

# ***SAY THEIR NAMES***

## **PLAYBILL**



**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2020 at 7:00PM EST on ZOOM  
w/Simultaneous Facebook Livestream**

*With Opening Remarks by*  
***Shermena M. Nelson, African American Policy Forum***  
*Chief of Staff/Director of Programs and Community Engagement*

*(In Order of Appearance)*

**Tanisha Anderson**  
***NeNe by Celeste Walker***

**Sandra Bland**  
***Technical Difficulties by Lisa B. Thompson***

**Eleanor Bumpurs and Deborah Danner**  
***The Way I Want to Be Remembered by Jake-ann Jones***

**Georgina Maldonado**  
***Daughter of the Sea and the Sun by Janis Astor del Valle***

**Vanessa Marquez**  
***Vanessa by Diana Burbano***

**Nizah Morris**  
***The Most Loving Thing to Do by Yvette Heyliger***

**Aiyana Stanley-Jones & Breonna Taylor**  
***Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep by Cheryl Davis***

**Pamela Turner**  
***Just Wanna Go Home by Michael angel Johnson***

**Misty Upham**  
***Never Be Afraid by Jaisey Bates***

***The Readings will be followed by a panel with the playwrights hosted by Jacqueline Lawton.***

# ***Say Their Names* Playbill**

## ***About Tonight's Presentation***

Inspired by the #SayHerName Movement, this is an evening of readings of Plays and monologues about Black Indigenous Women of Color (BIWoC) who have died at the hands of law enforcement, written by BIWoC Honor Roll! playwrights, for BIWoC and their allies.

CONTENT WARNING: There are gunshot sound cues in the play, *Just Wanna Go Home* by Michael angel Johnson.

*Say Their Names* is a self-initiated Honor Roll! Project in association with [Repro Freedom Arts](#), [The Breath Project](#), and African American Policy Forum's [#SayHerName Campaign](#).

[Honor Roll!](#) is an advocacy group for women+ playwrights over 40 and their allies. Honor Roll! Executive Committee: Cynthia Cooper, Cheryl Davis, Yvette Heyliger, Olga Humphrey, Sarah Tuft, Jacquelyn Reingold, and Lucy Wang.

*Say Their Names* Committee: Diana Burbano, Cheryl Davis, Yvette Heyliger, Jacqueline Lawton, Mildred Lewis, Celeste Walker, Lucy Wang

## ***WHO'S WHO***

Playwrights, Directors and Actors next page.

## ***PANEL DISCUSSION***

Moderator: Jacqueline Lawton

Chat/FB Post Facilitators: Mildred Lewis and Lucy Wang

Panelists (In order of presentation of plays.): Celeste Walker, Lisa B. Thompson, Jake-ann Jones, Janis Astor del Valle, Diana Burbano, Yvette Heyliger, Cheryl Davis, Michael angel Johnson, and Tara Moses (for Jaisey Bates)

## ***PRODUCTION TEAM***

Production Coordinator: Yvette Heyliger

Play Reading Committee: Jacqueline Lawton, Mildred Lewis, Lucy Wang

Company Manager: Lucy Wang w/Celeste Walker

Technical Director/Stage Manager: Declan Zhang

***This event was made possible on Zoom and via Facebook Livestream by  
Cindy Cooper, Repro Freedom Arts.***

# *Say Their Names* Playbill

## **Who's Who**

(Order of Show)

### ***Tanisha Anderson***

#### **NeNe**

*NeNe tells the story of Tanisha NeNe Anderson who died in police custody while suffering a mental break.*

**Written by:** Celeste Bedford Walker

**Directed by:** Lynnne Godfrey

**Actor:** Lisa Nicole Wilkerson (A SISTER)

**Celeste Bedford Walker** is the recipient of the NAACP Theatre Award for Best Play and Best Playwright for her play *Camp Logan*; The National Black Theatre Festival's August Wilson Playwright's Award; the AUDELCO Award for Best Play Revival for *Reunion in Bartersville*; The Women's Theatre Festival of Memphis' Gyneka Award; the Ensemble Theatre's Salute to Texas Playwrights, and a BOLD New Play Commission for the theatre. She was a finalist in the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for Distant Voices. Her play *The Red Blood of War* was selected for the 2020 William Inge New Play Lab Festival and *Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed* was recently workshopped at the Black and Latino Playwright's Celebration at Texas State University. Her plays are featured in the anthologies *Acting Up and Getting Down: Plays by African American Texans* and *Black History Plays*. Celeste is a member of Honor Roll!, Dramatists Guild, and Texas Institute of Letters.

### ***Sandra Bland***

#### **Technical Difficulties**

*During an interview with a researcher an incarcerated Black woman describes how she has been punished for expressing anger throughout her life.*

**Written by:** Lisa B. Thompson

**Directed by:** Indiiia Wilmott

**Actors:** Michelle Alexander (SISTER), Trevor Bissell (DEACON TURNER/DADDY), Zac Carr (RESEARCHER/WHITE BOY/POLICE OFFICER), Amber Quick (MRS. ROSS/MS. WILSON/CAMP COUNSELOR), Laura Spraggins (NARRATOR), and Valoneecia Tolbert (AUDRE LORDE)

**Lisa B. Thompson** is the author of three books, *Beyond the Black Lady: Sexuality and the New African American Middle Class*, *Single Black Female*, and *Underground, Monroe, and The Mamalogues: Three Plays*. The artist/scholar is professor of African and African Diaspora Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Thompson's plays, which have been produced off-Broadway, throughout the US, and internationally, often explore African American life and culture through the lens of the middle class. Her work has received support from a number of institutions including the American Council of Learned Societies; W. E. B. DuBois Research Institute; the Michele R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research; the University of California's Office of the President; Scriptworks; the Warfield Center for African and African American Studies; Hedgebrook; and the Millay Colony for the Arts.

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## *Georgina Maldonado*

### ***Daughter of the Sea and the Sun***

*Eagerly awaiting her first march, a 7-year old girl imagines a future when her people will be free.*

**Written by:** Janis Astor del Valle

**Directed by:** Allison Astor-Vargas

**Actor:** Janis Astor del Valle (GEORGINA and MARISOL)

**Janis Astor del Valle** uses her plays and films to foster discourse and understanding of LGBTQ issues and cultural diversity. She is a member of Honor Roll! and the Actors Studio's Playwright/Director's Workshop. She has served as an Assistant Professor in the Practice of Arts Management and Entrepreneurship at SUNY Purchase since 2013. Janis enjoys touring her solo plays: *Trans Plantations*, which explores her identity crisis as a New York-born Puerto Rican lesbian uprooted from the Bronx and transplanted to Connecticut and, *Becoming Joaquin*, about a Latino transman and his family who are in therapy, struggling to accept his identity. Her solo play, *Getting There*, was named a finalist in the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's 2018 National Playwrights Conference and the 2018 LTC Carnival of New Latinx Work. Janis resides in New Haven, CT, with her wife, their dog and kitten.

## *Vanessa Marquez*

### ***Vanessa***

*Vanessa Marquez is murdered by South Pasadena police officers. The video is damning but the officers were exonerated.*

**Written/Directed/ Performed by:** Diana Burbano

**Diana Burbano**, a Colombian immigrant, is a playwright, an Equity actor, and a teaching artist at South Coast Repertory and Breath of Fire Latina Theatre Ensemble. Diana's play *Ghosts of Bogota*, won the Nu Voices festival at Actors Theatre of Charlotte in 2019. *Ghosts* was commissioned and debuted at Alter Theater in the Bay Area in Feb 2020. She was in Center Theatre Group's 2018 – 2019 Writers Workshop cohort and is in the Geffen's Writers Lab in 2020 – 2021. She has worked on projects with South Coast Repertory, Artists Repertory Theatre, Breath of Fire Latina Theatre Ensemble and Center Theatre Group. She is the current Dramatists Guild Rep for Southern California. [www.dianaburbano.com](http://www.dianaburbano.com)

## *Nizah Morris*

### ***The Most Loving Thing to Do***

*On the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of transwoman Nizah's Morris's murder and cover-up, Roslyn Wilkins gets a sign from her daughter while preparing for Advent.*

**Written/Directed by:** Yvette Heyliger

**Actor:** Ricardo Frederick Evans (NARRATOR) and Yvette Heyliger (ROSLYN WILKINS)

**Yvette Heyliger** Author of *What a Piece of Work is Man! Full-Length Plays for Leading Women*, has contributed to various theatrical print and online anthologies including: *Performer's Stuff*, *The Monologue Project*, *Later Chapters: The Best Scenes and Monologues for Actors over Fifty*, *Short Plays on Reproductive*

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*Freedom, 24 Gun Control Plays, The Best Women's Stage Monologues 2003 and The Best Stage Scenes 2003. Pending: Performing #MeToo: How Not to Look Away, The Children of the People: Writings by and about CUNY Students on Race and Social Justice, She Persisted: 30 Ten-Minute Plays by Women Over 40, and She Persisted: Monologues from Plays by Women Over 40. Awards: AUDELCO Recognition Award for Excellence in Black Theatre's August Wilson Playwright Award; National Black Theatre Festival Emerging Producer Award; Best Playwright nomination NAACP's Annual Theatre Awards. Memberships: Dramatist Guild, AEA, SDC, and AFTRA-SAG. Service: Dramatists Guild NYC Ambassador and Executive Committee of Honor Roll!*

### ***Aiyana Stanley-Jones & Breonna Taylor***

#### ***Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep***

*A young woman and a very young girl realize they have a lot in common. Unfortunately.*

**Director:** Bryanda Minix

**Actors:** Julianna Ott (AIYANA STANLEY-JONES) and Bryanda Minix (BREONNA TAYLOR)

**Cheryl Davis'** play *Maid's Door* was produced at the Billie Holiday Theatre to excellent reviews, received seven Audelco Awards, and was presented at the 2015 and 2017 National Black Theatre Festivals; it was also a finalist for the Francesca Primus Prize. She received the Ed Kleban Award for her work as a musical theater librettist, and her musical *Barnstormer* about Bessie Coleman, the first Black woman flyer (written with award-winning composer Douglas J. Cohen), received a Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation Award under the auspices of the Lark Play Development Center. She received a Writers' Guild Award for her work on the daytime dramatic serial *As the World Turns* and was nominated for a Daytime Emmy Award for her work on that show as well. She currently writes for *Law & Order: SVU* on a freelance basis, and her episode "Garland's Baptism by Fire" aired on April 2, 2020.

### ***Pamela Turner***

#### ***Just Wanna Go Home***

*Pamela Turner imagines an ideal world in the moments before being killed.*

**Written by:** Michael angel Johnson

**Directed by:** Mary E Hodges

**Actor:** Lorna Haughton

**Michael angel Johnson's** plays have been produced in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Cleveland, Amherst, New Haven, and other places across the U. S. *The Price of Solitude* was a finalist in the National Ten-Minute Play Contest at Actors Theatre of Louisville. *The Apartment* earned Michael angel the honor of special participant at the O'Neill Theatre Centre. Her play, *Wild Fires*, was a finalist at the Hollywood Black Film Festival. Stories and essays: "The Echo" (Persimmon Tree) and "A Basket of Biscuits" (On the Issues). Michael angel is a member of The League of Professional Theatre Woman and a member of New York Women in Film & Television. She is an Associate Professor at The Fashion Institute of Technology (New York) where she developed and teaches African American Literature. Michael angel is a graduate of The Yale School of Drama in Playwriting.

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## *Eleanor Bumpurs and Deborah Danner*

### ***The Way I Want to Be Remembered***

*An ancestor and a ghost say 'so long' to the past with a goodbye game.*

**Writer/Director:** Jake-ann Jones

**Actors:** Hazelle Goodman (ELEANOR) and Jacqueline Gregg (DEBORAH)

**Jake-ann Jones** is a writer, performer, and producer, who began her career as an actress on stage before garnering acclaim as a playwright for works including: *Portrait of the Artist as a Soul Man Dead* (Penumbra Theater, St. Paul), *U(nder) F(rank) O(bservation)* (New York Theater Workshop), and *Magic Kingdom* (New Georges/Hourglass Theater). Her play, *Death of a Ho*, was published by TCG in their anthology, *Plays from the Boom Box Galaxy*. After performing the lead role of Cicely in the award-winning independent film *Naked Acts*, she co-wrote the Urban Film Festival grand-prize-winning script *Spook City* and co-produced the Creative Mothership/Black Public Media web series *Mondo Black*. Jones writes for The Weekly Challenger newspaper in St. Petersburg, FL. Her upcoming biography of civil rights activist, journalist, and press secretary Florence L. Tate, *Sometimes Farmgirls Become Revolutionaries: Notes on Black Power, Black Politics, and the FBI*, will be released next spring by Black Classic Press.

## *Misty Upham*

### ***Never Be Afraid***

*On the October day the police came for Misty, she fled; 11 days later family and friends found her body.*

**Written by:** Jaisey Bates in collaboration with Misty's family and friends

**Directed by:** Tara Moses

**Actors:** Jeff Barehand (FRIEND), Natalie Benally (MISTY), Michael Greyeyes (FATHER), Kimberly Guerrero (FRIEND), Tanis Parenteau (WOMAN), Nicholas Stauffer (POLICE) and Zach Wegner (POLICE)

**Jaisey Bates** writes, directs and performs with The Peoplehood ([the-peoplehood.com](http://the-peoplehood.com)). A Princess Grace Award and O'Neill National Playwrights Conference finalist and Kilroys List honorable mention, Jaisey is a recipient of the Emerging American Playwright Prize from Marin Theatre Company, and of Judge's Choice/Featured Play from the Oklahoma City Native American New Play Festival. The title *Never Be Afraid* is from a message Misty wrote to Jaisey. This play was written with Misty's family and friends. Special thanks to Mr. Charles Upham, Misty's father, for his support and contributions, and to Jeff Barehand, Misty's friend, who will be reading excerpts from his own reflections at the time. Gratitude to the director and cast, many of whom knew Misty. Gratitude to Honor Roll's *Say Their Names* for this chance to hold Misty's name -- and her memory -- to the sky.

## *Stand and Stretch*

### **PANEL DISCUSSION**

**Moderator:** Jacqueline Lawton

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