



"There is nothing new under the sun, but there are new suns" - Octavia Butler



4/20/21, SAY THEIR NAMES cemetery at 37th & Park (near George Floyd Square) The sun sets on a call for justice. Visitors at the cemetery honor, mourn, celebrate, and gather momentum for the work of tomorrow. They compose a symphony for those lost: Guilty on all three counts. Black Lives Matter. Humanity Matters. You Matter.

PHOTO AND WORDS BY MEGAN GRAMLOW, PWNO SAFETY COMMITTEE

A great exhale of relief went through the city, through the world, with the three guilty verdicts for Derick Chauvin. But, the verdicts cannot bring back those who lost their lives at the hands of police, or begin to comfort grieving families. Even as we feel relief we must add Daunte Wright to this picture. Our work is only beginning.

THE ALLEY EDITORIAL LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE



Painting of Daunte Wright and his son

BY NIKKOLAS SMITH/WWW.NIKKOLAS.ART

"If she saw your child, Katie, as she saw her child, I don't think she would've reached for a taser, let alone a gun," attorney Ben Crump said to Wright's mother and the crowd assembled at the services in North Minneapolis Thursday, April 22.

Semilla Center for Healing and the Arts: Fiesta de Arte/Art Parties

By INTERIM DIRECTOR BART BUCH AND ARTIST/BOARD MEMBER ANGELA BARRERA

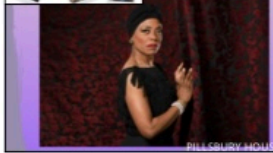
Una invitación a una fiesta:
(see p. 8 for English)

Tuvimos un año difícil el año pasado, de muchas, muchas maneras. El Covid-19, las dificultades económicas, la violencia, la adición, la brutalidad policial, el malestar social y la falta de vivienda han aumentado el miedo y el aislamiento del vecindario. Una cosa buena que surgió de la emergencia del levantamiento el año pasado fue conocer a nuevos vecinos y cuidarse unos a otros en tiempos difíciles. Esperamos y sentimos que se acercan tiempos mejores ahora que llega la primavera. Semilla Center for Healing and the Arts tenemos una idea. ¡Una invitación! Queremos ayudar a crear mejores tiempos con nuevas conexiones, fortaleciendo las conexiones existentes y aumentando la confianza de la comunidad, utilizando arte y fiestas: ¡Fiesta de Arte! Para celebrar juntos y seguir cuidándonos unos a otros.

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NINA SIMONE: FOUR WOMEN
BY CHRISTINA HAM
PILLSBURY HOUSE THEATRE



Regina Williams has played Nina from Philadelphia to Atlanta, and helps facilitate On Stage discussions of the play

Past, Present, Theater

On Stage involves local students in a closer look at Nina Simone's work around racialized violence

By JESSIE MERRIAM

"When we listen to Simone sing 'Mississippi Goddam'--it could've been written yesterday. Somebody needs to write a 'Minnesota Goddam' right now," Twin Cities actress Thomasina Petrus declared to the group,

gathered on the morning of April 1 to explore the play *Nina Simone: Four Women* and Simone's reverberating legacy.

This gathering was arranged by On Stage: Creating a Community Dialogue Around Live Theater, a Twin Cities nonprofit that brings the scripts of local plays to college classes and community centers and facilitates discussions with the aid of theater creators and educators. On April 1, Professor Jo Lee's "American Drama by Playwrights of Color" class at the University of Minnesota was joined by creators/artist-activists Nora Montañes

and Sun Mee Chomet, as well as Petrus, who performed in the 2016 Park Square Theatre staging of *Nina Simone: Four Women* in St. Paul. Lucas Erickson, On Stage's founder, facilitates every discussion.

Have you ever written a song? Have you been to a protest before? Is there a social issue in the world or something in your heart that activates you?

Christina Ham, an acclaimed Minnesota playwright, wrote the 2016 play that digs deeper into the way racialized violence catalyzed Nina Simone's evolution as

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A Closer Look at the Winter Greenhouse Project

By ELIZA SCHOLL, HECAIA INTERN WITH TAMALES Y BICICLETAS



Volunteers Bozena Scheidel and Mattie Wong secure polycarbonate glazing. Volunteers have been essential to the project.

On South 15th Avenue, half a block south of E. 28th St., Tamales y Bicletas is building a winter greenhouse on its urban garden space. For ten years, the nonprofit has used bikes and urban farming to reduce the environmental impacts of the heavy concentration of industry on the East Phillips community.

"How do we decolonize our food systems that then leads to decolonizing our minds and bodies?" asks Jose Luis Villaseñor Rangel, the founder of Tamales y Bicletas. "That's always been the DNA of why we do what we do."

The construction of a winter greenhouse is Tamales y Bicletas' latest project. Daniel Handeen, a professor of architecture and a Research Fellow

Pivotal Vote for East Phillips Urban Farm Project Expected in May

By LINDSEY FENNER

On May 14, the Minneapolis City Council is expected to vote to approve or reject the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the City's Hiawatha Maintenance Facility Campus Expansion Project at the former Roof Depot Building in East Phillips. An EAW gives details on a project and its environmental impact, and it is one critical legal check against the environmental damage the proposed Public

Works Maintenance Facility expansion might inflict on East Phillips neighbors. The vote on the EAW was delayed due to the unprecedented number of over 1000 public comments on the EAW by supporters of the East Phillips Urban Farm Project.

The East Phillips Urban Farm has growing support among the members of the Minneapolis City Council.

Please continue to urge Mayor Jacob Frey
jacob.frey@minneapolismn.gov
and the Minneapolis City Council
citycouncilmembers@minneapolismn.gov:



Vote YES for the East Phillips Urban Farm Project!



STOP THE VIOLENCE, LETTER FROM 8TH GRADER P 5



SEMILLA CENTER ART PARTIES/ FIESTA DE ARTE P 6



TWIN CITIES ARTS AND CULTURE OPENING UP! PAGE 9



PHOTO COURTESY OF ASI

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By LINDS

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On Stage, Nina Simone



an artist-activist. Pillsbury House Theatre planned to stage the play last year, but Covid postponement has pushed it to this fall or next spring.

The play follows Nina Simone on a fictional visit to the aftermath of a real event: the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, a prominent Black church and civil rights rallying place. In the bombed-out church, Ham brings the characters of Simone's 1965 composition "Four Women" to life and imagines Simone engaging with them on how to be heard as Black women in the midst of personal and widespread violence.

Petrus went over the backdrop of terrorism at that time in "Birmingham" and around the nation, and students were invited to consider the effects of fear on individual and social consciousness. The bombing occurred in a year of great upheaval, and three months after the murder of Medgar Evers in Jackson Mississippi. These events had a profound effect on the real Nina Simone. She wrote the song "Mississippi Goddam" that year, vigorously lamenting the sluggish pace of change and the persistence of bias in society and the justice system.

This sluggish pace was at the forefront of the group's mind that April morning, day four of the Derek Chauvin trial. The students and On Stage facilitators took a moment of silence to acknowledge the fear, anxiety and fatigue conjured by the overlap of past and present events.

"Bring your forehead closer to the screen if you've listened to music yet today," Chomet invited the group. They talked about the way some songs stick in your head and inform the way you see your daily life. Then they discussed Nina Simone's evolu-

ing sense of her duty to "reflect the times and situations in which I find myself" through song.

They viewed Simone's 1962 performance of Gershwin's 1935 folk opera song "I Loves You Porgy," to demonstrate her earlier style in subject matter as self-presentation. After viewing Simone's concert performances, Chomet guided the students to "rock the chat" and give impressions of what was conjured by this evolution to as, Petrus put it, Simone's "claiming being herself—claiming being a queen."

The women in the play grapple with the tragedy of the bombing, as riots erupt outside. Music becomes a core means of resistance in an era when women were denied speaking roles in the civil rights movement they were critical in organizing. Students listened to the song "Four Women," and considered the influence of racism on conceptions of beauty and self-worth, the tension created by the perceived gaze of a hostile world.

Think of a moment where you felt exposed or where you doubted yourself; What did you need in that moment to help you feel supported and strong?

The play offers "four different lenses on Blackness and Black women's thoughts," Petrus said. "How varied experiences are even within one's own community. This is what theater does that I love—it offers you the opportunity to realize how you thought one thing, but there are layers." Those layers are revealed by every single element of the theatrical enter-



1968 portrait of
Simone



Simone's 1962 "I Loves You Porgy" performance viewed by On Stage/OnLine facilitators Erickson, Petrus, Montañes, Austene Van (Artistic Director of both New Dawn and Yellow Tree Theatres), and Maria Asp (Speaking Out Collective)

prise: the costumes, lighting, set, and stage management all reveal aspects of a character and a situation, Petrus emphasized, along with dialogue and physical action. The jam-packed hour closed with a viewing of Simone's powerful 1964 performance of "Mississippi Goddam."

"I've had what I call the willies, I get chills every time to listen to these songs. 15 discussions - I listen to them a lot," Erickson said in an interview afterward. Each semester, On Stage hosts 15 discussions of two different plays. In 2020 he started OnStage/OnLine

On Stage has partnered with the following theatres. Check out their websites for virtual, outdoor, and upcoming shows:

Mixed Blood Theatre	Frank Theatre
Park Square Theatre	Children's Theatre
Jungle Theater	Company
MN Jewish Theatre	Yellow Tree Theatre
Company	New Dawn Theatre
Pillsbury House Theatre	Theater Latte Da

*Don't tell me
I tell you
Me and my people just about due
I've been there so I know
They keep on saying "Go slow!"
But that's just the trouble*

Nina Simone "Mississippi
Goddam" 1963

to bring future local plays to virtual classrooms, to "stimulate an interest in live theater, examine the cultural context of a play, and of course, to have fun!"

"We just want to create some kind of ripple effect in their learning. Hard to measure, but it's there," Erickson says. On Stage works with theaters to offer discounted tickets to participants so they can attend the performance post discussion. The plays have addressed such difficult issues as gender and racial inequity, LGBTQ discrimination, cultural diaspora and alienation and aging. The facilitators bring the plays alive through dynamic activities, encouraging the students to grapple with their themes and see theater as relevant and enriching.

"We open a can of worms and then leave," Erickson admits.



Thomasina Petrus leading a pre-pandemic discussion of Pike St. at Washburn High School

"Some educators have had to bow out. It's an intense time, with the trial," Erickson says. But the hope, and feedback, has been that this forum offers a source of connection and deeper consideration.

Chomet closed this discussion with shout-outs to current musical artists lifting social justice causes. And a palpable energy, the sense of the power of theater for grappling with these issues.

Petrus' enthusiasm for the accessibility, depth, and power of theater is infectious: "Theater is one of the last arenas where adults can learn about each other in an environment where it's safe to ask the hard questions. Strangers can come together and really learn about each other."

Find out more about On Stage at www.onstagemn.org. Follow Pillsbury House Theatre on social media for announcements about the play!



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