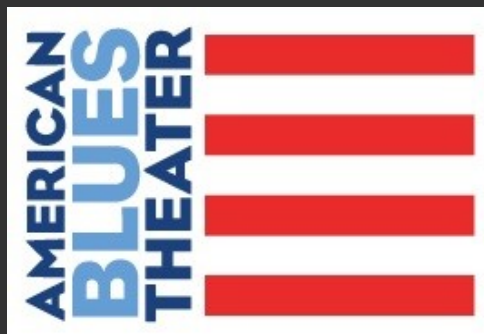


# Blue Ink Festival



## **BACKSTAGE** GUIDE

A publication of **COMMUNITY SERVICE** at  
**AMERICAN BLUES THEATER**

**BACKSTAGE** CALLBOARD

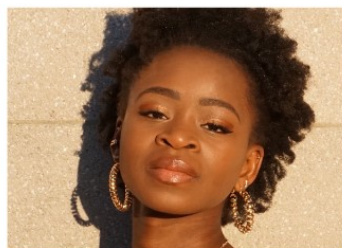
Blue **Ink** Festival  
AUGUST 12 - 13



**Things With Friends**

by Kristoffer Diaz

**AWARD WINNER**



**UHURU**

by Gloria Majule



**COLD SPRING**

by Victor Lesniewski



**TROUBLE**

*(at the Vista View Mobile Home Estates)*

by Audrey Cefaly

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# ABOUT THE BLUE INK AWARD



The nationally-renowned Blue Ink Award was created in 2010 to support new work. Since inception, we've named 13 Award winners, 129 finalists, and 203 semi-finalists. Nearly \$10,000 in cash and prizes will be distributed to playwrights in 2023.

Each year American Blues Theater accepts worldwide submissions of original, unpublished full-length plays. The winning play will be selected by Artistic Director Gwendolyn Whiteside and the theater's Ensemble. Cash prizes are awarded to finalists and semi-finalists too. All proceeds of the administrative fee are distributed for playwrights' cash prizes.

Submissions for the 2024 Blue Ink Award open August 1, 2023. All submissions must be received by American Blues Theater by August 31, 2023 at 11:59pm. Playwrights may only submit one (1) manuscript each year for consideration. [LEARN MORE >>](#)

## 2023 BLUE INK AWARD WINNERS

**2023 Winner:** Kristoffer Diaz (*Things With Friends*)

**2023 Featured Finalists:** Audrey Cefaly (*Trouble*), Victor Lesniewski (*Cold Spring*), Gloria Majule (*Uhuru*).

**2023 Finalists:** Amanda L. Andrei (*Mama, I wish I were silver*), Kimberly Dixon-Mays (*When Given a Choice, Bleed*), Emma Gibson (*LUMIN*), Keiko Green (*Hells Canyon*), Monet Hurst-Mendoza (*Blind Crest*), Deepak Kumar (*House of India*), Matthew Libby (*Sisters*), Tlaloc Rivas (*DIVISIDERO*), Nia Akilah Robinson (*The Great Privation: How to flip ten cents into a dollar*), Elaine Romero (*Hoverland*), Marcus Scott (*There Goes The Neighborhood*), SEVAN (*You, The Fire, and Me*), Liba Vaynberg (*The Matriarchs*), LaDarrion Williams (*Bridging the Gap*).

**2023 Semi-Finalists:** Jaisey Bates (*Real Time remix*), Cris Eli Blak (*Brown Bodies on a Blue Earth*), Brendan Bourque-Sheil and Madison Smith (*Dogrose Patrol*), Laura Maria Censabella (*Beyond Words*), Aaron Coleman (*Tell Me I'm Gorgeous at the End of the World: The Last Gay Play*), Nelson Diaz-Marcano (*When the Earth Moves, We Dance*), Ramón Esquivel (*¡O Cascadia!*), Gina Femia (*lisa; a fantasia*), Alyssa Haddad-Chin (*Off-White; Or the Arab House Party Play*), Darrel Alejandro Holnes (*Franklin Ave*), Jessica Kahkoska (*In Her Bones*), M.J. Kang (*The Battle of Saratoga*), Rajendra Ramoon Maharaj (*stop killing black people*), Zizi Majid (*They Came In The Night*), Eric Marlin (*and come apart*), Josie Nericcio (*619 Hendricks*), Peter Pasco (*Yoli, Alfredo, y la vida*), Jason Gray Platt (*Homeowners*), Audley Puglisi (*The Misplaced Saints*), Andre R. Hogan II (*The Hot Wing Special*), Iraisia Ann Reilly (*Saturday Mourning Cartoons*), Lia Romeo (*Greek Tragedy*), Phillip Christian Smith (*Riverside Drive*), Jonathan Spector (*Best Available*), Gina Stevensen (*Breakfalls*), Steven Strafford (*The Model Congressman*), Ellis Stump (*Once on Rumspringa*), Caridad Svich (*Joan of the Dockyards*), James Anthony Tyler (*Into the Side of a Hill*), Hope Villanueva (*Brackish*), Mary Weems (*Crack the Door for Some Air*), Deborah Yarchun (*Great White*).



# THING WITH FRIENDS

## BY KRISTOFFER DIAZ

### THINGS WITH FRIENDS

winner of 2023 Blue Ink Award

by Kristoffer Diaz

directed Dexter Bullard

Saturday, Aug 12 at 1:00pm

### ABOUT THE PLAY

Manhattan. Burt and Adele are hosting a dinner party. Steak is on the stove. The George Washington Bridge has collapsed into the Hudson. Kristoffer Diaz has written a play about it. I've already said too much.

### ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Kristoffer Diaz is a playwright, librettist, screenwriter, and educator. His play *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity* was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama. Other full-length titles include *Welcome to Arroyo's*, *Reggie Hoops*, *Hercules*, and *The Unfortunates*. His work has been produced, commissioned, and developed at The Public Theater, Dallas Theater Center, Geffen Playhouse, ACT, Center Theatre Group, The Goodman, Second Stage, Victory Gardens, and Oregon Shakespeare Festival, among many others. Awards include the Guggenheim, Jerome, Van Lier, NYFA, and Gail Merrifield Papp Fellowships; New York Times Outstanding Playwright Award; Lucille Lortel, Equity Jeff, and OBIE Awards; and the Future Aesthetics Artist Regrant, among others. As a screenwriter, Kristoffer has developed original television pilots for HBO and FX, written for the first season of Netflix's *GLOW*, and adapted the musical *Rent* for FOX. Kristoffer teaches playwriting at New York University. He is an alumnus of New Dramatists and a member of its Board of Directors, and the current secretary of the Dramatists Guild Council.



## THINGS WITH FRIENDS RELATED RESOURCES: COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

**CLEAN AIR TASK FORCE** - an organization that has been working to reduce air pollution since its founding in 1996. It led a successful campaign to reduce the pollution caused by coal-fired power plants in the US, helped limit the US power sector's CO2 emissions, and helped establish regulations of diesel, shipping, and methane emissions.

**EVERGREEN COLLABORATIVE** - a US policy advocacy group that includes some of the most prominent scientists and policymakers working for better climate policy and environmental justice.

**INDUSTRIOUS LABS** - a new organization with one clear goal: helping global "heavy industry" — think steel and cement — go green. Through advocacy, Industrious Labs pushes corporations to make low-carbon commitments, and pushes governments to make sure that regulations and public funding are in place to accelerate the transition.

*[View Vox's full list of the most high-impact, cost-effective, evidence-based organizations fighting climate change.](#)*

# THING WITH FRIENDS

BY KRISTOFFER DIAZ

## INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT KRISTOFFER DIAZ



### What was your inspiration for writing *Things With Friends*?

New York City makes no sense. It's the economic and cultural capital of the United States, and it's (mostly) an island. Manhattan is connected to the rest of the country by a handful of bridges and, even weirder, some tunnels. Tunnels are just holes -- I know you know what tunnels are -- but tunnels are just these giant holes that carry traffic underneath the Hudson and East Rivers. Nothing about New York makes sense -- the giant buildings, the nine million people, the infrastructure required to function -- but it functions. It thrives. It's a miracle.

It's also vulnerable. Wildly vulnerable. Over a decade ago, we lived through Superstorm Sandy, which flooded our subway system, bringing the city to a standstill. Personally, it was a bit of a wake-up call. It reminded me of the scene in *The Dark Knight Rises* (which

weirdly came out right around the same time) where Bane blows up pretty much every bridge in Gotham City, which is not New York City, but come on, it's New York City. And yes, it's a superhero movie, but holy hell, what would happen if we lost all our bridges? What would happen if we lost even one of our bridges? Just a few years before, a major bridge had collapsed in Minneapolis. An engineer friend of my father had once casually mentioned that if we knew what we knew about the structural integrity of NYC's bridges, we'd never even consider driving over them again.

And yet we do. Millions of people cross those bridges and tunnels everyday. Millions of people live in Manhattan -- going to work, visiting cultural institutions, throwing dinner parties -- knowing, at least subconsciously, that it wouldn't take much for the whole grand experiment to collapse.

Bad choice of words. Or maybe the exact right choice of words.

And then somewhere my mind made the connection: this is climate change. Sea levels are rising. Manhattan may sink into the sea someday, and Manhattan may be the least of our concerns. Our world is impossibly vulnerable and yet we go right on with our lives: writing plays, writing essays about the plays we write, throwing dinner parties.

*Things With Friends* is one of those dinner parties.

### What do you hope audiences take away from this play?

It's not up to me to decide what people take from my plays. I hope folks have fun. I hope folks get scared. I hope folks talk about it at their dinner parties.

### What are you working on next?

My play *Reggie Hoops* has its professional world premiere in Portland in early 2024. Before that, I'm opening a little musical that I wrote with Alicia Keys. It's called *Hell's Kitchen* and it premieres at New York City's Public Theater in November.

# THING WITH FRIENDS

BY KRISTOFFER DIAZ

## THINGS WITH FRIENDS DRAMATURGICAL MATERIALS: CLIMATE CHANGE IN NEW YORK CITY

Climate change in New York City could affect buildings/structures, wetlands, water supply, health, and energy demand, due to the high population and extensive infrastructure in the region. A seaport like New York is especially at risk if the sea level rises, with many bridges and tunnels in the city. Major facilities for Aviation in the New York metropolitan area, and the New York Passenger Ship Terminal, are also located in areas vulnerable to flooding. Flooding would be expensive to reverse. Tide gauge records indicate a rise in sea level of about 50 cm (20 inches) since 1860.

Rising temperatures could bring a higher risk of heat related deaths from heat waves and increased concentrations of ground-level ozone (potentially causing asthma and other health concerns). *The New York Times* has identified climate change as a contributing factor in the city's increasing level of rat infestation, stating that "[m]ilder winters — the result of climate change — make it easier for rats to survive and reproduce".

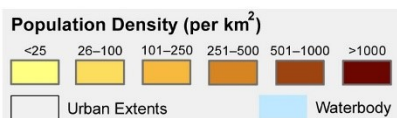
In June 2019 NYC made a climate emergency declaration.

### Urban-Rural Population and Land Area Estimates, Version 2, 2010: Greater NYC, U.S. Low Elevation Coastal Zone

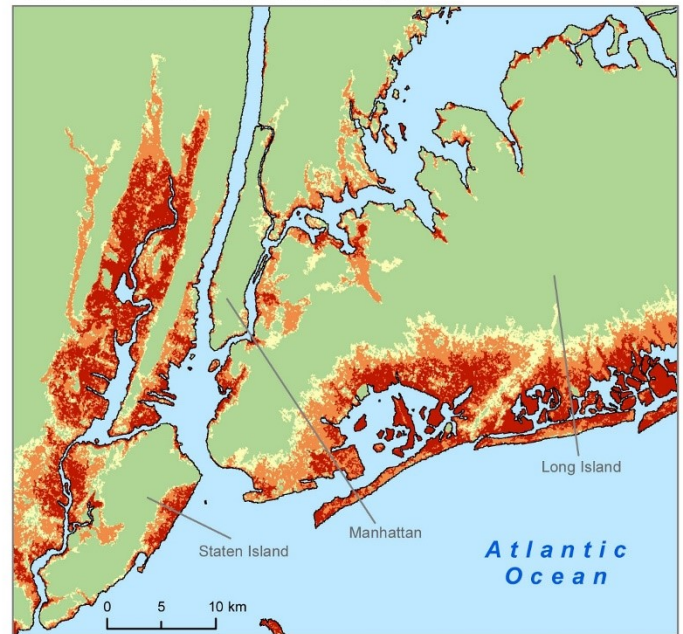
#### Population Density (per km<sup>2</sup>)



Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area Projection



#### Low Elevation Coastal Zone (m)



Map Credit: CIESIN Columbia University, November 2013



Center for International Earth Science Information Network  
EARTH INSTITUTE | COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

© 2013. The Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York.  
Data Source: Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) /Columbia University, 2013. Low Elevation Coastal Zone (LECZ) Urban-Rural Population and Land Area Estimates, Version 2. Palisades, NY: NASA Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center (SEDAC). <http://sedac.ciesin.columbia.edu/data/set/lec2-urban-rural-population-land-area-estimates-v2>.

The Low Elevation Coastal Zone (LECZ) Urban-Rural Population and Land Area Estimates Version 2 data set provides continent-level and country-level estimates of land area and urban, rural, and total population for 202 statistical areas (countries and other UN recognized territories). Population inputs were derived from Gridded Rural-Urban Mapping Project, version 1 (GRUMPv1). Elevation data were derived from the Shuttle Radar Topographic Mission (SRTM) 90 meter data set.

# COLD SPRING

BY VICTOR LESNIEWSKI

## COLD SPRING

by Victor Lesniewski

directed Marti Lyons

Saturday, Aug 12 at 4:00pm

## ABOUT THE PLAY

After a teenager accuses his baseball coach of sexual assault, four parents attempt to deal with the response of their close-knit community while the ramifications resound through their own relationships.

## ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Victor Lesniewski's plays include *The Fifth Domain* (World Premiere CATF), *Couriers and Contrabands* (World Premiere TBG Theatre NYC, Critic Howard Miller's Best of Off & Off-Off Broadway List), *Cloven Tongues* (World Premiere The Wild Project NYC), *Where Bison Run* (NY Times Profile), *Khardal* (Berkeley Rep's The Ground Floor), and *The Hunt for Benedetto Montone* (ANPF). He has

developed work at Roundabout Theatre Company, New York Theatre Workshop, Ars Nova, Geva Theatre Center, SF Playhouse, Playwrights' Arena, Pioneer Theatre Company, Northern Stage, Palm Beach Dramaworks, Benchmark Theatre, and La Mama Umbria. Victor is proud to sit on The Dramatists Guild's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Access Committee.



## INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT VICTOR LESNIEWSKI

### What was your inspiration for writing *Cold Spring*, and what do you hope audiences take away from this play?

The play is loosely based on events in my hometown when I was in high school. Although I was not close with the teenagers who are roughly analogous to the teens of the play, I was very close with one of their siblings. I was in that home a lot as things were unfolding and living within that family dynamic really stayed with me, especially watching from the outside as the parents struggled to hold everything in their lives together. So my lens for this story became the impact these events had on the immediate family and the community at large. I hope that the exploration of these topics from a different angle will help drive further discussion with audiences as our communities continue to wrestle with the reverberations of similar incidents.

### What are you working on next?

So much! Too much! Most notably, I'm writing a play about protest, how and why we do it and its power and limitations. I'm also beginning a Sloan commission for EST in NYC about the origins of big data, which will be an especially fun project for me as I will be able to utilize my background in data security and engineering.



### COLD SPRING RELATED RESOURCES: **KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE ON & OFF THE FIELD**

The below Frequently Asked Questions from the [U.S. Center for Safe Sport](#) offers information about abuse and grooming for the parents and guardians of children in sports. Explore their full toolkit [here](#).

#### **Could my child be at risk?**

Possibly. Too often, parents think of abusers as strangers. But abuse is most often perpetrated by people we know and trust, such as family members, family friends, neighbors, or your children's teachers, coaches, teammates, or schoolmates.

#### **What can abuse look like?**

##### *SEXUAL ABUSE*

The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in, or assist another person to engage in, sexually explicit conduct or sexual exploitation of children, including child pornography.

##### *PHYSICAL ABUSE*

Intentional contact or non-contact behavior that causes, or reasonably threatens to cause, physical harm to another person, including: punching, slapping, knowingly allowing an injured athlete to compete without proper medical clearance, withholding water or nutrition, providing illegal drugs or non-prescribed medication, and preventing someone from seeking medical care.

##### *EMOTIONAL ABUSE*

Behaviors and actions that cause emotional harm to another person including: screaming at, berating, insulting, body-shaming, or ridiculing someone; punching walls or throwing objects at someone; isolating someone for extended periods of time; and stalking someone.

Emotional misconduct is different from tough coaching. Tough coaches combine high expectations with positive motivation, respect, and care. Coaches who engage in emotional misconduct use fear, intimidation, and punishment.

#### **What is "grooming," and what does it look like?**

Grooming is where someone engages in a series of behaviors with the goal of engaging in sexual misconduct. In situations of child sexual abuse, the abuser targets a minor and works to earn the trust of the minor, the minor's

family, and the community. It can also be manipulative behavior the abuser uses to prolong the abuse and make the minor fear reporting or be less likely to be believed if they do report. Grooming behaviors include:

- Attempts to befriend the minor as a peer or "cool adult"
- Giving the minor gifts and special attention
- Talking to the minor about sexual experiences or desires
- Being helpful and non-threatening to the minor's family
- Volunteering for situations that involve spending time alone with the minor
- Using organizational status to have one-on-one interactions with the minor

#### **What should I do if I suspect my child or another child is being abused?**

- **Do** make open communication with the child a priority.
- **Do** remain calm if a child confides abuse. Your initial response to their disclosure has a significant impact on what happens next. Make sure to document emotional abuse, so if a pattern develops you can report all the incidents.
- **Do** use broad, open-ended questions to listen to their concerns.
- **Do** tell the child you're glad they shared the information with you, that their safety is your first priority, and encourage them to come to you whenever a boundary has been crossed.
- **Do** reach out to report abuse and to local support providers for assistance.
- **Do** seek medical attention if necessary.
- **Don't** doubt your child or ignore their feelings.
- **Don't** model inappropriate behavior by yelling at a coach, another child, or another parent.
- **Don't** assume your child just wants to quit the sport.
- **Don't** question whether your child "deserved" such treatment

# UHURU

## BY GLORIA MAJULE

### UHURU

by Gloria Majule

directed by Ensemble member Manny Buckley

Sunday, Aug 13 at 1:00pm

### ABOUT THE PLAY

Mshale, a Mount Kilimanjaro tour guide, dreams of marrying a white woman and moving to the West. Sprite doesn't like white people and sets out to decolonize what he deems "his mountain". Henry and Frannie are white missionaries who claim to be Tanzanian. As the four journey up to the roof of Africa, the looming ghost of colonialism dictates who gets to reach the peak, and who gets left behind.

### ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Gloria Majule is a playwright from Dodoma, Tanzania presently residing in Seattle, WA. She seeks to tell stories that bring multiple black voices together from across the world, and are accessible to black audiences no matter where they are. She writes plays about Africans and the African diaspora. Gloria is an inaugural recipient of Atlantic Theater Company's Judith Champion Launch Commission, and is the 2023 winner of the Leah Prize from the Leah Ryan Fund. Her plays have been developed at Vassar's Powerhouse Theater, The New Group, Premiere Stages, Great Plains Theater Commons, A is For, Alliance Theater, Westport Country Playhouse and Aye Defy. She graduated summa cum laude from Cornell University with a BA in Performing & Media Arts and Spanish, and holds an MFA in Playwriting from Yale School of Drama.



## UHURU DRAMATURGICAL MATERIALS: **ABOUT MOUNT KILIMANJARO**



Mount Kilimanjaro is a dormant volcano located in Kilimanjaro Region of Tanzania. It has three volcanic cones: Kibo, Mawenzi, and Shira. It is the highest mountain in Africa and the highest single free-standing mountain above sea level in the world: 5,895 m (19,341 ft) above sea level and about 4,900 m (16,100 ft) above its plateau base. It is the highest volcano in Africa and the Eastern Hemisphere. Kilimanjaro is the fourth most topographically prominent peak on Earth.

It is part of Kilimanjaro National Park and is a major hiking and climbing destination. Being one of the most popular mountains in the world, roughly 50,000 trekkers every year try to reach the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. According to research published by the Climb Kilimanjaro Guide, the average summit success rate across all climbers and routes is 65%. However, summit success rate heavily depends upon what route is climbed as routes vary considerably in terms of acclimatization profile and duration of the climb.

Because of its shrinking glaciers and ice fields, which are projected to disappear between 2025 and 2035, it has also been the subject of many scientific studies.

## INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT GLORIA MAJULE

### What was your inspiration for writing *Uhuru*?

I wanted to write *Uhuru* because I was fascinated by Kilimanjaro and the significance it had for people who were born and raised in Tanzania, versus for people in the outside world. I was excited about creating a world that took place on the mountain and exploring these different views and perspectives. Like with many of my plays, I used humor to explore complex subjects, such as colonization, exploitation and kinship in the African diaspora. I wanted to explore what freedom meant in a post-colonial Tanzania, and what mindsets and barriers limit this freedom.

### What do you hope audiences take away from this play?

I have always been hesitant about telling my audiences how they should feel or what they should take away from my work. I love letting the art speak to people and having them decide what they want to take away from it. People from different walks of life will have different experiences of watching *Uhuru*. Much like the characters in the play, freedom will mean something different to everyone, depending on so many factors. In regards to my target audience, Africans and the African diaspora, I do hope the play inspires conversations within the community about the themes that the play brings up.

### What are you working on next?

I am working on two plays that couldn't be more different from each other, one is a thriller/ psychological horror, and the other is a work place drama. The plays very much fit into my cannon right now, that is, work that centers Africans and the African diaspora.

## UHURU DRAMATURGICAL MATERIALS: MOUNT KILIMANJARO CLIMBING GLOSSARY

**GATE** - besides the main Kilimanjaro National Park gate where park fees are paid, every route its own gate where climbers assemble. The gates act as a meeting point where climbers are required to sign in at the Park office and where they meet with their guides and crew to make climbing preparations.

**GUIDE** - the main person to lead the trek. The Kilimanjaro National Park Authority requires that all hikers are accompanied by a registered and licensed guide.

**MACHAME ROUTE** - one of the more scenic and popular routes to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, out of the seven possible routes. It is 61km long and is a 6-7 day journey.

**PORTERS** - the workers who carry equipment and supplies up the mountain.

**UHURU PEAK** - the highest free-standing peak in Africa. It is the highest summit on Kibo's crater rim and is the official summit of Mount Kilimanjaro.



# TROUBLE (AT THE VISTA VIEW MOBILE HOME ESTATES)

## BY AUDREY CEFALY

### TROUBLE (at the Vista View Mobile Home Estates)

by Audrey Cefaly

directed by Ensemble member Elyse Dolan

Sunday, Aug 13 @ 4:00pm

### ABOUT THE PLAY

*Trouble* is a portrait of fierce women in the small (fictional) mill town of Litman, Alabama. The play centers around struggling ex-mill worker Euba on the eve of her “unwanted” birthday party, which her mother Bernie (against Euba’s express wishes) is intent on hosting. Also in the mix are mill workers Lila (8-months pregnant) and Fin (Euba’s best friend), along with YoYo, a local security officer. As the birthday hour approaches, Euba is visited by a raven, sending her spiraling in search for answers to the untimely death of her father. This all-female drama traverses the landscape of family ties, mental illness, addiction, and the trials and tribulations of motherhood.



### ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT

Audrey Cefaly’s plays include *The Gulf* (Edgerton, Lammy, Charles MacArthur Nominee), *Alabaster* (NNPN Record-Breaking RWP, Kilroys, Calicchio Prize, and Pulitzer-Prize Nominee), *Maytag Virgin*, *The Last Wide Open*, *The Story of Walter*, *Tell Me Something Good*, and *Love is a Blue Tick Hound*. Cefaly is a Dramatist Guild Foundation *Traveling Master*. She is published by Concord Theatricals and her plays have been produced by Cincinnati Playhouse, Florida Studio, Florida Rep, City Theatre, Penobscot Theatre, Gulfshore Playhouse, Merrimack Rep, Signature Theatre, Barter Theatre, Vermont Stage, and countless others. Her play *Alabaster* received an 10-city Rolling World Premiere, the largest in NNPN history.

## INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT AUDREY CEFALY

### What was your inspiration for writing *Trouble (at the Vista View Mobile Home Estates)*?

I wanted to adapt my popular short two-hander *Fin & Euba* into a longer work. I changed the setting, added four more characters, and broadened the scope.

### What do you hope audiences take away from this play?

I believe that when we explore generational trauma in our stories, it's important to find the tenderness and the humor, so that we don't get buried by it all. So, first and foremost, I want people to laugh. *Trouble* is billed as "mostly a comedy," and I'm very serious about that. Every family is a cult and family can be wonderful, but it's good friends who keep us from going insane.

### What are you working on next?

I'm working on an 80s Christmas musical about a group called *The Rutledge Family Singers* who have finally landed a holiday slot on local public-access television, a dream they've been chasing for years. The story is a very earnest portrait of a strong but flawed family, doing their best to step into this new and unfamiliar world, while also sorting through some very real family drama.

# TROUBLE (AT THE VISTA VIEW MOBILE HOME ESTATES) BY AUDREY CEFALY

## TROUBLE DRAMATURGICAL MATERIALS: **STATUS OF WOMEN IN ALABAMA**

*Trouble (at the Vista View Mobile Home Estates)* follows a group of women in a fictional town in Alabama. The below key findings (edited here for length) are from [Status of Women in Alabama](#), a 2020 report by The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham and based on data analysis by the Institute for Women's Policy and Research.

- The wage gap for women in Alabama is larger than for women in the United States overall: women in Alabama earn only 73 cents for every dollar a man earns, while women in the U.S. earn 82 cents for every dollar a man earns. If the current trend continues, Alabama women will not reach pay equity until 2089.
- The wage gap is even larger for Black women and Latina women in Alabama, indicating racialized structural barriers to well-being. Black women make 58.5 cents and Latina women 48.8 cents for every dollar that a White man earned in Alabama in 2017.
- Much like the U.S. generally, nearly half of all households in Alabama with children under 18 have a mother as sole breadwinner.
- Women in Alabama are entrepreneurial: they are slightly more likely to own their own business compared with women in the U.S. (37 percent versus 36 percent, respectively).
- Women in Alabama are more likely to live in poverty as compared with women in the U.S. in general: almost 18 percent of women in Alabama compared with 15 percent of women in the U.S.
- The annual cost of child care for an infant (under 12 months old) in Alabama is \$5,858, close to 17 percent of women's median annual earnings.
- Women in Alabama are less likely to have a bachelor's degree or higher than women in the U.S. overall (25 percent and 30 percent, respectively).
- In 2017, there were 102 pregnancy-related deaths and 2,480 infant deaths in Alabama.
- Eighty-six percent of Alabama women ages 18-64 are covered by health insurance.

Women's earnings are essential to the economic security of their families. With a fair and equitable wage, access to educational opportunities, and proper health care, women can move themselves and their families forward.



Pike County Lake, Alabama

# ABOUT **AMERICAN BLUES THEATER**

## **MISSION**

American Blues Theater explores the American identity through the plays it produces and communities it serves.

## **VALUES**

American Blues Theater *acts* on its values –

- Accountability
- Courage
- Teamwork
- Service

## **ABOUT US**

Winner of the prestigious National Theatre Company Award from American Theatre Wing (Tony Awards), American Blues Theater is a non-profit arts organization that produces high-quality productions with a focus on stories that are relevant, timeless, and inclusive to the American spirit.

American Blues Theater is **committed to developing new work as more than half of the productions are world and Chicago premieres**. Play development programs include the nationally-recognized Blue Ink Award, commissions, readings, and the 15th annual *Ripped Festival* of short plays.

American Blues Theater **believes in teamwork both on and off-stage**. A leader in community engagement for decades, the theater matches each play's themes with other non-profits' missions to raise awareness.

In addition to producing plays, American Blues Theater **offers a range of free services**, including continuing education programs, writing instruction and matinees for Chicago Public Schools, dramaturgical materials, and post-show discussions to widen access in the community.

American Blues Theater and its artists have earned 226 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations, 44 Black Theater Alliance Awards, and numerous industry accolades, including nomination and awards for the Pulitzer Prize, Academy Awards, Tony Awards, Golden Globes Awards, Emmy Awards, and more.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS AT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER**



Visit [AmericanBluesTheater.com](http://AmericanBluesTheater.com) to learn more.

# ABOUT **AMERICAN BLUES THEATER**

## ABOUT **“OUR FIRST HOME”**

We are thrilled to announce the launch of “Our First Home” campaign and purchase of a 17,965 square foot property in Chicago’s Lincoln Avenue North Arts District (LANA). This will establish the first permanent home in our history!

“This historic move to a permanent home is nearly 40 years in the making. After decades of leasing, including the beloved space on Byron Avenue, American Blues Theater will control its own artistic and financial destiny for the first time. Our exceptional Ensemble has dreamed of a dedicated home to expand our programming, education initiatives, and community partnerships,” said American Blues Theater Executive Artistic Director Gwendolyn Whiteside. “We understand all too well the limitations of being an itinerant company, and – with very few true subsidized venues in Chicago – we’re also excited to create an affordable rental space for other theater companies on their respective journeys.”

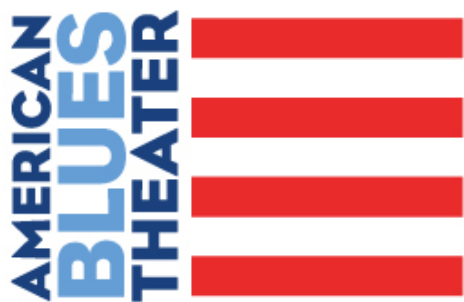
American Blues Theater’s productions explore the lives of everyday people who inhabit the working neighborhoods of America. Its new venue, designed by Morris Architects Planners and built by Lo Destro Construction, fully embraces this ethos. Formerly the site of a Mobil gas station, Walgreens, and Dollar General, the building will be repurposed to establish a cultural institution that is accessible to all.

The new theater venue will include two theaters (148-seat proscenium and 40-seat rehearsal studio); an inviting lobby with box office, bar, and concessions; gendered and all-gender restrooms; dressing rooms and greenroom; administrative offices; production spaces for scenery, props, and costumes; a small on-site parking lot with ample street parking. The facility is accessible from Interstate 90 and 94 and via the CTA Brown line and buses.

Alderperson Andre Vasquez comments, “It is an absolute honor and dream to welcome such a landmark institution to Ward 40. I had a clear vision of creating a Lincoln Avenue North Arts District, but I could never have imagined that we’d be blessed by having American Blues Theater as a crown jewel. It would be impossible to overstate the importance of such a beautiful entertainment experience to the business district for the whole city, here in the Ward 40!”

It will serve a community comprised of many cultural backgrounds and complement the area’s restaurants, schools, and the public library. Whiteside adds, “For over three decades, we’ve worked towards this dream. Through community support and the dedication of all our artists and staff over the years, we are able to make this dream a reality now.” [READ MORE >>](#)





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American Blues Theater sits on the original homelands of the Council of Three Fires (Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa). Read full land acknowledgment at [americanbluestheater.com/location](https://americanbluestheater.com/location).