

lifeline



THEATRE

Big Stories, Up Close



NATIVE SON

By **NAMBI E. KELLEY**

Based on the novel by **RICHARD WRIGHT**

Directed by **ILESA DUNCAN**

Native Son

By Nambi E Kelley

Based on the book by Richard Wright

Directed by Ilesa Duncan*

Scenic Designer
Regina García

Lighting Designer
Branden Marble

Costume Designer
Janelle Smith

Sound Designer
Steve Labeledz

Projection Designer
Eme Ospina-López

Props Designer
Paloma Locsin

Fight/Intimacy Designer
Sheryl Williams

Dialect Coach
Carrie Hardin

Dramaturg
Martine Kei Green-Rogers

Production Manager
Adi Davis

Stage Manager
Hanna Smaglis

Asst. Stage Manager
NaVada Reed

Assistant Director
Faramade (Fara) Oladapo

Technical Director
Harrison Ornelas

Lighting Supervisor
Avery Spellmeyer

THE CAST

Bigger	Tamarus Harvell
Black Rat	James Lewis
Buddy/Clerk/Jackson, et. al	Dairyon Bolden
Bessie/Vera/Leslie, et al	Ashli Rene Funches
Hannah/Others et. al	Kamille Dawkins
Mrs. Dalton/Agent, et. al.....	Mandy Walsh
Mary	Laura Nelson
Jan/Store Owner/Police#2, et. al	Nick Trengove
Britten/VO/Police#1, et. al	Gabe Fries
Understudies	Maureen Azzun, Dairyon Bolden, Brian Bradford, Zachary Koptik, Keith Surney, and Ashlea Woodley

*denotes members of the Lifeline artistic ensemble

About Native Son

Set in Chicago's South Side during the 1930's, the play follows 20-year-old Bigger Thomas struggling to realize his dreams in a world that has shut him out. After taking a job in a wealthy white man's house, Bigger unintentionally unleashes a series of events that violently and irrevocably seal his fate. Based on a true murder case, **Nambi E. Kelley's** adaptation is a powerful and suspenseful re-telling of **Richard Wright's** novel. Lifeline is producing the play on the 10th anniversary of its original staging and captures the power and suspense of the original work for a whole new generation.

SETTING

A labyrinth of Chicago's Black Belt and surrounding areas as it appears inside Bigger's mind.

TIME

A split second inside Bigger's mind when he runs from the crime, remembers, imagines, two cold and snowy winter days in December 1939 and beyond.

Content Disclosure

Nambi E. Kelley's adaptation of Richard Wright's seminal book – first published in 1940 – explores the following topics:

Racism, depiction of sexual encounters, violent fights, crime, accidental death, stylized version of a sexual assault, and self-condemnation. The production uses fog, haze, and strobing lights.



Tamarus Harvell (Bigger)

Tamarus Harvell is excited to be working with Lifeline Theatre for the first time! He is currently a company member with MPAACT Theatre where he was last seen in their production of *Tad in 5th City*. He has worked with several theatre companies in Chicago such as Perceptions Theatre, Black Ensemble, and Raven Theatre. He has several short films that have premiered at Chicago's Black Harvest Film Festival and other festivals across the country. He is currently represented by Big Mouth Talent Inc. He would like to thank his wife and parents for their continued love and support.



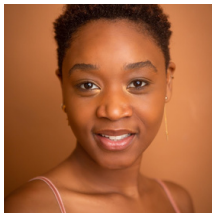
James Lewis (Black Rat)

James Lewis is excited to be in his first Lifeline production for *Native Son*! A proud father of two beautiful kids, his previous Chicago credits include *The Secret Council* (First Folio, Jeff Nominated), *The Last Pair of Earlies* (Raven, Jeff Nominated) and *Titus Andronicus* (Haven). James also performed in various locations in LA, NY and Connecticut. TV/Film credits include *True Blood*, *2 Broke Girls* and *Brooklyn 99*. A CAG Artist Board member, James is also an Alumni of The Theatre School at DePaul University and represented by Stewart Talent. @prodigenoir



Dairyon Bolden (Buddy (Black Rat U/S))

Dairyon Bolden is ecstatic to be a part of the Lifeline Theater family. Favorite credits include: *For Colored Boys* (Blake Martin), *Bad Seed* (Reginald Tasker), *1800 vs 2020* (Joshua), *When Silence Screams* (Adam), *Topdog/Underdog* (Lincoln/Booth), *Peter Pan* (Peter Pan), *Lord of the Flies* (Simon), *Anthony & Cleopatra* (Octavius Caesar), and *King Hedley II* (King Hedley II). His experience over the years has truly broadened his perspective on life, as he continues to lead with acting. It's not only about being on a stage, in front of a camera or audience, THIS is his therapy, passion, and what he considers his second love [Mom is first]. Dairyon is also a poet and photographer expanding his craft within words on paper. As he sees the pen is mightier than the sword, while having his eye set on a vision and making it come true.



Ashli Rene Funches (Bessie/Vera/Leslie)

Ashli Funches is currently working as an Actor, Educator, and Florist. They are from Birmingham, Alabama but she considers Chicago her artistic home. Ashli's recent credits include: *IS GOD IS* (Red Orchid), *Notes from the Field* (Timeline), *Stew* (Shattered Globe), and *Detroit 67* (The Theatre School). Ashli received their BFA in Acting and an BA in African Diaspora from DePaul University. She wrote, produced, and portrayed Amari in the film, *A Yellow Circus*. Ashli also portrays Z in a feature entitled, *The Lapse*. Both films are set to premiere in 2024. @ayellowcircusofficial



Kamille Dawkins (Hannah)

Kamille Dawkins is a Chicago based theater artist and the executive artistic director of Strawdog Theatre Company. This is Kamille's second time working with Lifeline Theatre, appearing in last year's *Cat's Cradle*. Previous works include: *The Revolutionists*, *Pillars of Community*, *Barbecue* at Strawdog Theatre, *Gender Breakdown* at Collaboration Theatre, *Hand in Hand* at Akvavit Theatre, *Pinocchio The Folk Musical* at Filament Theatre, *If Scrooge Was A Brother* at ETA Creative Arts Foundation, and many others.



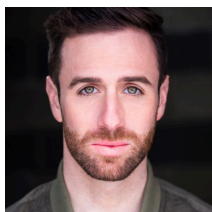
Mandy Walsh (Mrs. Dalton)

Mandy is thrilled to return to Lifeline after last being seen earlier this season as Sandra/Mrs. Crosby in *Cat's Cradle*! She has also previously appeared at Lifeline as Watson in both productions of *Miss Holmes* and *Miss Holmes Returns*, as well as *Monstrous Regiment*, *Watership Down*, and *The Count of Monte Cristo (U/S)*. Other Chicago area credits include work with Paramount Theatre, A Red Orchid Theatre, 16th Street Theatre, Windy City Playhouse, WildClaw Theatre, The Factory Theater, and more. Regionally she has performed at Dunes Summer Theatre in Michigan City, IN. She has also appeared on NBC's Chicago Fire and in the upcoming short film *I Wish I Were Pretty*. Mandy is represented by the lovely folks at Big Mouth Talent, Inc. www.mandywalsh.com



Laura Nelson (Mary)

Laura Nelson is thrilled to make her Lifeline Theatre debut with *Native Son*! Chicago credits include: *Bowie in Warsaw* (Chicago, New York tour), *Princess Ivona*, *Medea Material*, *The Killer* (Trap Door Theatre), *The Hilary Duff Project* (Newport Theatre), *Masque Macabre* (Strawdog Theatre), *The Sound of Music* (Drury Lane Theatre), *The Roar on Rush* (The Roar Chicago), *Bros do Prose: Peter Pan* (u/s Mercury Theater) and *Grey Gardens* (u/s Northlight Theatre). Film/TV: Senior Moments, The MisEducation of Bindu and Garden Doc web series. Laura graduated with a BFA in drama from NYU Tisch, Experimental Theatre Wing. She is an ensemble member at Trap Door Theatre and represented by Stewart Talent.



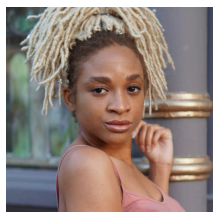
Nick Trengove (Jan)

Nick Trengove is thrilled to be making his Lifeline Theatre debut. A California native, Nick has worked as a professional actor, director, and VO artist in both the SF Bay Area and in Chicago. He holds an MFA from DePaul University. Recent credits include two new play festivals with Pocket Theater VR and Playground Chicago. nicktrengove.com



Gabriel Fires (Britten/Voice Over/Police 2)

Gabriel Fires is delighted to return to Lifeline, where he previously appeared in *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* and *Think It's Easy Being the Tooth Fairy?* Recent credits include *A Christmas Carol* (Metropolis PAC), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Paramount Theatre), *Big River* (Mercury Theater Chicago) and *The Mama & the Papa Goose* (Inkwell Arts). Other Chicago credits include productions with TimeLine, Porchlight, City Lit, Nothing Without a Company, and Oil Lamp. Gabriel is at work on an album of original music, and you can catch him in *The Merry Beggars' On the Night Train* and *The Saints* podcasts! He is a proud graduate of Wesleyan University and is represented by Big Mouth Talent. Love and thanks to Mom and Dad!
www.gabriefries.net



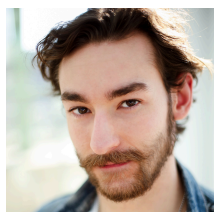
Maureen Azzun (Bessie, Hannah, et al U/S)

Maureen Azzun is proud to be making her Lifeline Theatre debut. Recent theatre credits include: *A Raisin in the Sun*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Utah Shakespeare Festival); *By the Way*, *Meet Vera Stark* (Roxy Regional Theatre); *Black Playwrights Festival* (Black Ensemble Theater); *This Is Only A Test* (Broken Nose Theatre). Maureen holds a BFA in Theatre and a BS in Psychology from the University of Oklahoma. She has also trained with Black Box Acting, the Second City, and IDC Professionals.



Brian Bradford (Buddy U/S)

Brian Bradford is delighted to be working with Lifeline Theatre for the first time. Previous theatre credits include: *The Innocence of Seduction*, *The Bloodhound Law*, *Fuente Ovejuna* (City Lit Theater); *The Winter's Tale* (Oak Park Festival Theatre); *Titus Andronicus* (Haven); *Five Presidents* (American Blues Theater); *Hamlet* (Gift Theatre); *Force Continuum* (Eclipse Theatre Company); *Romeo and Juliet* (Muse of Fire Theatre Company); *Estrella Cruz*, *In Love and Warcraft*, *From Every Mountainside/or does it explode*, *Emperor of the Moon* (Halcyon Theatre).



Zachary Koptik (Jan/Britten U/S)

Zach Koptik is a new face at Lifeline theatre and is excited to be understudying for their production of *Native Son*. Having graduated from Loyola University's acting program, he is excited to be back acting on stage in Rogers Park. Zach has been using his vocal range behind the scenes as a voice actor, having recently lent his talents to the Museum of Science and Industry Chicago. He is looking forward to once again physically inhabiting a theatrical space and is thankful to Lifeline for the opportunity. In his free time, Zach explores Cemeteries and takes his cat Mustang on walks. He is thankful for his family and their immense support and his partner Lauren, the love of his life.



Keith Surney (Bigger U/S)

Keith Surney is super excited to be working with Lifeline for the first time. Keith is a Veteran of the US Army and graduate of Columbia College. For the last 5 years Keith has been an ensemble and board member of Trap Door Theatre. His past credits include *The Pragmatist*, *Medea Material*, *The White Plague*, and *Princess Ivona* all at Trap Door. He is also the former host of two podcasts; Black Noise and Playing In The Dark.



Ashlea Woodley (Mrs. Dalton/Mary U/S)

Ashlea (she/her) is pleased to join the cast of *Native Son* for her first production with Lifeline. She is an actor and devising artist. Regional credits include Anne/Woman U/S in *The Father* at Remy Bumpo (dir. Kay Martinovich), *Red Summer* at MPAACT (dir. Andrea Dymond), Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet* with Jacaranda Collective at The Den Theater (dir. Sam Bianchini), and *Inger in Number the Stars* at GreatWorks Theatre Company (dir. Matt O'Brien). She is the co-Artistic Director at Proboscis Theater. Ashlea is a proud graduate of the Theatre School (MFA). ashleawoodley.com.



Nambi E Kelley (Playwright/Adaptor)

Nambi is developing multiple projects for Broadway. She received **The Prince Prize** and an **NNPN commission**, where her play *Re-Memori* was presented at WP's Pipeline Festival in New York City and recently celebrated a world premiere at Penumbra Theatre Company in St. Paul. A former playwright-in-residence at the National Black Theatre, Dramatists Guild, and the Goodman Theatre, Nambi was chosen by **Toni Morrison** to adapt her novel *Jazz*. Her adaptation of Richard Wright's *Native Son* (Sam French, Concord Theatricals) has been produced across the country and premiered in New York at The Duke on 42nd Street (The Acting Company, producer), receiving a **Drama League nomination** (Best Revival) and an **AUDELCO Award** (Best Production). Most recently, Nambi served as a writer/co-producer on Peacock's *Bel Air*. Previous television credits include: *Lady In The Lake* (Apple), *Our Kind of People* (Fox), and *The Chi* (Showtime). Also an award-winning actress, Kelley appears on television and has graced stages all across the world. www.nambikelley.com



Ilesa Duncan (Director)

Ilesa Duncan became Lifeline's artistic director and joined the ensemble in January 2019, where she directed *Neverwhere* (Jeff Recommended 2018), and *Blue Shadow* (2010 KidSeries Premiere). A producer, director, writer, educator and theater-maker, Ilesa is an avid collaborator on new work. Other directing credits include *Eclipsed* (Jeff Recommended), *Shakin' The Mess Outta Misery* (Jeff Nominated), *Rutherford's Travels* (Jeff Nominated, co-adapter), *The Green Book, For Her as a Piano*, and *Blacula: Young, Black & Undead* at Pegasus Theatre; *Broken Fences* at 16th Street Theater; *The Nativity* (Congo Square; Jeff nominated); and the Jeff Award-winning *Jar the Floor* at ETA Creative Arts. Ilesa has also worked with The Goodman, Writers Theatre, Victory Gardens, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, Stage Left, and Chicago Dramatists, as well as Contemporary American Theatre Company (Ohio), The Alliance Theatre (Atlanta), Arena Stage (Washington DC), and Lincoln Center Theater (New York). As an educator, Ilesa has led youth development and arts education programs in Chicago for over thirteen years. She is a past awardee of an NEA/TCG Directing fellowship and a 3 Arts Ragdale's Fellowship. She is member of the Lincoln Center Theatre Director's Lab and the Chicago Director's Lab, and is an associate artist with Chicago Dramatists (where she previously served as education and community engagement director).



Faramade (Fara) Oladapo (Assistant Director)

Faramade F. Oladapo is graduating in the spring of 2024 with her BFA from the Theatre School at DePaul University. Her stage credits include *Mess Fest*, *Witch Way*, *Clearing*, *Pink Milk* (DePaul University), and *London Road* (Shattered Globe Theatre). She worked with Cinema Chicago as a member of the 2023 CineYouth Programming Committee. She is excited to join Lifeline Theatre for the production of *Native Son*. Faramade kindly invites you to visit her freelance work at Faramadeophotography.com



Addoris Davis (Production Manager)

Adi is the production manager for Lifeline Theatre. Chicago credits include production management for *The Jigsaw Bride* (First Folio Theatre), *The Secret Council* (First Folio Theatre), *Jeeves Intervenes* (First Folio Theatre), *Little Women* (First Folio Theatre), and *Neither Have I Wings To Fly* (First Folio Theatre), *Anna in the Tropics* (Remy Bumpo Theatre Company [co-production manager]), *Galileo's Daughter* (Remy Bumpo Theatre Company), and Lifeline Theatre's *From the Mississippi Delta*. Originally from Alaska, they have worked as a stage manager for Cyrano's Theatre Company, Anchorage Community Theatre, Alaska Fine Arts Academy, Pier One Theatre, and the University of Alaska.



Regina García (Scenic Designer)

Regina is a Chicago-based scenic designer from Puerto Rico. She has had long standing relationships with the Latinx Theatre's renowned Teatros including Repertorio Español, the Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, Teatro Vista and Pregones Theater. Recently completed projects include *POTUS* for Steppenwolf and *August, Osage County* for Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. Regina is a Fellow of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Designers and the Princess Grace Awards, USA; a Regional Associate member of the League of Professional Theatre Women; and company member with Rivendell Theatre Ensemble. She is a founding organizational member of La Gente: The Latinx Theatre Production Network and Head of Scenic Design at the Theatre School.



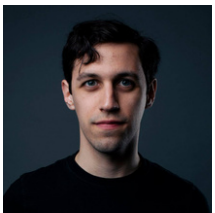
Martine Kei Green-Rogers (Dramaturg)

Martine Kei Green-Rogers is the Dean of the Theatre School at DePaul University. Her dramaturgical credits include *its not a trip, its a journey*, *He Brought Her Heart Back in a Box* and *The Ohio State Murders* at Round House Theatre; *Wind in the Door and Long Way Down* at the Kennedy Center; *The Catastrophist* at Marin; *Sweat* at the Goodman; *King Hedley II*, *Radio Golf*, *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Blues for An Alabama Sky*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, *Seven Guitars*, *The Mountaintop*, and *Home* at Court Theatre; *It's Christmas*, *Caroll*, *Hairspray*, *The Book of Will*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *UniSon*, *Hannah and the Dread Gazebo*, *Comedy of Errors*, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *The African Company Presents Richard III*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and *Fences* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Broadway credits include *Jagged Little Pill*.



Carrie Hardin (Dialect)

Carrie Hardin is pleased to be back at Lifeline after previously coaching dialects for *Whose Body?* and *Sylvester*. You might have also heard her coaching efforts around town at Babes with Blades, Kokandy, First Folio, Pegasus, CityLit, Idle Muse, (the dearly departed) Prologue Theatre Co, and Loyola University Chicago, where she also sometimes teaches. Many thanks to everyone involved, and to her family, for putting up with her near-constant quiet mumbling in different voices.



Steve Labeledz (Sound)

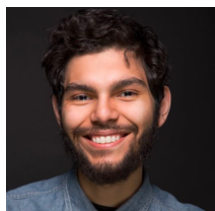
Steve Labeledz is excited to be doing their first design at Lifeline! Previous designs include *The SpongeBob Musical* (Kokandy), *Dutch Masters* (Jackalope), *United Flight 232* (House), and *Put Your House in Order* (The Roustabouts). A few lifetimes ago, Steve was the Assistant Master Electrician at Lifeline. Oh how times change.

Paloma Locsin (Props)



Brenden Marble (Lighting Designer)

Brenden Marble is excited to be working their first show with LifeLine Theatre! After studying theater design at Eastern Michigan University, the Detroit MI native moved to Chicago to start living their dream of becoming a lighting designer! Recent credits include *An Educated Guess* (Definition Theatre), *Liaisons* (Chicago Tap Theatre), *Black By Popular Demand* (Second City Chicago), *A Hit Dog Will Holler* (Artemisia Theatre), *Fairview* (Definition Theater), *Currents* (Chicago Fringe Opera), and *Dance Like There Are Black People Watching* (Second City Chicago). Even though his career is just beginning, he knows this is something he wants to do for the rest of his life.



Harrison Ornelas (Technical Director)

Harrison was born and raised on the north side of Chicago. After graduating from Columbia College in 2015 Harrison has been Technical Directing for theater all over the city including Akvavit, Redtwist Theatre, Strawdog Theatre Co., Silkroad Rising, A Red Orchid, UrbanTheater, Red Tape Theater, Theater Wit, and Shattered Globe, just to name a few. He has also been the staff TD for the past three seasons at Theater on the Lake. Harrison is thrilled to now be working with Lifeline. Harrison is always looking for his next collaboration and creative challenge wherever his skills are needed.



Eme Ospina-López (Projections)

Eme Ospina-López is an artist, videographer and projection designer born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia. After receiving their MFA in Media Design and Technology for Live Performance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Eme moved to Chicago in June 2023 and has had one of the most vital and exciting seasons of their career. They have collaborated with the Chicago Latino Theatre Alliance, PrideArts, Collaboration, Refracted Theatre Company, Pegasus Theatre Chicago, Paramount Theatre, Teatro Vista and Blue in the Right Way. They were recently honored with the Jeff Award for Best Projection Design (*Tambo and Bones*). Eme is proud and grateful to be contributing to Lifeline Theatre for the first time.



NaVāda Reed (Assistant Stage Manager)

NaVāda is a Chicago-based freelance artist. This is NaVāda's second ASM role at Lifeline where she has also worked on the production *Cats Cradle*. Other Chicago credits, stage management for *Pegasus 37th Young Playwright's Festival*. She wants to give a huge shoutout to all her friends and family for supporting her dreams always, especially Mom and Dad, Love you! @adavan_



Hanna Smaglis (Stage Manager)

Hanna is a stage manager and theatrical creator from Jacksonville, FL who is passionate about unconventional works and community-based art. Having recently earned a Bachelor's degree in both Theatre and Spanish, Hanna continues to grow as a manager and collaborator anywhere off the stage; whether in the wings, a shop or a booth. Her most recent credit is crew member for *Lucy and Charlie's Honeymoon* at Lookingglass Theatre. Previous credits in the DMV area include: *Mlima's Tale* (SM) and *The Rainmaker* (SM) at 1st Stage Theater. Hanna is currently based in Chicago, IL.



Janelle Smith (Costume Designer)

Janelle Smith is a Chicago-based costume designer, wardrobe, and stylist who has worked at Marriott Theatre, Oil Lamp Theater, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Tuacahn Center for the Arts, University of Chicago, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, The Second City and Writer's Theater doing wardrobe, hair, makeup, and costume design. After finishing their BFA in Theatrical Production and Design at Western Michigan they followed it up with an MFA in Theatrical Design with a focus in Costume Design from Illinois State University. Special thanks to friends who helped bring production to life. Enjoy the show!

Avery Spellmeyer (Lighting Supervisor)



Sheryl Williams (Fight/Intimacy Designer)

Sheryl Williams is from Phoenix, Az, She received her B.A in Musical Theater From Columbia College Chicago and has been working in and around Chicago since 2017. Along with coordinating support for several Universities such as Roosevelt, North Central and DePaul as an Intimacy Professional, her recent credits include: *Cabaret* (Porchlight Music Theater) , *The Nacirema Society* (The Goodman Theater), *Anything Goes* (Porchlight Music Theater) , *Antigone* (Court Theatre), *Silent Sky* (Citadel Theater), *The Brightest Thing in the World* (AboutFace Theater) and more. She has also been published as a contributor in Intimacy Directing for Theatre and T.I.E Affiliate.

LIFELINE THEATRE ARTISTIC ENSEMBLE

Aly Renee Amidei	Andrés Enriquez	Elise Kauzlaric	Suzanne Plunkett
Patrick Blashill	Diane Fairchild	Robert Kauzlaric	Maren Robinson
Jessica Wright Buha	Kevin D. Gawley	Anthony Kayer	Sandy Pietz Snyder
Christina Calvit	Peter Greenberg	Frances Limoncelli	Phil Timberlake
Heather Currie	James E. Grote	Amanda Link	Jenifer Tyler
Victoria "Toy" Delorio	Chris Hainsworth	Martel Manning	Christopher Vizurraga
Amanda Delheimer	Katie McLean Hainsworth	Michael McKeogh	Christopher M. Walsh
Alan Donahue	John Hildreth	Dorothy Milne	
Ilesa Duncan	Paul S. Holmquist	Shole Milos	

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Eric Lane Barnes, Meryl Friedman, Rebecca Hamlin,
James Sie, Kathee Sills, Steve Totland, and Elizabeth Wislar

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Raymond R. Snyder (In
Memoriam)
Rebecca Tinkham
Steven Wise
Susan Rosenberg (In Memoriam)
Tyrone "Tye" Clark

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Book Keeper Kelly Nespor
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Education Director Merissa Stewart
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MAY 24 - JUNE 16, 2024

WORLD PREMIERE

STOKELY: THE UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

BY

NAMBI E. KELLEY

DIRECTED BY

TASIA A. JONES

Stokely Carmichael to
Kwame Ture; civil rights
activist to icon; man to
legend. Experience the
transformation.

Sponsored by Prince Charitable Trusts
Gustavo Bamberger and Martha Van Haitsma

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