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For Immediate Release

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True Colors and The Hansberry Project Announce The Drinking Gourd: Black Writers at Work

January 12, 2021 (Atlanta, GA) – True Colors Theatre Company and The Hansberry Project announce the pilot year of *The Drinking Gourd: Black Writers at Work*, a new play program that will create a network of Black theatres linked in the shared goal to co-commission, co-develop, and co-premiere the work of Black artists across the country. Jamil Jude, Artistic Director at True Colors, conceived of the idea in response to the dearth of Black work being produced on the American Theatre stage. This partnership with the Seattle-based Hansberry Project is the first step in engaging Black theatre companies from across North America to address this gap.

Hansberry Project Director Valerie Curtis Newton, who provided the name for this program, describes it as a way to “create a space where the entire community can be enriched by the voices of professional Black artists, reflecting autonomous concerns, investigations, dreams, and artistic expression.” Jude concurs, “True Colors’ mission challenges us to connect our audience with leading and emerging voices in American theatre today who are illuminating the experiences of Black people and telling bold stories that grow from the African diaspora. The *Drinking Gourd* allows True Colors to search out and support Black voices through a national network that will uplift more Black voices and nurture their stories within Black theatres.”

The Drinking Gourd: Black Writers at Work is a multi-year project that ultimately seeks to create a coalition of five Black theatres. Hansberry Project and True Colors will pilot the program in 2021, with each presenting readings of four plays. The vision over time is for all five member theatres to produce staged workshops and readings, creating a pipeline of new works for eventual full productions. This project has the potential to add new Black plays to the theatre ecology through a rolling process of commissions, readings and workshops, and productions. The Black artists engaged in *The Drinking Gourd* will have an unprecedented opportunity to work with a number of producing theatres serving different communities of color across the country.

True Colors has commissioned three writers — Addae Moon, Gabrielle Fulton-Ponder, and Trey Anthony — and Hansberry has commissioned five — Faith Bennet Russell, Aviona Rodriguez, Porscha Shaw, Ty Greenwood and Brian Jones Mooney — to develop new works.

The first readings of the *Drinking Gourd* program will begin in February and will feature plays by Addae Moon at True Colors and Faith Bennett Russell at the Hansberry Project. The 2021 series will be capped off with a Juneteenth Community Conversation hosted by The Hansberry Project. The full detailed schedule will be announced shortly.

Drinking Gourd: Black Writers at Work is made possible in part by funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, SouthArts Foundation and Hansberry's generous donors.

ABOUT KENNY LEON'S TRUE COLORS THEATRE COMPANY

True Colors Theatre Company is a nonprofit regional theater company based in Atlanta, GA. True Colors Theatre Company's mission is to celebrate the rich traditions of Black storytelling while giving voice to bold artists from all cultures. We add dimension and relevance to our work on the stage through active community events and 3rd – 12th grade education programming. The vision of Artistic Director Jamil Jude is for the company to “thrive at the intersection of artistic excellence and civic engagement.” Visit <https://truecolorstheatre.org> for more information

ABOUT THE HANSBERRY PROJECT

Established in Seattle, WA in 2006, The Hansberry Project is founded on the beliefs that:

- Communities tell stories to create shared culture and find meaning.
- Black artists should be at the center of an artistic process that seeks to tell their stories.
- Support for the artist is essential to the telling of our stories.

Our Mission is: “To celebrate, support and present the work of black theatre artists.” Our ultimate Vision is: “A community in which the voices of black theatre artists – artfully expressing their observations, investigations, hopes and dreams - are an integral part of a rich, full-throated civic conversation.” For more information visit The Hansberry Project's website at:

www.hansberryproject.org

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