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For Immediate Release

Lines in the Dust: JCTC Revives New Jersey Play About Race, Class & Public Education

Lines in the Dust, the Main Stage Projection of the 2019 fall season of Jersey City Theater Center (JCTC), is a New Jersey Story depicting the volatile mix of race, class and inequality in public education.

A JCTC production and part of the nonprofit arts organization's *Stories of Greenville* program, *Lines in the Dust* is being presented in a 13 show run, with 10 shows (10/18-11/3) at Merseles Studios, 339 Newark Avenue, Jersey City and three shows (11/7 – 11/9) at New Jersey City University's West Side Theatre, 285 West Side Ave Jersey City, New Jersey 07305.

Lines in the Dust, by Obie-Award winning actress & Pulitzer Prize nominated writer, Nikkole Salter, tells the story of the lengths a mother will go through to ensure a better future for her daughter. Set in 2010, *Lines in the Dust* explores the issue of separate and unequal schooling. The story follows a mother and Newark resident seeking to send her daughter to a better school in Millburn, which seems a risk worth taking, but may end up requiring a bigger sacrifice than she ever could have imagined.

Lines in the Dust is a contemporary fable about the injustices of a public school system where the quality of your children's education can depend on solely on your street address. Originally commissioned by Luna Stage in West Orange to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Brown Versus Board of Education, the plays reveals the persistent racial and economic inequities defining public education in 21st century America.

Although fictional, *Lines in the Dust* is based on true events and real lives. The play's 'context issue' may be school residency fraud, but the heart of its story are people struggling to maintain a sense of value in an amoral, hierarchal societal system where access to quality education often determines who has power.

If anything, the issue of educational disparity has only gotten more dire since *Lines in the Dust* premiered in 2014. Budget cuts, overcrowded classrooms and understaffing afflict schools across the county, especially with populations made up of working class and multiracial families. In Jersey City alone, more than 200 public school teachers were fired last May.

"I saw this play when it first opened and was so impressed with how intelligently written it is," said Olga Levina, Artistic Director, JCTC. "With all the problems with Jersey City schools, especially in neighborhoods like Greenville and Westside, the time is right to bring this new production of *Lines in the Dust* to Jersey City. What is happening with public education is just another form of segregation. Our children are our future, and how we educate all our children will determine what that future will be."

Lines in the Dust was commissioned by and received its world premiere at Luna Stage, then was followed by subsequent productions at the Cleveland Public Theatre, ETA Creative Arts in Chicago, the St. Louis Black Repertory Theatre, Tennessee Women's Theatre Project in Nashville and the Black Theatre Troupe, Phoenix, Ariz.

The JCTC production is the first New Jersey production of the play since its initial run in 2014. In addition to a revised script, the new version features a new set design, as well as multimedia components, including video-mapping projections.

"I'm excited to share *Lines in the Dust* with Jersey City," said Salter. "While the play takes place in Essex County, after seven productions across the country, I find that the story's dynamics resonate beyond the specificity of any town or region. I'm grateful my play is being produced at Jersey City Theater Center, and I hope the play and the production contribute to the important conversations about public education happening this ballot season in Jersey City."

The JCTC production is also the first time *Lines in the Dust* is being staged in New Jersey since its Luna Stage premier in 2014. The director of the show is Cheryl Katz, a New Jersey-based theater professional, who is currently the co-director of The New Jersey Play Lab and was Artistic Director of Luna Stage when *Lines in the Dust* was commissioned. "I am thrilled with the success the play has had since its World Premiere, and even more gratified to have a hand in bringing this important and timely play back home to New Jersey," said Katz..

LINES IN THE DUST

Tickets: \$25

Lines In The Dust/Merseles Studios

Friday 10/18

Saturday 10/19

Sunday 10/20 *

Thursday 10/24

Friday 10/25

Saturday 10/26

Sunday 10/27*

Friday 11/1

Saturday 11/2

Sunday 11/3 *

Doors: 7:30/ Show: 8:00

***Sunday Shows Only: Doors: 5:30/ Show:6:00**

To purchase tickets visit: www.JCTCenter.org

**Merseles Studios
339 Newark Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07302
(201) 795-5386**

Lines in the Dust/NJCU West Side Theatre

Jersey City
Theater Center

JCTC

Thursday 11/7
Friday 11/8
Saturday 11/9

Doors: 7:30/ Show: 8:00

To purchase tickets visit: <https://www.njcu.edu/community/center-arts/theatre-dance>

**West Side Theatre
285 West Side Avenue
Jersey City, NJ 07305**

**Lines in the Dust
Cast & Crew**

Cast:

**Dr. Beverly long/Principal: Tasha R. Williams.
Denitra Morgan: Kerry Vivian Mantle
Michael DiMaggio, P.I.: Thomas Grube**

Director: Cheryl Katz

Playwright: Nikkole Salter

Crew:

**Costume Designer: Eden Tayar
Lighting Designer: Sarah Rae Murphy
Sound Designer: Donald Stark
Set Designer: Grigory Gurevich
Projection/Video-Mapping: Laia Cabrera
Projection/Video-Mapping: Isabelle Duverger
Stage Technician: Fernando Ayres**

Nikkole Salter – Bloomfield resident and *Lines in the Dust* author Salter is best known for her co-authorship and performance in the Pulitzer Prize nominated play, *IN THE CONTINUUM (ITC)*, which had an Off-Broadway run at Primary Stages and the Perry Street Theatre and a US State Department and Bloomberg sponsored international tour, Salter received an OBIE Award, and the NY Outer Critics Circle's John Gassner Award for Best New American Play, the Seldes-Kanin fellowship from the Theatre Hall of Fame, and the Global Tolerance Award from the Friends of the United Nations. She also received Helen Hayes and Black Theatre Alliance nominations for Best Actress for her performance. *ITC*, published by Samuel French, was pronounced - by New York Times, Newsday and New York Magazine - as one of the best plays of 2005. She's also appeared in the film *Pride & Glory* and as the voice of 'LATICIA' in Rockstar Games' video game release, *Midnight Club: Los Angeles*. As a dramatist, Ms. Salter has written eight full-length plays, been commissioned for full-length work by six institutions. Her work has been produced on three continents in five countries, has appeared in 20+ Off-Broadway, regional and international theatres. Her play *Repairing A Nation* was featured in the second season of the WNET program "Theatre Close-Up."

Cheryl Katz has been developing and directing new plays for over 30 years. She is currently the Co-Director of The New Jersey Play Lab, a new organization dedicated to developing production-ready plays. Prior to this, she served as Director of Play Development at Luna Stage from 2003 to 2011, before becoming Associate Artistic Director (2011-2013), and Artistic Director (2013-2018). During her tenure at Luna, she contributed to the development of over eighty new works for the stage, including three world premieres by Nikkole Salter. Cheryl is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

***Lines in the Dust* is part of *Stories of Greenville*, the first arts project to be part of the I Love Greenville Community Plan, a neighborhood improvement initiative created by the Greenville Community Partnership (GCP) and funded by the statewide Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) Program. The project supports continued execution of neighborhood improvement initiatives outlined in the I Love Greenville Community Plan and is made possible by generous program investments by the following values-driven corporations: Horizon Healthcare Services, Investors Bank, M&T Bank, Provident Bank & Valley National Bank.**

***Lines in the Dust* was made possible by generous support from the Hudson County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs/Tourism Development, Thomas A. DeGise, Hudson County Executive and the Hudson County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.**

***Lines in the Dust* was also made possible through the generosity of Ben LoPiccolo Development Group, JCTC's Board of Directors, private donors and local Jersey City businesses.**

Jersey City Theater Center, Inc. (JCTC) is a nonprofit, 501c3 arts organization committed to inspiring conversations about important issues of our times through the arts.