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**JOLA OLOJEDE WINS TRUE COLORS THEATRE'S
INAUGURAL NEXT NARRATIVE MONOLOGUE COMPETITION**

*Dallas High School Student Receives \$3,000 Scholarship
For Performance In May 2nd National Finals Held At Harlem's World-Famous Apollo Theater*

NEW YORK (May 3, 2022) – Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company today announced that Jola Olojede, representing the Dallas region, won its inaugural Next Narrative™ Monologue Competition (NNMC), a national program for high school students that features the works of a host of contemporary Black playwrights.

Olojede, who received a \$3,000 scholarship for his performance of a monologue entitled "Chuck" written by playwright Jonathan Norton. LaNiyah Simone K. Grovell, representing the Atlanta region, finished in second place and received a scholarship of \$2,000. Third place and a scholarship of \$1,000 went to Alexandria Woods, representing the Milwaukee region.

"By just about any measure, our first Next Narrative Monologue Competition exceeded our expectations," said True Colors Artistic Director Jamil Jude. "Our contestants were fantastic and the support from playwrights was incredible. We received 41 monologues written by 20 playwrights representing the broad diversity of the African diaspora. We couldn't have gotten a better start on our journey to inspire a love of theatre in the next generation."

Jude was joined as co-host of the finals, held at Harlem's world-famous Apollo Theater, by Joaquina Kalukango, who, 15 years ago, was the first winner of True Color's previous monologue competition and is now starring in PARADISE SQUARE, currently playing on Broadway. "I can't tell you how much of a thrill it was to be able to serve as a co-host at this year's finals of this unique and important competition that set me on my path as an actor," said Kalukango.

In addition to the top finishers, two finalists, Nick Marston, Seattle region and Arissa Collymore, New York region, received the inaugural New Leaders award, which recognized their embodiment of NNMC values, "new voices, new truths, new discoveries." The judges for this year's finals included: Clint Ramos, Tony Award® winning costume and set designer; actor, director and producer Stori Ayers; and actor Jordan Barrow, known for his role as Boq in *Wicked*.

Eighteen students participated in the finals, representing NNMC partner organizations across the country including: True Colors Theatre Company, Atlanta, GA; The Huntington Theatre Company, Boston, MA; Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX; Wharton Center, E. Lansing, MI; Milwaukee Rep, Milwaukee, WI; Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven, CT; LEAP, New York, NY; Bill Nunn Theatre Outreach Project, Pittsburgh, PA; and Seattle Rep, Seattle, WA.

All of the students received an expense paid trip to New York City, participated in a theater workshop and attended the Broadway production of **For Colored Girls who have Considered Suicide/When The Rainbow is Enuf**. In addition to the top three finishers, the other finalists were:
Atlanta (Zaria Williams)

Boston (Sakura Rosenthal, Lala Cooks)
Dallas (Courtney Anderson)
East Lansing (Aija Hodges, Ife Martin)
Milwaukee (Terynn Erby-Walker)
New Haven (Julia Weston, Leila Hyder)
New York (Arisa Collymore, Karamoko Kaba)
Pittsburgh (Mikayla Keyes, Shakyna Golphin)
Seattle (Nick Marston, Jordan Talley)

“We owe a great debt of gratitude to our partner organizations that chose to support us in this new monologue competition,” said True Colors Managing Director Chandra Stephens-Albright. “All of this would never have been possible without our fantastic NNMC National Coordinator, Larsen Kennedy, our generous friends at the Apollo Theater and our publishing partner, Theatrical Rights Worldwide which will publish the complete compendium of the monologues that have been commissioned for this program. We also want to recognize Dihvinely Konnecked Production’s Stefaniyemiya Ingram for giving every runner-up a \$250 cash award.”

For more information on the NNMC, please visit: <https://truecolorstheatre.org/next-narrative-monologue-competition/>. For more information on True Colors Theatre Company please visit: www.truecolorstheatre.org.

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About True Colors Theatre Company

Kenny Leon’s 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 tradition of Black storytelling while giving voice to bold artists from all cultures. We add dimension and relevance to our work on the stage through community events and education programming. The vision of Artistic Director Jamil Jude is for the company to “thrive at the intersection of artistic excellence and civic engagement.” For more information on True Colors, visit www.truecolorstheatre.org.