

Contact: Mallory Miller/Kat Moser
info@workingindc.org

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Working in DC Celebrates Labor While Setting Out to Reimagine Theatre
Event to celebrate the working class through the lens of history, labor and justice, while striving to create a more equitable model for theatre production

WASHINGTON, DC (August 25, 2021)— Beginning on Labor Day, [Working in DC](#) will host a public celebration of the dignity of work through the lens of history, labor, justice, and the arts. Presented in collaboration with [The Labor Heritage Foundation](#) and hosted by the [AFL-CIO](#), the performances will take place outdoors on **Black Lives Matter Plaza** in Washington, DC. The headliner event of this 3 weekend-long celebration is ***Working, A Musical*** - a joyful musical highlighting workers in America - based on the acclaimed literature of **Studs Terkel** with music by some of Broadway's best known composers (**Stephen Schwartz, Micki Grant, Lin-Manuel Miranda**) .

While the Pandemic continues, Artistic Producer [Shanara Gabrielle](#) has set out on a mission both to honor frontline workers with this performance and to make sure our eventual return to 'normal' does not include the inequality that is structurally inherent in a typical theatrical production. To change that structure, Gabrielle and her team are facilitating deep conversation, conducting extensive implicit bias and anti racism training, and creating consensus for core principles centered in social and racial justice. To ensure accountability, **Working in DC has become the first official [Allied with Broadway for Racial Justice \(BFRJ\)](#) organization in the region**, creating oversight and practices with BFRJ to deconstruct racism and create a new theatrical community.

In addition to the work they are doing internally, as part of the event, *Working in DC* has developed an educational and community initiative called **Something to Point To**, aimed at developing a deeper connection to worker identity and the dignity of work in the Washington DC community. Along with that, the group hopes to promote a clearer understanding of the history of the labor movement and its legacy today. As part of this initiative, *Working in DC* plans to provide teaching artists in DC public and charter schools, host panel conversations and oral history activations, and collect creative arts testimonies from students across the district to be showcased during the event. To do so, they will be partnering with multiple organizations in the area, including [Teaching for Change](#), [Humanities Truck](#), [Workers' Rights Institute](#) and [Kalmanovitz Initiative for Working Poor](#) among others.

“Our focus is on fostering new models for creating meaningful arts and culture - finding ways to connect theatre to our communities and to the things we care about. We want people to know that theatre is not something staid and stuffy, but rather an action.” says Artistic Producer, Gabrielle. “This means making work outside the traditional theater producing model by partnering with nonprofits to create theatre that furthers their

missions and offers arts as a service to support their work, while centering professionalism, artistic excellence, and risk-taking art that prods us to consider things anew."

Tickets for the headline event are free, furthering the *Working in DC* commitment to accessibility and radical hospitality. While tickets are free, the creative team is committed to showing the true costs of making art. Thus, the ticketing process will include a [donation calculator](#), allowing audience members to make a contribution in line with their values and ability to pay.

While all this is happening on a relatively small scale, Gabrielle and her team hope to provide a working model for other theatre companies moving forward.

"The pandemic has changed what we do and why we do it in the arts and as arts workers," says Gabrielle. "You either move forward and reinvent or you'll be rehashing old ideas. What we hope to do is create a sustainable model that re-imagines the future of the arts in America."

The cast for this production includes a diverse slate of actors with credits spanning Broadway, national tours, TV, and acclaimed local productions, as well as numerous Helen Hayes Award winners. Featured actors include: **Thomas Adrian Simpson** (Signature Theatre, Shakespeare Theatre, *House of Cards*), **Jay Frisby** (major DC theatres with national (*South Pacific*) and international tours), **Alexandra Palting** (Olney Theatre, Imagination Stage, The Kennedy Center), **Carl L. Williams** (*Bob Marley's Three Little Birds* (National Tour)), **Theresa Cunningham** (Arena Stage, Round House Theatre, Atlanta Lyric Theatre), **Randyn Fullard** (who has performed as Tiffinique, his drag persona, at Toby's Dinner Theatre), **Emily Zinski** (an actress and singer who has performed as lead vocalist with AIDA Cruise Lines), **Chris Genebach** (whose Broadway credits include *Manhattan Theatre Club: Shining City*, along with a lengthy list of off-Broadway roles) and **Alyssa Keegan** (Ford's Theatre, Roundhouse Theatre, Woolly Mammoth Theatre.)

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With a celebratory performance at BLM Plaza on the streets of Washington, DC, and by sharing "the extraordinary dreams of ordinary people" through the lens of history, justice, activism and the arts, **Working in DC** brings the spirit of the legendary Studs Terkel to life. Proudly presented in collaboration with **Labor Heritage Foundation**, this project uplifts the working class during this pivotal time of racial justice reckoning, political unrest and COVID-19.

WorkingInDC.org