



THE JUST AND THE BLIND

A VISIONS AND VOICES SIGNATURE EVENT

Tuesday, February 9, 2021, at 5:30 p.m. PT
Live via Zoom
University of Southern California

Conceived and written by **MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH**
Original musical score by **DANIEL BERNARD ROUMAIN**
Directed by **MICHAEL JOHN GARCÉS**

ARTISTS:

MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH, Spoken Word
DANIEL BERNARD ROUMAIN, Violin/Piano/Electronics
DREW DOLLAZ, Choreographer/Dancer
DAVID SZLASA, Projection Designer
XIA GORDON, Animator
BRITTSSENSE, Photographer
LISA ARMSTRONG, Journalist
ANNIE MARCH, Stage Manager
RIKA IINO, Producer
MELISSA HIGGINS, Producer

ABOUT *THE JUST AND THE BLIND*

Poignant and pressing, *The Just and The Blind* illuminates the unseen and under-heard experiences of incarcerated youth and the realities their families face. Spoken-word artist and arts activist Marc Bamuthi Joseph (Bamuthi) joins forces with long-time collaborator composer/violinist Daniel Bernard Roumain (DBR) and street dance pioneer and choreographer Drew Dollaz to explore themes of racial profiling, sentencing, and the prison-industrial complex from the perspective of fathers of Brown sons.

Centered on the humanity of the historically marginalized, *The Just and the Blind* provides a framework for the unique voices of the community, striving to humanize the Black and Brown children that are enmeshed in it. Now adapted to an online event powerfully combining live performance, short films, and honest conversation, it is more intimate and essential than ever.

The Just and the Blind was commissioned by Carnegie Hall and presented as part of the 2019 Create Justice Forum.

The Just and the Blind was produced by Sozo Artists, Inc., in partnership with the Sozo Impact Fund and its fiscal sponsor, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, with support from Ford Foundation. Special thanks to Miami Light Project.

BIOS:

Photo: Fadi Kheir



Marc Bamuthi Joseph

Marc Bamuthi Joseph is a 2017 TED Global Fellow, an inaugural recipient of the Guggenheim Social Practice initiative, and an honoree of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship. Bamuthi's opera libretto, *We Shall Not Be Moved*, was named one of 2017's Best Classical Music Performances by the *New York Times*. His evening-length work created in collaboration with composer Daniel Bernard Roumain, *The Just and the Blind*, was commissioned by Carnegie Hall and premiered to a sold-out house at Carnegie in March 2019. His upcoming piece, *In His Name*, is inspired by the forgiveness exhibited by the congregation of Emanuel AME church in Charleston, and will premiere at The Perelman Center in New York in 2021. While engaging in a deeply fulfilling and successful artistic career, Bamuthi also proudly serves as Vice President and Artistic Director of Social Impact at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. He is in high demand for his creative approach to organizational design, brand development, and community mediation, and has been enlisted as a strategic partner or consultant for companies ranging from Coca-Cola to Carnegie Hall. His TED talk on linking sports to freedom design among immigrant youth has been viewed nearly one million times, and is a testament to his capacity to distill complex systems into accessible and poetic presentations. Bamuthi's community development philosophy, The Creative Ecosystem, has been implemented in dozens of cities across the United States and is the subject of several critical writings, including one of the seminal essays in *Cultural Transformations: Youth and Pedagogies of*

Possibility, published by Harvard Education Press. Bamuthi is the founding program director of the exemplary non-profit Youth Speaks, and is a co-founder of Life Is Living, a national series of one-day festivals that activate under-resourced parks and affirm peaceful urban life. He has lectured at more than 200 colleges and carried adjunct professorships at Stanford and Lehigh, among others.



Daniel Bernard Roumain

Daniel Bernard Roumain's acclaimed work as a composer, performer, educator, and activist spans more than two decades, and he has been commissioned by venerable artists and institutions worldwide. "About as omnivorous as a contemporary artist gets" (*New York Times*), DBR is perhaps the only composer whose collaborations span Philip Glass, Bill T. Jones, Savion Glover, and Lady Gaga. Known for his signature violin sounds infused with myriad electronic, urban, and African American musical influences, DBR takes his genre-bending music beyond the proscenium. He is a composer of chamber, orchestral, and operatic works. He has won an Emmy for Outstanding Musical Composition for his collaborations with ESPN, been featured as keynote performer at technology conferences, and created large-scale, site-specific musical events for public spaces. DBR earned his doctorate in Music Composition from the University of Michigan and is currently Institute Professor and Professor of Practice at Arizona State University. An avid arts industry leader, DBR serves on the board of directors of the League of American Orchestras, Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP), and Creative Capital,

the advisory committee of the Sphinx Organization, and was co-chair of 2015 and 2016 APAP Conferences. DBR has most recently created the musical score for *The Just and the Blind* and a new work for Washington State University's Symphonic Band, *Falling Black Into The Sky*, based on the work of the artist James Turrell and his "light work" at Roden Crater. DBR is currently creating *Cipher*, a new pocket opera for the Philadelphia Boys Choir, with a libretto by Mark Bamuthi Joseph, based on the incarceration of young, Black boys.



Photo: Fadi Kheir

Drew Dollaz

Drew Dollaz is a pioneer of flexing, a Brooklyn-based genre of street dance also referred to as bone breaking, which is characterized by rhythmic contortionist movements. A self-taught dancer, Dollaz' signature work blends flexing with other genres of movement, including ballet, to create a transcendent hybrid of movement artistry. Dollaz has performed and partnered with a broad range of artists and brands, including Madonna, Rihanna, Skrillex, Red Bull, Sony, Aloft Hotels, and *Billboard*. His performances on Madonna's MDNA tour in 2012 marked the first time flexing appeared on the world stage. Next Level Squad, a New York City collective of flexing dancers in which Dollaz performs and choreographs, has garnered more than a million views on YouTube and has been featured on shows including *The Breakin' Convention* and *America's Got Talent*. Movement for Human Rights, a component of Dollaz' newest work #IMPERFECT, was performed to an audience of more than 70,000 at Budapest's Sziget Festival in 2019. #IMPERFECT is currently in creative development and will premiere in 2021. Arts education and youth empowerment are core tenets of Dollaz' work, and he currently mentors young dancers and gives master classes around the world, most recently at the Kennedy Center for participants ranging from ages 5 through 70.



Michael John Garcés

Michael John Garcés is the artistic director of Cornerstone Theater Company, a community-engaged ensemble in Los Angeles where he recently directed *Urban Rez* by Larissa FastHorse. Other productions at Cornerstone include *California: The Tempest* by Alison Carey, *Plumas Negras* by Juliette Carrillo, and *Café Vida* by Lisa Loomer. He is a company member at Woolly Mammoth Theatre in

Washington, D.C., where his directing credits include *Lights Rise on Grace* by Chad Beckim and *The Convert* by Danaï Gurira. Other recent productions include *The Box* by Sarah Shourd at Z Space and *District Merchants* at the Folger Theatre. Other credits include (in New York) BAMtheatre, the Atlantic, Cherry Lane, INTAR, and Repertorio Español, and (regionally) South Coast Repertory, A Contemporary Theatre, Hartford Stage, The Huntington Theatre, and The Children's Theatre. Michael is the recipient of the Alan Schneider Director Award, the Princess Grace Statue Award, a TCG New Generations Grant, the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors Grant, a Van Lier Directing Fellowship, and a Drama League Director's Residency. He serves as vice president of the executive board of SDC, the theatrical union for stage directors and choreographers.



David Szlasa

David Szlasa designs spaces for performance in collaboration with individuals, institutions, and communities. His work has been called "so timely as to feel timeless" by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and has received an Isadora Duncan Award, Future Aesthetics Award, and a Gerbode. Szlasa's residency program, *Range Studio*, was deemed a Living Innovation Zone by the City of San Francisco in 2015 and became a national model for cross-sector partnerships between government, developers, institutional funders, and academic institutions. Szlasa has taught design at Stanford University, St. Mary's College of California, NYU, and (currently) Bard College.



Annie March

Annie March has a contagious passion for production and loves supporting game-changing artists who elevate everyday experiences. Her dedication, flexibility, and proclivity for mastering new skills have made her a Jill-of-all-trades. Production credits include: Producer, DJ Spooky's *Quantopia* (YCBA, 2019) and *The Hidden Code* (Museum of Science Boston, 2015); Stage Manager, *The Just and the Blind* (Carnegie Hall, 2019); and Artist Relations, BAMS Fest (Boston, 2019). She manages bluesman Ryan Lee Crosby and is the former manager of Haitian singer Emeline Michel and rock band Aloud. An international tour manager emeritus, Annie now lives in Massachusetts with her husband and their two young children.

THEME GUIDE

WHAT TO KNOW

- ◉ *The Just and the Blind* is a multimedia event that illuminates the experiences of incarcerated youth and their families.
- ◉ It was conceived and written by spoken-word artist Marc Bamuthi Joseph (Bamuthi).
- ◉ Bamuthi's collaborators include composer Daniel Bernard Roumain, dancer Drew Dollaz, journalist Lisa Armstrong, photographer Brittsense, illustrator Xia Gordon, designer David Szlasa, and director Michael John Garcés.

"I've started to make a series of poems from the perspective of a teenage father's body cam. They capture a justice system that refuses to affirm the value of Black life and a cultural system that self-restricts our ability to see Black people as free and loving beings. The poems are a lens on a psychology of self-hate and a climate of terror."—Marc Bamuthi Joseph

INCARCERATION OF YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States incarcerates more young people than any other country does. Black and indigenous youth are overrepresented in juvenile facilities relative to their share of the total U.S. youth population, while white youth are underrepresented.

The following statistics are provided by the Children's Defense Fund,

- ◉ In 2018, 728,280 children were arrested in the U.S. A child or teen was arrested every 43 seconds despite a 63 percent reduction in child arrests between 2009 and 2018.
- ◉ Although the number of children in the juvenile justice system has been cut in half since 2007, 43,580 children and youth were held in residential placement on a given night in 2017.
- ◉ Another 935 children were incarcerated in adult prisons on any given night in 2017—down from 2,283 in 2007.
- ◉ Although 62 percent of children arrested in the U.S. were white, children of color were nearly two times more likely to be arrested than white children. Black children were two and a half times more likely.
- ◉ Two-thirds (67 percent) of children in the juvenile justice system were children of color: 41 percent were Black and 21 percent were Hispanic.
- ◉ Children of color are also disproportionately transferred to the adult criminal justice system, where they are tried and prosecuted as adults.

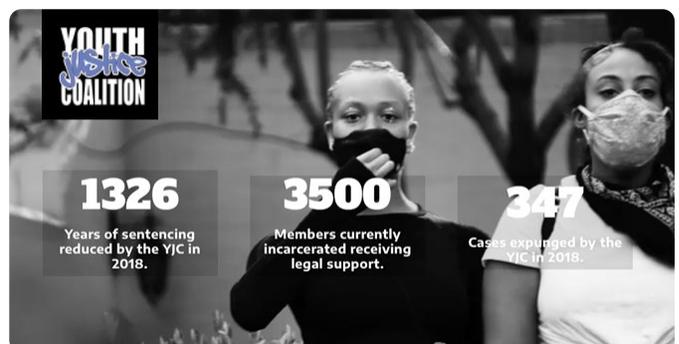
- ◉ At least 1 in 3 youth in the juvenile justice system has a disability qualifying them for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—nearly four times the rate of youth in public schools. Less than half receive special education services while in custody.
- ◉ The percent of LGBTQ children in the juvenile justice system (20 percent) is more than two times that of LGBTQ youth in the general population (7-9 percent); 85 percent are children of color.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- ◉ How has your life been affected by the criminal justice or juvenile justice system?
- ◉ Did you learn anything new, or was your perspective changed in any way, by this event?
- ◉ Why do you think so many young people are incarcerated in the United States?
- ◉ What are alternatives to incarceration?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- ◉ "You Have the Rite"—Marc Bamuthi Joseph's Ted Talk [ted.com/talks/marc_bamuthi_joseph_you_have_the_rite](https://www.ted.com/talks/marc_bamuthi_joseph_you_have_the_rite)
- ◉ Arts for Healing and Justice Network | ahjnetwork.org
- ◉ LA Youth Uprising | layouthuprising.org
- ◉ Youth Justice Coalition | youthjusticela.org



EVERYDAY

The Transition to Adulthood Among Formerly Incarcerated Youth

DESISTANCE



LAURA S. ABRAMS and DIANE J. TERRY

CARA H. DRINAN

THE WAR ON KIDS

How American Juvenile Justice
Lost Its Way



DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

CHRISTINA SNIDER of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this evening's event. Those with a call number (e.g., books) are physical items which you can find in our campus libraries. Those without a call number (e.g. e-books, journals, and databases) are electronic resources, which are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

BOOKS

- ◉ Laura S. Abrams and Diane J. Terry, *Everyday Desistance: The Transition to Adulthood Among Formerly Incarcerated Youth* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2017).
- ◉ Alison Behnke, *Racial Profiling: Everyday Inequality* (Minneapolis: Twenty-First Century Books, 2017).
- ◉ Cara H. Drinan, *The War on Kids: How American Juvenile Justice Lost Its Way* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2018).
- ◉ Christopher A. Mallett, *The School-To-Prison Pipeline: A Comprehensive Assessment* (New York: Springer, 2015).
- ◉ LaTonya C. White, "The Experiences of Black Mothers of Incarcerated Children: With a Focus on Their Sons," PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2019.

DATABASES

- ◉ [Child Development & Adolescent Studies](#)
- ◉ [Family Studies Abstracts](#)
- ◉ [ProQuest Criminal Justice Database](#)

JOURNALS

- ◉ [Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal](#)
- ◉ [Child & Family Social Work](#)
- ◉ [Incarceration: An International Journal of Imprisonment, Detention and Coercive Confinement](#)
- ◉ [Alternatives to Incarceration](#)

STREAMING VIDEO

- ◉ [The Talk: Race in America](#) (PBS, 2017).

