

info@jctcenter.org

For Immediate Release

Privilege: New JCTC Series Explores Issues Both Contemporary & Controversial

Few words are as hot button in today's political climate than Privilege. But controversy is a mainstay of Jersey City Theater Center (JCTC) programming.

Privilege is the new series of visual arts, play readings and other performances that opens March 1st at Merseles Studios with an art show and artist talk and concludes March 29th with *The Box: Privilege Edition*, an evening of music, spoken-word, dance and other performances in JCTC's black box theater.

JCTC selects a topic global in scope yet relevant to the community, then explores that theme through a variety of artistic disciplines and community dialogue. But Privilege as a theme and the diverse visual arts show created around this often divisive term is unique even for JCTC, an arts organization noteworthy for presenting and producing cutting-edge work.

"JCTC series are about asking questions of ourselves and society through art and there is probably no theme more pertinent to today than Privilege," said Olga Levina, Artistic Director of JCTC. "By exploring what the word privilege means, we are looking at all sides of the question of privilege. The artists are not only holding up a mirror to society, but they are encouraging the viewer to question their own privilege."

Due to the contemporary connotations of the word Privilege, Lucy Rovetto, Visual Arts Coordinator for JCTC and curator of Privilege, assembled the exhibition via a distinctly different method than the process she followed for other JCTC art shows. She first contacted Jenny Brover, a Jersey City-based travel and documentary photographer, committed to using her art as a means to bring about political awareness and social action. (Jennybrover.com).

Rovetto selected photos from *Detained: Undocumented and Imprisoned in America*, Brover's series of photographic essays about former detainees who were held at immigration detention centers in Kearny, Elizabeth, and Hackensack. "Immigrant detention is a private prison system across the country that claims to protect American values "with honor and integrity," yet, the treatment of detainees – asylum seekers, documented and undocumented immigrants – is dehumanizing in the way the system strips a non-violent, non-criminal individual of basic human privilege," said Brover.

With government shutdowns over border wall funding, violent ICE raids and tragic family-separation stories pushing immigration issues to the forefront of consecutive news cycles, Brover's *Detained* photographs became the core around which a visual arts exhibition exploring an ultra-relevant topic could be constructed. Brover put Rovetto in touch with other Hudson County based artists – all non-photographers – whose work had political overtones but had never shown at the Merseles Studios art gallery before.

Inspired by the theme, this small group of artists submitted an array of art that further unpacked and examined Privilege. To complete the exhibition, Rovetto personally contacted artists whose work unabashedly confronted this controversial topic. The Privilege Art Show is a dynamic and fearless collaboration between curator and artists resulting in a multifaceted assortment of artwork and ideas by artists both established and brand new to the Jersey City art scene.

“What we have here are artists of diverse race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and language, all offering their voice to a conversation on the topic of Privilege,” said Rovetto.

The artists featured in Privilege run a gamut of visual expression: Luis Alves (handmade collage); Jenny Brover (photography); Jerome China (scrap metal sculpture); Lisa Collodoro (acrylic and permanent marker on canvas); Leandro Comrie (mixed-media on canvas); Asha Ganpat (glass jar product line); Amaia Gomez Marzabal. (oil paint on canvas); Katie Niewodowski (mixed-media/drawing and polymer-clay sculpture); Walter John Rodriguez (mixed-media on canvas); and Ibn Sharif Shakoor (video/Concrete Culture Productions).

The Privilege art show takes viewers out of their comfort zone, provoking a dialogue about an uncomfortable subject – undeniably global in scope – but with painful implications for a community facing such privilege-related, real life issues as gentrification, multiculturalism and class divisions.

“It's natural for privilege to make people angry,” said Rovetto. “But maybe when we understand how the system oppresses individuals, we become more openhearted. My hope is that the viewer looks at the work and has a moment where they question what does this have to do with me: Where do I fit into this system?”

The Privilege art show will be open and accessible through the entire Privilege series, which includes the 3rd Annual Jersey City New Play Festival, presented in Partnership with The Writers Theatre of NJ. “All the plays included in this festival have all been written by playwrights in our New Jersey Women Playwrights Program,” said John Pietrowski, Artistic Director, The Writers Theatre of NJ. “They all looked at privilege from the point of view of a female central character in both a current and historical. The women in these plays struggle with their identity and value in their respective social environments.”

Privilege Series

Wed · 2/20

Suicidal Dog & Laika by Catalina Florina Florescu

An immigrant dog has a surrealist encounter with Laika to whom he summarizes the socio-political events since she was sent to outer space where she died. The humans, mere silhouettes, struggle to stay human in a world still divided by status quo, citizenship, and borders. Directed by Olga Levina. (**\$5 suggested donation**)

Doors: 7:30/Reading: 8:00

Fri · 3/1

Privilege Art Show – Gallery Opening, Artist Reception & Art Talk (7:00 – 10:00)

Free & open to the public, in addition to the unveiling of the Privilege visual art exhibit, attendees can participate in Q&A with the artists and a community dialogue on the subject of Privilege. Curated by Lucy Rovetto; Co-curator Bang Chau.

Doors: 7:00

Artist Talk: 8:00-9:00

3rd Annual Jersey City New Play Festival

Wed · 3/6

***Bunnies* by Joanne Hoersch**

A story of self-revelation and empowerment – on a January night in 1973 – Bonita, Janice and Lottie – who are bunnies at NY Playboy Club – find out the struggles Bonita (bunny of the month) has faced with a customer, leading to exposed feelings and the dread that a Bunny’s worst nightmare is about to come true. (**\$5 suggested donation**)

Doors: 7:30/ Show: 8:00

Wed · 3/13

***I Don't Know How She Does It* by Nancy Méndez-Booth**

How does one Puerto Rican woman rise from public housing to become a Pulitzer Prize winner? This one-person show cycles through eight moments in one Boricua’s life to explore how imagination and humor help her survive and achieve despite struggles and haters—most especially herself!

(**\$5 suggested donation**)

Doors: 7:30/ Show: 8:00

Wed · 3/20

***Room 30* by Dania Ramos**

Sofia doesn’t know what to think after her younger sister Ana runs away from home, then declares a sudden interest in their indigenous roots. The sisters take shelter in a New England inn where they receive unexpected guidance from their room’s former occupants. Both soon realize that inside Room 30 the distance of time isn’t as vast as it seems. (**\$5 suggested donation**)

Doors: 7:30/ Show: 8:00

Wed · 3/27

***The Havana Orthodoxy* by Vita Patrick Morales**

The harrowing story of courage and commitment by one family embroiled in the political turmoil of 1950s Cuba, torn between idealism and survival. In less than 24 hours, this family is forced to leave their home and their country and everything they owned. This play was a finalist in the 2018 Women

Jersey City
Theater Center

JCTC

Playwrights Competition sponsored by the Centenary Stage Company. (\$5 suggested donation)
Doors: 7:30/ Show: 8:00

Fri · 3/29

The BOX: Privilege Edition

An evening of music, spoken-word, poetry, performance art, dance and other performances

Doors: 7:30/Show: 8:00

For more information visit: www.JCTCenter.org

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

Photographs and interviews available upon request

Funding for Privilege 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.

Privilege 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) presents programming at Merseles Studios and White Eagle Hall. JCTC is a nonprofit, 501c3 arts organization committed to inspiring conversations about the important topics of our times through innovative and progressive performing and visual arts that celebrates diversity, bringing communities closer together and enhancing the quality of life.