

## WHY KILL MOVE PARADISE? *by Reggie Jackson, Co-Founder, Nurturing Diversity Partners*



When Sylville Smith was shot and killed by a police officer three blocks from my home in 2016, the community quickly gathered on the scene of the shooting. Young and old alike were there, dealing with the pain of another Black person killed by the police.

Reporters came to the Sherman Park neighborhood after multiple fires were set and violent confrontations between young people and the police broke out. These reporters asked questions but rarely asked the questions that were most pertinent to the young Black boys and men of America. Instead of finally listening to the young men and boys of the Black community, their voices were silenced, much as they always are in America.

*KILL MOVE PARADISE* gives room for those voices to be heard. However, the three men and one

teenager in the play are only able to articulate to America how they see the world after they are killed.

They question the audience, who are symbolic of the nation they once lived in. As they inquire about where they are – is it heaven, is it hell, are they still alive? – they realize it doesn't really matter for them.

### AN EVER-GROWING LIST

One of the central themes of the play is a never-ending list of the names of other Blacks killed by the police. I had kept a list myself. As I went out into the community after Sylville Smith was shot, I wanted to hear the voices of the young men and teenage boys who were mourning one of their own. They often said it could have just as easily been them that was killed. Their voices were full of grief and sadness but also anger. They were tired and traumatized and had no outlet that would satisfy their emotional needs at that moment.

The killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery in 2020 led to what many called a racial reckoning in America. The characters in *KILL MOVE PARADISE* challenge the audience members in much the same way. They ask the audience why they are seen as scary. What did they do to become "boogiemens"? The reality is that they did nothing, much like members of the list of Blacks killed by police and so-called vigilantes. They attempt to

tell the story of how random acts, which would never cause alarm if committed by a White person, often lead to the death of unarmed Blacks.



### NEW KID FROM THE BLOCK

The men are shocked when they see a teenager drop into the strange space they occupy. He teaches them lessons about his life. They eventually begin to learn that being who they are offers no guarantees of a long, loving and peaceful existence. America has told them to see themselves through a very specific racial lens. They realize how often America sends a message into the world that makes Black people the enemy instead of the friend. Not just the enemy of the world, but enemies of each other.

*Continued, next page*

### Inside This Issue

Producer's Circle	2
Movement as Ritual	2
The Power of You	3
What I Did This Summer	4
Safety Policy Update	5
Heritage Pride Strength	7



The young men try to be supportive of each other. This is something they see as the opposite of the messaging America sends them regularly. As they get to know more about their current circumstances, they reminisce on their lived experiences and the way life feels like a game. A game that is rigged and guarantees they will lose.



## THE GAME OF LIFE

The game plays out in different ways for each character, but the ending of the game is the same. They did nothing wrong other than being born into a segment of American society that is devalued. Their lives and that of their friends and families are exposed to the audience, to America, in a way that makes the audience question what they think they know about the experiences of Black men and boys. The conversations among the three men and the teenage boy spiral around from talking to each other, to asking the audience questions, to teaching the audience through song and dance.

The characters in *KILL MOVE PARADISE* try really hard to understand what the future holds for them and the long list of their peers on the outside, still living. What will be their futures? Will they join the list? Will their stories, like that of Sylville Smith, mean something in the long-term or simply be a story that dies in the abyss of American race rela-

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tions? For those interested in knowing more about the voices of the unheard in America's racial caste, *KILL MOVE PARADISE* opens up a way to explore those stories.

**Reggie Jackson** is a nationally heralded independent scholar and much sought-after speaker, researcher, writer, and consultant to the media on race relations. He helps institutions and individuals understand how our country's racial hierarchy developed historically, its impact on our lives today, and how we can realize America's promise for all its citizens. Reggie shares seldom-told stories and data about the experiences of African-Americans and other peoples of color past and present.

## MOVEMENT AS RITUAL

by Marti Gobel, Director, KILL MOVE PARADISE

The African American race can trace its very survival to the execution of movement. We as a people have used movement to go forward and do better for ourselves and for the generations to follow: the Great Migration, dance, political and social marches for freedom, and most recently movement to demonstrate that we will not be forced to NOT move toward a better existence. Movement has served as the ritualistic provision of solutions for social problems, as well as to express the central values of our culture.

In all the shows I have had the honor to direct, I implement the natural ritualistic need to full-body express emotions such as pride, pain, anger, and in the case of *KILL MOVE PARADISE* by James Ijames, transcendence. This remarkable play offers a landscape of the African American existence that is dependent on movement. It is an unconscious ritual to which we were born as African Americans. Even when the ritual of passing from one existence to another is prematurely aborted, still we move with our whole selves. It is a beautiful tradition that I share with my people. It is a tradition that is unstoppable, un-outwittable and often underestimated. Perhaps, the most important but oft overlooked phenomenon of this movement is that it is executed with joy... With hope... With love of self.

## THE POWER OF YOU

*by Jane Flieller, Development Director*

Maybe you don't know what your support of Next Act accomplishes. The play's the thing, of course, but what about the ripple effect? The many ways a play can touch a person? When you buy a ticket, bring a friend, make a donation – the play goes on. And with it comes joy, questions, insight, discussion, enlightenment. The power of you is what makes live theatre powerful.

*"My friend and I watched Red Herring last night and were enthralled. All the actors were brilliant – and amazingly versatile. Their vibrance and warmth filled our evening with light. We sailed home, and the glow remains. Can't wait to see the next show."*

– Patron to *RED HERRING* (2021-2022)



*"Thank you so much for sharing the info. I'll make sure to fill the form out and start booking some matinees. The students are clamoring for live theatre and we can't wait to visit."*

- High School Teacher

## QUESTION & ANSWER

*"STUDENT: What about the play is universal and what is uniquely an African-American experience?"*

*“CAST MEMBER: Universally, it’s about two parents trying to do what’s right for their child. As an African-American, you carry the burden of never being allowed a bad day; of being on alert all the time; never being sure when you leave for work or school that you will come home.”*

- From a Talkback with High School Students to the Play, *PIPELINE* (2021-2022)



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### DID YOU KNOW?

When you make a contribution, your name is listed in our playbill (unless you ask for it not to be). But did you know you can make a gift in honor, memory or congratulations to someone? For example, Joe Smith [in honor of Jane Doe], Joe Smith [in memory of Jane Doe] or Joe Smith [for Jane Doe on her nuptials].





**Whew! The summer just flew by.** While we still had some rental shows in our space, the lack of any Next Act productions gave the staff some free time – here’s how we stayed busy during the dog days of summer.



**Jane Flieller, Development Director:** Jane started her summer with Bravo, Next Act’s annual fundraiser, back in person after a two-year pause. She then spent a whirlwind weekend in New York City to celebrate a milestone birthday followed by wiling away many hours catching up on an ever-growing queue of books.



**Libby Amato, Administrative Coordinator:** This summer Libby bought a new house! And then spent all her free time on house and yard projects – and loved every minute of it.

**A.J. Magoon, Marketing Director:** When he wasn’t at Next Act, A.J. spent his summer overseeing Summit Players Theatre’s tour of *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING* performances and workshops in the Wisconsin state parks. A new homeowner, he also tried his hand at gardening and took lots of walks with his dog, Boomer.

**Jessica Connelly, Stage Manager:** In between puttering in her garden and snuggling her puppies, Jessica was able to squeeze a few live concerts and some great road trips with her husband and her Mother. But after her very busy 21-22 season, she also just relaxed.

**Tom Darrow, Administrative Volunteer:** This summer Tom relaxed on the new deck and spent more time with his cat Belle. After his grandchildren came for a week’s visit in July, he joined his fellow Quakers in raising money for an asylum family by selling reusable “paper” towels. He and Michael managed to travel to western Wisconsin to spend time with friends after enjoying one of their favorite events–Irish Fest.

**Malaina Moore, Community Liaison:** Malaina kicked off this summer with an amazing birthday weekend with some of her closest friends. Another highlight was seeing T-Pain at the Rave and 2 Chainz at Summerfest. She was also able to visit Washington D.C for the first time ever as she sent her very best friend off to Howard University School of Law! She also produced two pieces for the Milwaukee Black Theatre Festival, curating a program for Youth and Family Night and directing a remount of her first-ever produced show, *THIS JUST IN*.

**David Cecsarini, Producing Artistic Director:** David has been pretty much camped out at good ol’ Next Act on a very regular basis, with two notable exceptions: he and his wife Deborah took a quick driving sprint out east to celebrate his mom’s 98th birthday in late July. The miles allowed them time to appreciate (and frankly, for him to learn about) two brash and bold comedians: Dave Chappelle and Hannah Gadsby. Outlandishly, furiously funny. His other outing was spent around the house one weekend tending to a cluster of projects which brought satisfaction. His high bar for success is expressed in this pithy phrase, “Well, it’s better than it was.”



**COVID-19 continues to spread** in our community, and our first priority is once again making sure Next Act is a safe place for all to gather and enjoy live theatre.

- **During the 22-23 season, masks will be required at Next Act Theatre if the CDC COVID-19 level for Milwaukee County is High (Red) or Medium (Yellow). If the level is Low (Green), masks will be optional.**
  - We’ll keep you posted about the current CDC level in our pre-show reminder emails and with signage in the lobby at Next Act. You can also check on the CDC website. Masks will be available in case you forget yours!
  - Should it become necessary to institute new or different policies as the season progresses, we will keep you updated. We appreciate your help keeping Next Act a safe place.

Read on if you’d like a little more detail about our COVID safety policy:

Throughout our entire 2021-22 season, our patrons were a driving force of health and safety at Next Act Theatre. When it was time to return to the theatre in-person, you did so safely, vaccinated and masked, supporting our efforts to protect audiences, staff and artists. Thanks to you, we only had to cancel two performances in 21-22, not even two percent of last season’s shows.

When we closed the 2021-22 season last May, we had hoped to relax all of our safety policies for the 2022-23 season. Unfortunately, COVID-19 continues to be significant, so we need to make sure everyone feels safe and comfortable at Next Act. As we saw last season, if our actors test positive for COVID, we could lose more performances, so having safe-

ty policies in place helps protect you and prevent show cancellations.

**Our mask policy, stated above, is based on the CDC COVID-19 Community Transmission Level for Milwaukee County.** This is a metric assigned to all counties in the United States by the CDC based on data like new weekly cases, new hospital admissions and the percentage of hospital beds used by patients with COVID-19.

We will be returning to full-capacity seating this season, allowing larger audiences to once again join us in conversation, exploration and understanding. Next Act installed an enhanced air filtration system in 2020, and we strongly believe in its ability to make our space safe. Even when masks are mandatory in our space, we’ll be allowing drinks back into the theatre, though we ask patrons to be respectful and careful about masking back up when not drinking.

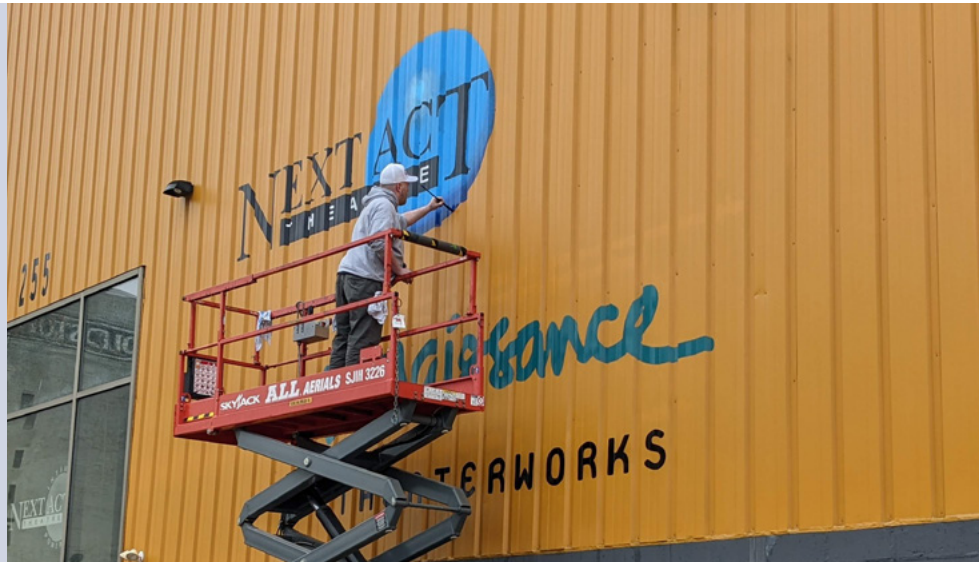
**Thank you again for what you’ve already done to help us safely return to live theatre.** We look forward to both entertaining and challenging you with our productions, and doing so with everyone’s health in mind. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at [info@nextact.org](mailto:info@nextact.org) or (414) 278-7780.

**COME USHER AT NEXT ACT!** Next Act Theatre is looking for volunteer ushers for our 2022-23 season. Next Act volunteers have many opportunities to choose from. They provide ushering service for all Next Act productions, as well as for season performances by Renaissance Theatreworks and presentations by other groups who rent the performance space. The support of our volunteers is invaluable! To sign up, visit our website, email [boxoffice@nextact.org](mailto:boxoffice@nextact.org) or call 414-278-0765.



## Look at Those Logos!

If you passed by Next Act Theatre over the summer, you may have noticed a new addition to the front of our building. The South Water Street side of our building now sports the Next Act and Renaissance Theaterworks logos! Thanks to Adam Nilson and son of Nilson Studio for this new look.



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The How and  
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by Sarah Treem

Science, family, and survival of the fittest.

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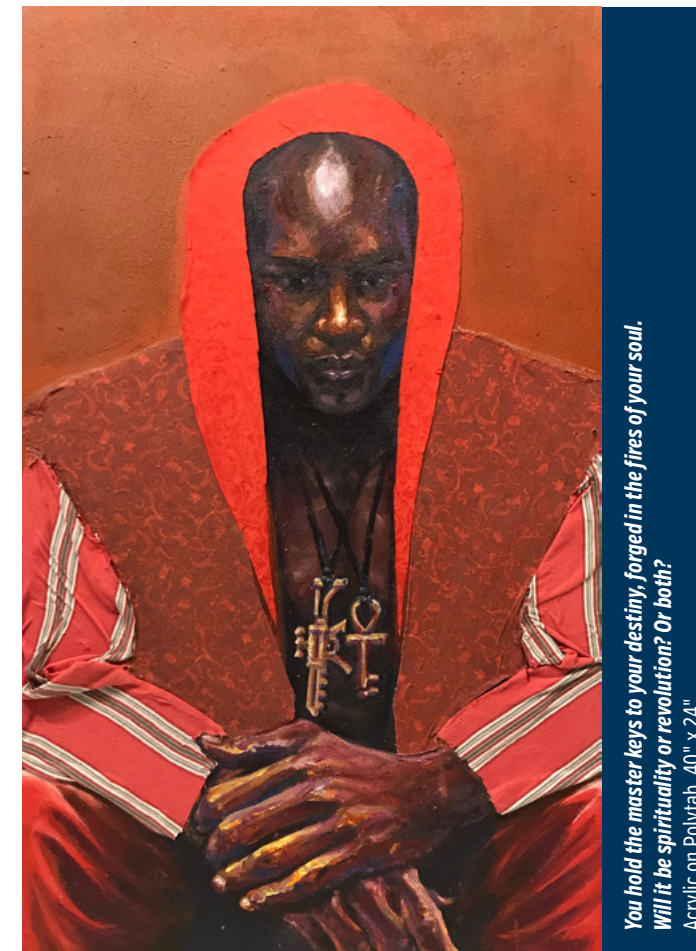
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## HERITAGE PRIDE STRENGTH the Portraits of Ras' Ammar Nsoroma

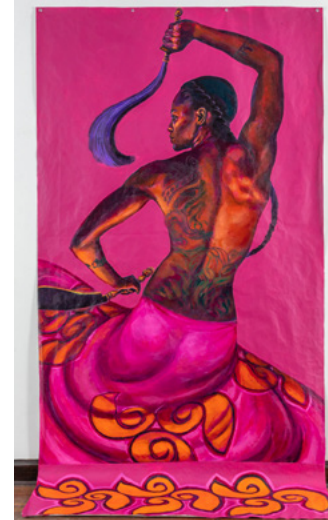
Curated by James Toth

**We Are Thrilled** to be able to feature the artwork of Milwaukee artist Ras' Ammar Nsoroma. His vibrant, energetic portraits represent just one aspect of his work as a muralist and mixed media painter. In 2000, two of his murals were nominated for inclusion in the book, *Walls of Heritage, Walls of Pride: African American Murals*. In 2019, he was honored as a Nohl Fellow and in 2020 he was named a Milwaukee Arts Board Artist of the Year. He has painted more than forty murals, including pieces in Chicago, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. as well as many in Milwaukee.

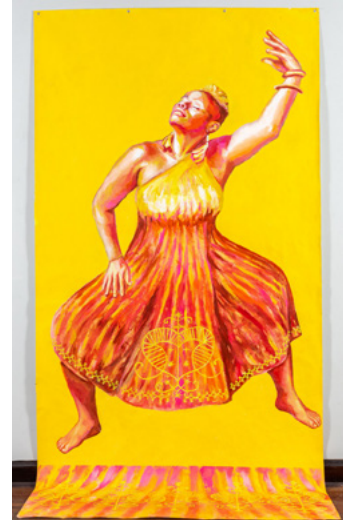
Ras' Ammar, a Milwaukee native, graduated from the Milwaukee High School of the Arts in 1985 and continued his studies at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design and at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work centers around the spiritual, cultural and political consciousness of the African Diaspora. In it he captures the strength and pride of his subjects through a bold use of color and collaged materials. Working large, his pieces have an undeniable presence that require an in-person viewing to fully appreciate. I am pleased we will be able to provide just that for those coming to see *KILL MOVE PARADISE* by James Ijames.



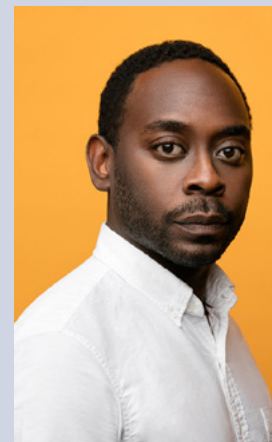
You hold the master keys to your destiny, forged in the fires of your soul.  
Will it be spirituality or revolution? Or both?  
Acrylic on Polytab, 40" x 24"



**Oya with Dragon Tattoo**  
Acrylic on Polytab, 10' x 5'



**Oshun in Power Dance**  
Acrylic on Polytab, 10' x 5'



## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

*KILL MOVE PARADISE* author James Ijames is a playwright, director and educator. He has received many accolades, including the 2015 Terrance McNally New Play Award for *WHITE*, the 2015 Kesselring Honorable Mention Prize for *...MIZ MARTHA*, a 2017 Whiting Award, a 2019 Kesselring Prize for *KILL MOVE PARADISE*, a 2020 Steinberg Prize and the 2022 Pulitzer Prize in Drama for *FAT HAM*.

Regarding his last name, Ijames states: "It's pronounced 'I'ms.' The J is silent. I'm not really sure [how that happened]! I have a friend who's into surnames, and he said it's Welsh and means 'of James.' I'm a junior, so that works for me."

For more information about Ras' Ammar Nsoroma, including in-depth interviews, please visit:



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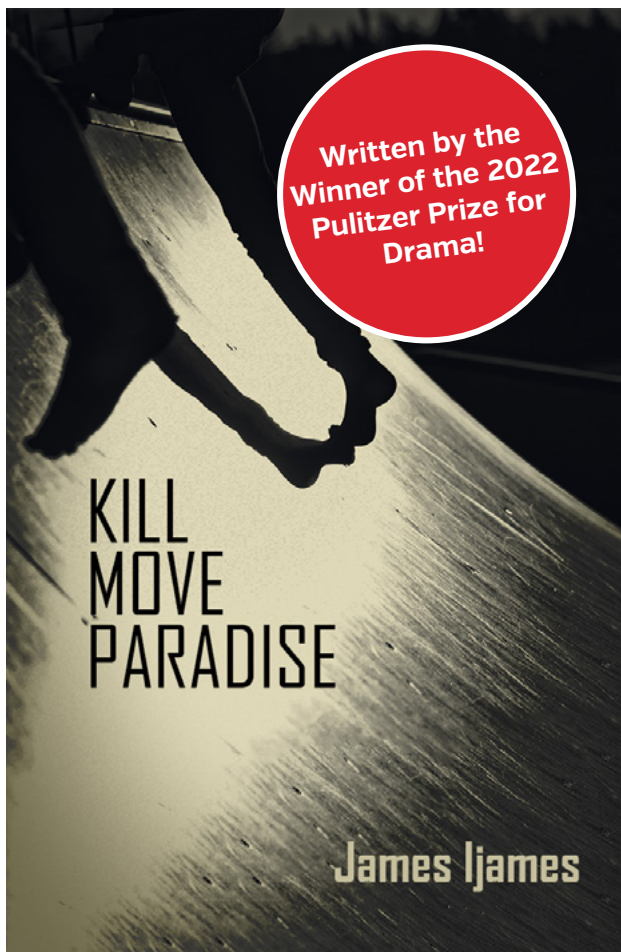


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In a space somewhere between past and future, between now and nowhere, four Black men meet. Isa, Daz, Grif and Tiny have been torn from the lives they knew and thrust into limbo, just to find out they are four more names on an ever-growing list. Trapped in uncertainty, their search for meaning evolves into an electrifying fusion of words, movement, combat, music, dance and play that express both profound grief and radical joy. Far from merely cold statistics of slain Black men and women, James Ijames sketches moving portraits of vibrant lives cut short.

SEPTEMBER 22 – OCTOBER 16, 2022						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				22 Preview 7:30	23 Opening 7:30	24 4:30 8:00
25 2:00			28 1:30 7:30	29 7:30	30 7:30	1 4:30
2 2:00			5 1:30 7:30	6 7:30	7 7:30	8 4:30 8:00
9 2:00	10 7:30		12 7:30	13 7:30	14 7:30	15 4:30 8:00
16 2:00	Personal Preview (Begins 30 minutes prior to curtain) Talkback Sunday Night Insights Pay What You Can					

**Directed by:** Marti Gobel

**Featuring:** Marques Causey, Ibraheem Farmer, Dimonte Henning and Joseph Brown Jr.

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