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**KENNY LEON’S  
TRUE COLORS THEATRE COMPANY  
ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE  
14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL AUGUST WILSON  
MONOLOGUE COMPETITION  
NATIONAL FINALS**

**HELD VIRTUALLY ON MAY 3, 2021**

(Atlanta, GA – May 4, 2021) – **Kenny Leon’s True Colors Theatre Company (Jamil Jude, Artistic Director, Chandra Stephens-Albright, Managing Director)** announced winners of its **14<sup>th</sup> Annual August Wilson Monologue Competition National Finals**, held virtually on Monday, May 3, 2021 at 7pm ET at [truecolorstheatre.org](http://truecolorstheatre.org). The first place winner was **Taloria Merricks** from Atlanta; second place, **Taylor Jackson** from Atlanta; and third place, **Tyla Uzo** from Los Angeles.

All 13 participating regions held virtual regional competitions to select this year’s winners. The top 2 winners from each region advanced to the national semifinal round, from which 16 national finalists were selected. The weekend before the competition, regional finalists attended virtual panel discussions and workshops with industry professionals and award-winning playwrights, actors and designers, including Tony Award-winners **Clint Ramos, Ruben Santiago-Hudson** and **Phylicia Rashad**, and esteemed designers **David Gallo, Xavier Pierce, Allen Lee Hughes** and **Dwight Andrews**.

National finalists performed remotely for this year’s panel of judges, who were:

- Tony Award-winner **Joaquina Kalukango**, who won the first annual August Wilson Monologue competition in 2007
- **Jason Dirden**, known for his work in *Greenleaf* and in *Robin Roberts presents: Mahalia*
- five-time AWMC judge **James A. Williams**
- Tony Award-winner **Tonya Pinkins**, the writer, director, producer and star of award-winning feature film *Red Pill*

- **Seret Scott**, accomplished director, playwright and actress, appearing in regional theatres, on Broadway, and on television

Founded in 2007 by True Colors' Artistic Director Emeritus Kenny Leon and former Associate Artistic Director Todd Kreidler, the **August Wilson Monologue Competition** is held annually by True Colors Theatre Company to foster a new generation of creative minds, including exposing them to the life's work and artistic legacy of seminal American playwright August Wilson. Program participants in cities across the country have historically encountered Wilson's ten-play cycle and received coaching from teaching artists as they prepared their monologues for local, citywide and national competitions.

The 2021 virtual event featured high school students from partnering regional organizations in Atlanta, Georgia (True Colors Theatre Company); Boston, Massachusetts (The Huntington Theatre Company); Chicago, Illinois (Goodman Theatre and the University of Chicago); Dallas, Texas (Southern Methodist University); Greensboro, North Carolina (Triad Stage and North Carolina A&T State University); Hampton Roads, Virginia (Norfolk State University); Los Angeles, California (Center Theatre Group); Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Milwaukee Rep); New Haven, Connecticut (Long Wharf Theatre); New York, New York (LEAP); Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Bill Nunn's Theatre Outreach Project); Portland, Oregon (World Stage Theatre); and Seattle, Washington (Seattle Repertory Theatre).

In past years, the first-, second- and third-place winners received scholarships of \$3000, \$2000 and \$1000, respectively. This year, judge Tonya Pinkins was so moved by the power of the students that she made a gift to fund scholarships for six additional finalists. Upon hearing the live announcement, Stefaniyemiya Ingram, a long-time True Colors donor, made an additional gift to ensure that the remaining seven national finalists received scholarships.

The full list of prize winners follows:

First Place \$3,000 scholarship: Taloria Merricks, Atlanta

Second Place \$2,000 scholarship: Taylor Jackson, Atlanta

Third Place \$1,000 scholarship: Tyla Uzo, Los Angeles

\$500 scholarships funded by Tonya Pinkins: Arwen-Vira Marsh, New York; Yexuanj Rivera Melendez, Milwaukee; Jola Olojede, Dallas

\$300 scholarships funded by Tonya Pinkins: Kaylah Copeland, Atlanta; Jayla Gossett, Dallas; Marla Jordan, Portland

\$250 scholarships funded by Stefaniyemiya Ingram: Dalencia Brown, Chicago; Katherine Bruce, Pittsburgh; Shakyna Golphin, Pittsburgh; Juwan Lee, New Haven; Julius Shanks, Atlanta; Bri'Yon Watts, Chicago; Johnathan Westbrook, Chicago

The August Wilson Monologue Competition is featured in *The Start of Dreams*, a 2010 documentary directed by The Horne Brothers. Featuring A-list actors like Denzel Washington, Samuel L. Jackson and Phylicia Rashad, *The Start of Dreams* weighs in on this important art form and what it means to the United States. *Giving Voice*, a documentary directed by James D. Stern and Fernando Villena, follows the 2018 August Wilson Monologue Competition through the lives of six students as they meticulously

develop their individual performances with the hopes of embodying August Wilson's legacy.

### **ABOUT KENNY LEON'S TRUE COLORS THEATRE COMPANY**

**Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company** is based in Atlanta, GA and led by Artistic Director **Jamil Jude**, and Managing Director **Chandra Stephens-Albright**. True Colors' mission is to celebrate the rich tradition of Black storytelling while giving voice to bold artists of all cultures.

For more information, visit

[www.truecolorstheatre.org](http://www.truecolorstheatre.org)

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