



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS TO CONVENE FOR LIVE WEBCAST EXPLORING GENDER AND RACIAL EQUALITY IN THE THEATER ON MAY 25TH

LIVE DISCUSSION TO AIR ON THE  
#NEWPLAY TV LIVESTREAM CHANNEL

NEW YORK, May 23, 2011 – Fuel | We Power Change today announced that seven women writers in the Off Broadway theater will convene this Wednesday May 25<sup>th</sup> at 3:00PM EST for “The Dream At Work,” a live webcast discussion addressing the question, “Nearly 48 years after ‘I Have a Dream,’ how has the American theater fared in its pursuit of gender and racial equality?”

Hosted by the recently launched #NEWPLAY TV, the discussion will webcast live and on demand at [www.livestream.com/newplay](http://www.livestream.com/newplay). Dubbed ‘the CSPAN of the American new play development sector’, #NEWPLAY TV is a shared resource administered by The American Voices New Play Institute at Washington DC’s Arena Stage.

Joining the discussion are playwrights Maria “Alex” Beech, Radha Blank, Bridget Kelso, Winter Miller, Dominique Morisseau, Deepa Purohit and Betty Shamieh. Unlike the traditional panel discussion, their conversation will be shot on location in a private living room in midtown Manhattan in order to establish a more intimate tone.

“We’re thrilled that #NEWPLAY TV is providing a platform for these writers to explore how gender and race impact a writer’s creative freedom and ability to make a living in the theater,” said Bridgit Antoinette Evans, President of Fuel and producer of the webcast. “In an industry often praised for its history of standing on the right side of justice, ensuring that women have equitable access to professional development, jobs, and leadership positions is critical.”

The writers hope the talk will inspire a heartier national dialogue about the issues. Viewers are encouraged to tweet questions to the women during the live webcast using the hashtag: #NEWPLAY.

“Social networking played a key role in catalyzing this week’s discussion,” Evans points out. A casual message sent to five women writers on Facebook quickly sparked a passionate exchange that lasted over a week. “The women revealed the hopes and heartaches they face in an industry still grappling with deep gender and racial bias. It was clear a larger audience was needed.”

Referenced numerous times in the Facebook exchange was a [2008 study](#) conducted by Princeton University economics student Emily Glassberg Sands (now a PhD student at Harvard). In an effort to analyze whether gender bias existed in the selection of plays for production nationally, artistic directors and literary managers at dozens of US theaters were asked to rate four new play scripts. Not revealed to respondents was the fact that while identical scripts were sent to all, half of the script coversheets named fictitious women as the writers, and half named fictitious men.

One finding in particular rocked the theater community: While male Artistic Directors and Literary Managers generally rated plays supposedly written by men and by women the same, their female counterparts consistently rated the quality and economic prospects of the scripts substantially lower when supposedly written by women. Female respondents also deemed plays with female protagonists 'less likely to reach production' when these plays were supposedly written by a woman. The study did not, the Facebook group noted, examine the impact of race on a female writer's ability to get produced.

"At a time when this country is hungry to see itself reflected in the stories we see on stage and screen, it's important to ask ourselves why so few women of color are produced," says Alex Beech. "Let's shine a light on this question and see where it takes us."

Winter Miller, whose "In Darfur" was the first woman-penned play presented at the 1800-seat Delacourt Theater in Central Park, agrees: "Paraphrasing Spanish poet Antonio Machado, we make the path by walking. So let's walk. And sit when we must. And lean on each other when we must. This is not a solitary game, a solitary struggle."

**ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS:** For full bios please visit <http://fuelchange.net/news/thedream>.

#### **ABOUT FUEL | WE POWER CHANGE**

Founded by Bridgit Antoinette Evans in 2008, Fuel | We Power Change is a creative social enterprise and 'social movement builder' dedicated to helping urgent causes gain a national or global support base through groundbreaking campaigns, strategic communications and creative productions. At the core of Fuel's work is the belief that artists and the creative industries are extremely powerful yet underdeveloped assets in the movement for progressive social change. Recent projects include executive production of the charity music single "This Is to Mother You" featuring Sinead O'Connor, Mary J Blige and Martha B; creation and management of the Live for Darfur Artists Campaign chaired by Don Cheadle; and executive production of the South African staging of Suzan-Lori Parks' Venus. More info at [www.fuelchange.net](http://www.fuelchange.net).

#### **ABOUT #NEWPLAY TV**

#NEWPLAY TV is a shared resource of the U.S. new play development sector and an initiative of The American Voices New Play Institute at Arena Stage. The institute is a center for research and development of effective practices, programs, and processes for new-play development in the American theater. The institute's programs are designed to test and develop promising advances in new-play development around the country, with the intention of developing the infrastructure for new plays and new voices nationwide. Launched in July 2009, the American Voices New Play Institute is dedicated to advancing the infrastructure for new plays nationwide. More info at [www.arenastage.org/new-play-institute](http://www.arenastage.org/new-play-institute).

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