

info@jctcenter.org

For Immediate Release

JCTC Explores Issues of Race, Oppression & Injustice with New Online Reading Series

Jersey City Theater Center (JCTC) presents *Our Times: Uprising*, a virtual reading series of plays, poetry & other writings by Black American Authors. Beginning, Monday July 13, the series runs three weeks on consecutive Mondays providing an original overview of African American history and culture while exploring issues of race, oppression and injustice for contemporary audiences.

“The *Our Times: Uprising* series features voices that have been ignored too long,” said Olga Levina, Artistic Director, JCTC. “As a theater company, social justice is has always been in our mission, and it’s our obligation to respond to the issues of today by speaking truth to power through stories. With what is happening now in America, we felt that one of the most important things we could do was to listen to those stories.”

Our Time: Uprising is a compelling mix of genres with subject matter both topical and historical. The series presents rehearsed readings by professional actors, followed by an interactive discussion highlighted by an audience Q&A.

La Race (La Raz) (July 13) depicts the realities of gentrification when a jobless woman finds meaning by running for city council.

A Collection of Poems (July 20), is an evening of poetry – ranging from Shakespeare to Langston Hughes – recited by professional actors.

Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years (July 27) – the life and times of Bessie & Sadie, a sister duo whose delightful yet poignant stories span the post-Reconstruction South to the 20th century Civil Rights Movement.

The series was organized and curated by Mark Cirnigliaro, a theater director with credits on both sides of the Hudson. The series opener, *La Race (La Raz)* sets the topical tone by addressing issues relevant to our current era. This contemporary play depicts heated City Council election battle over the divisive issue of gentrification. “This is a beautifully executed play, one of a series of works, written by Bley Beckford-Burrell, is fantastic playwright who has a unique way of exploring the nuances and challenges of the black experience in America,” said Cirnigliaro,

Cirigliaro worked with Broadway theater veteran and Montclair resident Count Stovall, who was instrumental in shaping the relevance of each episode to address the complex racial issues of today.

“Count felt that something comprehensive in its scope and viewpoint from the black woman perspective would give us some truth and gravitas to the our current time through the lens of wonderfully drawn, beautiful characters full of life and love,” Cirigliaro explained. “The poetry readings are an extension of that idea. This could be love of another person, love of a people, a culture, but love is the common driving force. This mean meant presenting works by black authors, lifting up black voices for our local community and providing something more intangibly magical for people to experience.”

Our Times: Uprising is free to the public, no subscription fee or registration. Everyone is invited to watch, listen and join in the conversation. For updates and additional information, please visit JCTC’s Facebook page and its website, www.JCTCenter.org.

Our Times: Uprising is a *Stories of Greenville* presentation.

JCTC OUR TIMES: UPRISING

Episode 1 LA RACE (La Raz) July 13th/6:00pm:

Gentrification has come to The Rockaways in Queens and Maxine finds herself jobless and searching. After being pushed into running for city council by her closest friend AJ, Maxine is challenged to balance her sense of self, love and what is right in this funny yet gripping new work. Written by Bleu Beckford Burrell; Directed by Nicolette Lynch

Episode 2 A Collection of Poems July 20th / 600 pm

An evening of poetry curated by Count Stovall, Nicolette Lynch, Marie Thomas and Perri Gaffney. From Shakespeare to Langston Hughes, this evenings of select readings by theatre professionals brings some beauty and heart to our uncertain times.

Episode 3 HAVING OUR SAY: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years July 27th/ 6pm:

The warm, feisty & sharp-witted Delany sisters speak their mind in a play that is both vital historical record and a moving portrait of two remarkable women who continued to love, laugh, and embrace life after over a hundred years of living side by side. Their sharp memories show us the post-Reconstruction South and Booker T. Washington; Harlem's Golden Age and Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Paul Robeson. Bessie breaks barriers to become a dentist; Sadie quietly integrates the New York City system as a high school teacher. Written by Emily Mann, their extraordinary story makes an important contribution to our nation's heritage—and an indelible impression on our lives.

How to Watch – the easiest way is to visit the Our Times: Uprising Event Page on Facebook and follow the instructions. The program uses Zoom Meeting technology.

Or visit: www.JCTCenter.org

Meeting ID: 497 328 6111

Password: 924548

Or to access via smart phone:

One tap mobile

+19292056099,,4973286111# US (New York)

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+1 301 715 8592 US

+1 +1 253 215 8782 US

International

+39 020 066 7245 Italy

+39 021 241 28 823 Italy

+39 069 480 6488 Italy

+351 265 120 012 Portugal

+351 308 804 188 Portugal

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+34 84 368 5025 Spain

+34 91 787 0058 Spain

+34 917 873 431 Spain

+27 87 551 7702 South Africa

+27 87 550 3946 South Africa

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Jersey City
Theater Center

JCTC

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

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Our Times: Uprising 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.

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.