

COUNTING

BY AJA HOUSTON

DIRECTED BY **NANCY CHERYLL DAVIS**

NEW WORK FESTIVAL

MFA DRAMATIC WRITING YEAR 2

Playwrights Workshop

MASSMAN THEATRE APRIL 20-22, 2018

NW F
Y2



USC School of Dramatic Arts

PRESENTS

COUNTING

By Aja Houston

WITH

Amber Butler Cherie Carter AJ Clark

Jordan Jahmal Davis Casey Gardner

David McClain Jr. Kiara Muhammad

SCENIC DESIGN

Ruby O'Brien

COSTUME DESIGN

Mattie Harris-Lowe

LIGHTING DESIGN

Milner Sommers

SOUND DESIGN

Ethan Zeitman

STAGE MANAGER

Chloe Willey

DIRECTED BY

Nancy Cheryll Davis

NEW WORK FESTIVAL

MFA Dramatic Writing Year 2 | Playwrights Workshop

Massman Theatre
April 20-22, 2018

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

Till

Jordan Jahmal Davis

Martin

David McClain Jr.

Proctor

Amber Butler

Gray

AJ Clark

Bland

Cherie Carter

Original 1

Casey Gardner

Original 2

Kiara Muhammad

TIME: The past, present and hopefully not the future.

PLACE: The Middle, The Down There, and maybe, The Away.

There will be no intermission.

PRODUCTION STAFF

STUDENT TECHNICAL DIRECTOR Jordan Fox | **HAIR & MAKE-UP DESIGN** Mattie Harris-Lowe

DRAMATURG Adrian Centeno | **VOCAL COACH** Lauren Murphy

CREW Samantha Berger, Angela Chapman, Cat Clements, Tim Frangos,
Austin Karkowsky, Rachel Levy, Eliot Ohlemeyer, Allie Ronces

WARNING Please be advised that this production contains
mature language and themes, and smoking of herbal cigarettes.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

*“Just because we’re magic
doesn’t mean we’re not real.”*

—Jesse Williams (actor/activist)

This epitaph proceeds the first page of *Counting* because I am *real*. Black people are *real*. Our right to live is *real*.

Counting was born out of my desperate need to pour out my rage, anguish, helplessness, and exhaustion of being a Black woman constantly bearing witness to the brutalization of Black American bodies, onto the page. There is always a news story of state sanctioned violence being visited upon Black people. Most recently Stephon Clark has been added to the long list of names. News pundits speak of these victims as if they summoned their own death, for being “thugs.” This denies Black people their humanity. It denies the sanctity of human life that goes beyond the complex politics of race. This fact is simple, Black people are *REAL*, their lives *COUNT*, and they have the right to *BREATHE*.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The history of African-Americans in America is a living history lesson. Despite the progress that has been made, the racism that permeates America is never ending. The possibility always exists, no matter how low or high your place is in American Society, as a person of color you remain a target.

Gray's character in *Counting* says, *“Tiredness, sadness, frustration, something in between. Cause they was living in a place where they was forgotten.”* As artists, we have the ability to make sure that ALL the ones who are forgotten are remembered. Aja Houston has created a moving, impactful, poignant and powerful piece of theatre brought to life by an outstanding cast. It reminds us that the lives and deaths of Emmett Louis Till, Trayvon Benjamin Martin, Sandra Bland, Freddie Carlos Gray and Sheneque Proctor, and all the others who have (and may) become part of the Count, are NEVER FORGOTTEN.

BIOGRAPHIES

Aja Houston is an actress and playwright. She received her Bachelor of Theatre Arts Degree from Pitzer College in Claremont, CA. Aja is now a MFA Dramatic Writing Candidate at USC School of Dramatic Arts Class of '19. She is a proud member of The League of Professional Theatre Women, Actors Equity Association, British Actor's Equity, and the Dramatists Guild. Her play *Journey to Alice* is currently being workshopped as a part of Inkwell Theatre's New Play Development Lab (Los Angeles). Some of Aja's other notable work includes *The Flight of Emina and Zubaida*, an adaptation of classic Polish novel “The Saragossa Manuscript”, commissioned by Playwright's Arena (Los Angeles) and The Adam Mickiewicz Institute (Poland) for their 2017 Iron Tongues Staged Reading Festival and *Floating On Credit* (published by The Dionysian, 2017) For more information visit ajahouston.net

Nancy Cheryl Davis is a critically acclaimed actress, director, producer & Founding Artistic/Producing Director of the Towne Street Theatre. Selected directing credits; *In Response, Langston & Nicolas, Millennium in Black, Passing* (plus conception on those 4), *Sister Cities, Nevis Mountain Dew, Five on the Blackhand Side, & Madwoman of Chaillot*. Her one woman show, *PassingSOLO*, is published in the anthology *black/woman/solo* by Northwestern University Press. Performed at the University of Duisberg in Essen, Germany 2016 & now in the syllabus for Performance Studies at Stanford University, University of Santa Barbara & University of Duisberg, Germany. Nancy received a NAACP Best Actress award for *Passing* & Best Actress Nomination for *Flyin' West* at the St. Louis Black Repertory Company. In addition to many theatre & T.V. credits, she was in the iconic films *Hollywood Shuffle, I'm Gonna Git You Sucka!, Menace to Society, and The Court Martial of Jackie Robinson*.