



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**West Coast Premiere of *The Urban Retreat* by A. Zell Williams
Presented by Lorraine Hansberry Theatre March 23 - April 6**

The Dead Don't Stay So in The Urban Retreat Directed by Darryl V. Jones

(San Francisco, CA) Lorraine Hansberry Theatre's (LHT) West Coast Premiere of *The Urban Retreat* by A. Zell Williams, resident playwright with New Dramatists and former writer for NBC's *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, is presented in the Buriel Clay Theater, 762 Fulton Street in San Francisco from March 23 to April 6.

The dead don't stay so in *The Urban Retreat*, directed by Darryl V. Jones, LHT's Acting Artistic Director. If you threw *Hamilton*, *Empire*, and *Hamlet* into a crockpot, you might catch a whiff of what this contemporary tragicomedy is cooking. A mid-twenties hip-hop mogul in his prime (Trench Deep) reaches out to his slumping but brilliant high school English teacher (Chaucer Mosley) to ghostwrite his memoir. Between them, their haunted pasts, their beefs, and their generational language barriers reveal Black masculinity at its tautest. Who can really rep South Side Chicago -- or any hood? Who has a better grip on what it means to be Black: the do-gooders or the go-getters?

Surrounding them, a cast of agents, producers, and groupies push their own needs, desires, and premonitions through Trench Deep's platinum fingers. As the pressures of publication dates and deadlines loom closer, old alliances (and archetypes) wither and the heart of black art demands our attention. "Blackness is doin for yuh'self," Trench says, but *The Urban Retreat* asks: When all's said and done, what have we got except for each other? And can the spirit of hip-hop truly ever be chopped, shipped, and sold?

A. Zell Williams gives much to consider regarding the power of words to heal or to destroy. He invites us to consider the personal fortitude it takes to be your authentic self, when hiding behind a mask can give you fame and fortune beyond your wildest dreams. But notoriety of this type comes at a price, and sometimes it means selling out and sacrificing your integrity and that of others.

In this funny, gripping, raw and powerful play, the writing process becomes a deeply honest tool to inspire an exchange about survival, selling out and what it means to be a Black man in America today. Using hip hop dance and rap music lyrics, *The Urban Retreat* appeals to audiences across generations who will relate to the characters' soul-searching to be true to themselves.

LORRAINE HANSBERRY THEATRE - CALENDAR LISTING

WHAT: *The Urban Retreat* by A. Zell Williams and directed by Darryl V. Jones

WHO: West Coast Premiere Presented by Lorraine Hansberry Theatre

WHEN: March 23 – April 6, 2019 (11 Performances)

VENUE: Buriel Clay Theater, 762 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

TICKET COST: Tickets \$15 - \$35 (15% discount for groups of 10 available through LHT's Box Office.)

PURCHASE ONLINE: Click **Get Tickets** at www.LHTSF.org

CONTACT: BoxOffice@LHTSF.org, (415) 474-8800

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Lorraine Hansberry Theater, 762 Fulton Street, Suite 304, San Francisco, CA 94102 – www.LHTSF.org

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***The Urban Retreat* by A. Zell Williams**

Presented at Lorraine Hansberry Theatre March 23 - April 6, 2019

ABOUT A. ZELL WILLIAMS

A. Zell Williams is a Resident Playwright with New Dramatists and was a writer for NBC's *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. He has served as a National New Play Network Playwright-in-Residence at Philadelphia's InterAct Theatre Company, the Tow Foundation's Emerging Playwright-in-Residence at the Public Theater, as a Featured Writer with the Lark Play Development Center, as a member of The Civilians' R&D Group, and Ars Nova's Play Group. **Productions:** In *A Daughter's Eyes & Down Past Passyunk* (InterAct Theatre, Philadelphia.) **Awards:** Marin Theatre Company Emerging American Playwright Prize, The Terrence McNally New Play Award, NYU's Goldberg Playwriting Award, National New Play Network's Smith Prize. **Nominations:** The Williamstown Theatre Festival's L. Arnold Weissberger Award, The Playwright of New York (PoNY) Fellowship. **Finalist:** Yale Drama Series for Emerging Playwrights and Kitchen Dog Theatre's New Works Festival. His plays include *The Biggest Valley*, *Slay & Eat*, and *The Urban Retreat*.

ABOUT DARRYL V. JONES

Darryl V. Jones (LHT Acting Artistic Director) is Professor and Chair of Theatre and Dance at Cal State East Bay. Last season he directed and co-choreographed the Aurora Theatre production of *The Royale* which won the BACC Award for Entire Production-East Bay and this year he opened their season with *Detroit 67*. Directing includes: Off Broadway/National Tour *We Are Your Sisters* (AUDELCO Award Outstanding Production), *A View From The Bridge* (Theatre Lobby Award Outstanding Direction) and *Spunk* (Helen Hayes Award Nominee). Other credits include: *The Minneola Twins* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Co.) and *The Brothers Size* (Theatre Rhino). Jones was Directing Associate at Arena Stage where he choreographed *Candide* and *Dance of Death* and directed and produced new plays for *PlayQuest*. He is an active member of Actors Equity Association and a 2017 TBA Award nominee for outstanding supporting actor in the musical *Priscilla*. He has performed with theatre companies such as Arena Stage, The Old Globe and Ford's Theatre. Jones was Head of the B.F.A. Directing Concentration at the University of Michigan and Foundation Advisor for their BFA Acting Program. He also currently teaches acting in the American Conservatory Theatre MFA Acting Program. Jones holds a Bachelor of Music, Vocal Performance from The Catholic University of America, and an MFA in Directing from Boston University. He is a certified Meisner Acting Technique instructor from Larry Silverberg's True Acting Institute.

ABOUT LORRAINE HANSBERRY THEATRE (LHT) Founded in San Francisco in 1981, the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre is the premiere African American theatre company in the San Francisco Bay Area. LHT has produced more than 140 plays, including west coast and world premieres, experimental works, classics in the African-American canon, lively musicals, and poignant socio-political dramas. The Lorraine Hansberry Theatre presents plays by both emerging and established African American and multicultural playwrights and provides employment and career building opportunities for actors, directors, designers, and technicians from the African American and multicultural communities. LHT draws from the cultural and economic resources of the San Francisco Bay Area to enrich and strengthen the Performing Arts by actively seeking and participating in collaboration with Bay Area arts institutions and performing arts organizations.

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MEDIA CONTACT: Gina Snow, Marketing & Grants Manager, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre (LHT) | (415) 954-2635 | media@LHTSF.org (email best way to contact). Interviews with Darryl V. Jones are available by arrangement. Bios of cast/crew/designers are available upon request.