UC SANTA BARBARA

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‘A Rich Collaboration’

A beauty shop in purgatory, a small Michigan high school, and the U.S.-Mexico border are just some of the places UC Santa Barbara’s upcoming BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) Reading Series Festival will transport audiences.

Following a week-long workshop, the virtual festival will be presented Friday, April 2, and Saturday, April 3. It will feature the work of six accomplished playwrights from National New Play Network’s (NNPN) Affiliated Artists.

Live performances, which will not be recorded, will take place at 12, 3 and 6 p.m. Each reading will be followed by a Q&A with the playwright, director, dramaturg and actors.

“LAUNCH PAD is dedicated to the creation of new plays through a collaborative and nurturing process,” said artistic director and UCSB professor of theater Risa Brainin. “Our audiences have always been adventurers — excited by being a part of the birthing of new plays. This festival brings a wonderful group of writers from National New Play Network together with our students, faculty and professional guest artists for a rich collaboration.”

The six plays being presented are:

“American Fast” by Kareem Fahmy, directed by Hala Baki (Fri., April 2, 12 p.m.)
Khady, a college basketball star who comes from a devout Muslim family, has a dilemma. She’s about to compete in the NCAA championships, but they coincide with the start of Ramadan, and that means she is expected to fast. When news of

her fast goes public, Khady unexpectedly becomes a hero to young Muslim women everywhere while dealing with the expectations of her boyfriend, her coach and her mother.

“Lorena: A Tabloid Epic” by Eliana Pipes, directed by Erica Terpening-Romeo (Fri., April 2, 3 p.m.) *Spinning out of the media hailstorm surrounding Lorena Bobbitt, who became a sensation after she infamously used a kitchen knife against her husband in 1993, this play showcases the tacky dystopia of American pop culture in a series of funhouse vignettes that know no bounds.*

“A People’s Guide to History in the Time of Here and Now” by Rehana Lew Mirza, directed by Lucie Tiberghien (Fri., April 2, 6 p.m.) *Loner and grungy Muslim-American student Jennah has just transferred to a small Michigan high school, and during the weeks immediately following the 2016 election, she struggles to find her place as she embarks on a battle of wills against a popular History and Civics teacher.*

“Exotic Deadly: or the MSG Play” by Keiko Green, directed by Rebecca Wear (Sat. April 3, 12 p.m.) *It’s 1999, and Ami is an awkward Japanese American high school girl whose world comes crashing down with a terrible discovery: her family is responsible for manufacturing MSG, the poison spice getting all the kids hooked. In this time traveling adventure, Ami vows to save the world from MSG and realizes what she's capable of, if she would stop being invisible.*

“A Medusa Thread” by Candrice Jones, directed by Shirley Jo Finney (Sat. April 3, 3 p.m.) *In the world of a purgatorial beauty shop, Medusa gives customers one last hairdo before they transition to their after-life.*

“Pilar and Paloma” by Milta Ortiz, directed by Sylvia Cervantes Blush (Sat. April 3, 6 p.m.) *After the newly built wall, Desert mourns her fallen saguaros as Lupe rushes to get across the border. One mother's grieving ripens another's pregnancy and Zuri steps in to help Lupe's twins. In a hurry, Zuri breaks desert convention and years later they must face the consequences.*

The BIPOC festival is presented in partnership with NNPN and UC Santa Barbara’s LAUNCH PAD, AMPLIFY and New and Reimagined Work. Admission to the festival is free and open to all.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.