-running independent theatre company in NYC. She is an escort for Planned Parenthood and an activist with the National Institute for Reproductive Health. www.CaitCortelyou.com

Kimiye Corwin, actor, is an actor, dancer, choreographer and teacher living in Brooklyn, NY. She danced professionally with the Jose Limon Dance Company prior to expanding into acting. NY theater credits: Red Bull, Ma–Yi Theater, NAATCO. Regional theater credits include Guthrie, McCarter, Actors Theater of Louisville, Syracuse Stage, Shakespeare Festival St. Louis. TV/Film credits include *Blacklist*, *The Family*, *One Life to Live*, *Five Dances* (film by Alan Brown). She trained in dance at Juilliard and acting at Brown/Trinity. Kimiye is grateful to her theater community and the chance to contribute during this challenging time.

Alinca Hamilton, actor, has appeared in *Reproductive Freedom Is What We Want* and on the Reproductive Freedom Walking Tour. Her favorite credits include: Calphurnia in *Julius Caesar*, Classic Stage Company; Philly in *Someone Dies at the End*, Edinburgh Fringe Festival; Sorin in *The Seagull*, Columbia University, and the title character in *Melody June Cooper: Actress* for*

Hire, which she conceived and produced. She is a recent graduate of Columbia University's MFA Acting program and holds a BBA from Baruch College.

Yvette Heyliger, actor, is a playwright, producing artist and actor. Yvette has performed her work in various theatre festivals, most recently #Heal MeToo Festival and United Solo Theatre Festival. Author of *What a Piece of Work is Man! Full-Length Plays for Leading Women* she has also contributed to various theatre anthologies including *Short Plays on Reproductive Freedom* edited by Cindy Cooper. Yvette is a recipient of the AUDELCO Recognition Award for Excellence in Black Theatre's August Wilson Playwright Award and an NAACP Annual Theatre Award Best Playwright nomination. She is the co-recipient of the first National Black Theatre Emerging Producer Award. Yvette was an Obama Fellow (2012), a founding member and longtime volunteer leader with Organizing for Action where she worked on issues like gun violence prevention and immigration. A citizen-artist, she has also worked on equal opportunity and pay for women artists and most recently the #MeToo movement. Memberships: AEA, SDC, AFTRA-SAG and the Dramatist Guild where she serves as the first Dramatists Guild NYC Ambassador. She is also a member of Honor Roll! and serves on the board of the League of Professional Theatre Women. <https://newplayexchange.org/users/30298/yvette-heylinger>

Crista Marie Jackson, actor, is an actor, aerialist, and model. She toured and performed with Words of Choice for several years. <http://cristamariejackson.wixsite.com/actor>

Carl H. Jaynes, actor, appeared in New Light Theater Project's premiere of *Still Dance the Stars* by Jayme McGhan. He has performed with the Negro Ensemble Co., Ensemble Studio Theater and Flock Theater of New London CN, where he performed the title role in Shakespeare's Othello. A member of the Words of Choice company since 2006, he has travelled to a dozen states helping present dynamic theatre on reproductive freedom to vulnerable communities.

Stacey Linnartz, actor and co-producer, is a professional actor, director, and teacher of acting. Recently, she starred in the Off-Broadway hit *Life Sucks* by Aaron Posner, directed by Jeff Wise (Drama Desk Nomination.) Last fall, the solo show she directed *As Soon As You're Born (They Make You Feel Small)*, had its Off-Broadway premiere at The United Solo Festival, where it received a Critic's Choice Award. She has acted in and directed several projects for Words of Choice, including the **Reproductive Freedom Theatre Festival**. She is currently a professor of Acting at Playwrights Horizons Theatre School at NYU / Tisch. MFA, Graduate Acting, NYU. StaceyLinnartz.com.

Producing Team

Francesca Mantani Arkus, director, has worked at the Hudson Guild, Anne Frank Center, HERE, Signature, Blue Heron, Phil Bosakowski Theatre, 78th Street, The Director's Company, Barrow Group, Pulse Ensemble, with Words of Choice, and in readings at New York Theatre Workshop

and the Public Theatre. Regionally, she's worked at Mark Taper Forum, Capitol Theatre and the Open Eye, and served as Assistant Dir. to Tina Landau on *Floyd Collins* at Playwrights Horizons.

Cindy Cooper (co-producer) is an award-winning playwright and journalist in New York. Her plays have won awards from Pen & Brush, Samuel French, Nantucket Playwrights Festival, Malibu Intern'l Festival, and others. *Running On Glass* about women in sports won accolades at Venus Theatre. Her work has been produced in New York at The Women's Project, Primary Stages, Wings, EST, Art and Work Ensemble, WOW, Theatreworks USA, Anne Frank Center, Center for Tolerance, Ronald Feldman Gallery, Center for Jewish History, Lincoln Center Clark Studio, New Circle Theatre Company and more. Elsewhere, her plays have been produced in Boston, Philadelphia, LA, Chicago, Minneapolis, Buffalo, Reno, Vancouver, Budapest, Montreal, Helsinki, and others. A two-time Jerome Fellow, her plays are published in 16 publications, including *Women Heroes* and *Front Lines*. She edited *Short Plays on Reproductive Freedom*. The founder of Words of Choice and the Reproductive Freedom Festival, she has been honored by NARAL Pro-Choice America, the Abortion Conversation Project and Quixote Foundation. She formerly worked at the Center for Reproductive Rights; with Social Justice Tours in New York, she gives Reproductive Freedom Walking Tours in Manhattan.

Stacey Linnartz, co-producer, see above.

Emory Kempf, assistant producer, is an NYC-based writer and performer. She is graduating (or rather, Zooming out of school) next month from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where she has studied at Playwrights Horizons Theater School and Stonestreet Studios. She is committed to creating and engaging in projects (both theatrical and non-theatrical) that focus on mental health advocacy and gender rights!

Declan C Zhang, Zoom Producer, is a producer, playwright, actor, and musician. Recent credits: *Hyacinth and Apollo* and *The Sun Club* at Dixon Place, *Frankenstein* at The Tank, and *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Wildness* at NYU Tisch. They are a 2050 Administrative Fellow at New York Theatre Workshop, in the Executive department, and an amateur chef. BM: NYU. @dclnzhang

Writers

Dr. Grisel Acosta (see performers, above).

Melissa Bell's productions include *Lady Capulet*, Henley Rose Finalist 2017, presented by Barefoot Shakespeare in Central Park in 2019, and COURAGE by NACL Theatre (Honored Finalist, Women in Arts and Media Coalition 2019 Collaboration Awards) presented on Governor's Island, NYC, and the Catskills, featuring Debra Winger.

Justice Harry A. Blackmun (d.1999) was appointed to the United States Supreme Court in 1970 by President Richard Nixon, and served until his retirement in 1994. In 1973, he wrote the majority opinion in *Roe v. Wade*, which, by a vote of 7–2, held that states could not criminalize all abortion care. The decision held that the right of privacy in the U.S. Constitution prevents the government from interfering in intimate decision-making. More letters were received by Justice Blackmun about the *Roe* decision than the court had received on any other matter. In subsequent cases, *Roe* was reconsidered many times, but its core holdings stood.

Esosa Edosomwan is a producer, writer, actress, model and health expert who was named one of '10 African Artists and Entrepreneurs You Should Know' by *The Root*. Also known as Esosa Edo or Esosa E, she played Ngozi in the hit web and TV series *An African City*. Her film work has appeared on Canal Plus, Ebony Life TV, VOX Africa, BET, MTV, the Whitney Biennial and MOMA. Esosa's one-woman show, *The Woman Who Would Be King*, about Hatshepsut, the first female pharaoh, has been performed at The Smithsonian Museum of African Art, Kennedy Center for Performing Arts and the Sundance Institute. Esosa is also a certified Clinical Nutritionist, the creator of *Raw Girl in a Toxic World*, a health website that features holistic lifestyle tips, and the author of *Got Veg? How to Thrive on a Plant-Based Diet*, and other books. www.esosae.com

Jessica Feder-Birnbaum is a playwright, author and theatre artist. Her plays have had readings, workshops and productions in New York and regionally. Her plays and other writings appear in print and on-line. Recent readings/productions: Coronavirus One Minute Play Festival (Queens Theatre, NYC), The Director's Workshop Theatre of Western Springs (Illinois), Bechdel Group's 9th Overnight Writing Challenge (NYC), Clutch Productions EmpowerHER Reading Series (Primary Stages Studios NYC), Burning Coal Theatre (Raleigh NC); *Words of Choice*, *Short Plays on Reproductive Freedom* at Bluestocking (NYC); 5 Minute Jewish Play Festival Second Prize recipient; Lawrence Family JCC (San Diego)

June Jordan (1936–2002) is one of the most widely-published and highly-acclaimed Jamaican American writers of her generation. A poet, playwright and essayist, Jordan was known for her fierce commitment to human rights and political activism, writes the Poetry Foundation. Over a career that produced 27 volumes of poems, essays, libretti, and works for children, Jordan engaged readers in the struggles for civil rights, women's rights, and sexual freedom.

Florynce ("Flo") Rae Kennedy (1916 – 2000) was an American lawyer, feminist, civil rights advocate, lecturer and activist. She was a lawyer on the first class action to challenge the anti-abortion laws in New York State in the late 1960s. An early member of the National Organization for Women, she co-founded the National Black Feminist Organization which then sponsored the candidacy of Shirley Chisholm for President. A fiery speaker known for her punditry and witticisms, she traveled the lecture circuit with Gloria Steinem in the 1970s. She co-wrote the book, *Abortion Rap* with Diane Schulder. and penned an autobiography, *Color Me*

Flo: My Hard Life and Good Times. In 2005, Sherie Randolph released a biography, *Florynce "Flo" Kennedy: The Life of a Black Feminist Radical*.

Jacqueline E. Lawton is a playwright, dramaturg, producer, and advocate for Access, Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the American Theatre. She received her MFA in Playwriting from the University of Texas at Austin. She is a 2012 TCG Young Leaders of Color award recipient and an alum of National New Play Network (NNPN), Arena Stage's Playwrights' Arena, and Center Stage's Playwrights Collective. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a dramaturg for PlayMakers Repertory Company. She is also the Dramatist Guild's North Carolina Regional Representative.

Alix Olson is an internationally touring spoken word artist-activist who has ignited stages from Lincoln Center to the March for Women's Lives, from South Africa to Australia. She is featured in TV and radio appearances including on HBO, Rachel Maddow, CNN, Oxygen and more. Olson has published several volumes of poetry, three spoken word albums, the award-winning documentary *Left Lane*, and is the editor of *Word Warriors: 35 Women Leaders in the Spoken Word Revolution* (Seal Press) and co-author of *Burning Down the House* (Soft Skull Press). She has been featured in *Ms.*, *Curve*, *The New York Times*, *Time Out*, *OUT Magazine*, *Poets and Writers* and others, and has been voted OutMusic's Out Musician of the Year.

Marge Piercy has written 17 novels including *The New York Times* Bestseller *Gone To Soldiers*; the National Bestsellers *Braided Lives* and *The Longings of Women*; the classic *Woman on the Edge of Time*; and most recently *Sex Wars*. Among her 19 volumes of poetry the most recently published include *The Hunger Moon: New & Selected Poems 1980-2010*, and *Made in Detroit*. Her critically acclaimed memoir is *Sleeping with Cats*. She is active in antiwar, feminist and environmental causes.

Mary Ann Sorrentino, author of the *The A Word*, served as Executive Director of Planned Parenthood of Rhode Island, where she was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church. After leaving Planned Parenthood she went on to become the top-rated talk host on Rhode Island's flagship radio station WPRO where she worked for 12 years, appeared in a weekly television show, wrote newspaper opinion articles and won several Associated Press Awards.

Dr. Susan Wicklund is a doctor who provided abortion care for nearly 30 years, working in Montana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota. She became vocal advocate for reproductive health and rights, appearing on *60 Minutes*, *Fresh Air* and elsewhere. Her top-rated book, *This Common Secret: My Journey as an Abortion Doctor*, co-written with Alan Kesselheim, describes her work as an abortion provider and the harassment she experienced from the anti-abortion ideologues.

