



For Immediate Release

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Eye of the Storm: The Bayard Rustin Story
Opening February 9- March 11, 2018 eta Creative Arts Foundation
7558 S. South Chicago Ave.

Chicago-(January 10, 2018))-eta Creative Arts Foundation presents the musical production, *Eye of the Storm*, by McKinley Johnson chronicling the life of Bayard Rustin, a largely forgotten but immensely influential civil rights leader. Rustin was an African American political strategist who championed the rights of others while being denied his own because of his homosexual identity, which was highly controversial during his time.

McKinley Johnson's portrayal of Rustin is a moving commentary on identity politics that is particularly important to share during this time of heightened political tensions, especially around race and gender. McKinley believes, "*Musicals have a way of touching people and getting them to listen to a story or point of view in a way they might not be open to...I'm hoping the music helps people to embrace the story of Bayard Rustin and not overlook his contributions, which really built the foundation of the rights we have and the way we're able to live.*"

"The audience is a "fly on the wall" in this revelatory musical that explores comradery, rivalry and bias among America's leading civil rights icons. Heroic Bayard, a genius political strategist of his time, is ridiculed and persecuted for being gay." Producing Artistic Director, Kemati J. Porter.

It opens Friday, February 9, 2018 and will run through March 11, 2018 at eta Creative Arts Foundation, 7558 S. South Chicago Ave. Show times are Fridays and Saturdays at 8pm, and Sundays at 3 pm (7pm when booked). General Admission is \$40 with reduced rates for seniors, students and groups. To purchase tickets and inquire additional information on Group Sales, call 773-752-3955 or visit www.etacreativearts.org.

Eye of the Storm: A Contemporary Conversation on Race, Sexuality and Politics 2018 is the topic of a joint panel scheduled with the University of Chicago Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture and eta Creative Arts Foundation on Saturday, February 10 at 6:30 pm with the playwright, social justice leaders and scholars from Chicago.

Eye features **Marc A. Rogers** (Rev. Adam Clayton Powell), **Gregory “Henri” Slater** (Roy Wilkins), **Jacob McCoy** (Walter Nagle), **Donald Fitzdarryl** (Bayard Rustin), **Renardo Johnson** (A. Philip Randolph) and **Lawrice Flowers** (Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.). Musical director Todd Lundy, Costume design Rebecca Duff, Scenic design Dennis Mae, Light design Darryl Goodman.



MCKINLEY JOHNSON (Playwright/Director) is a Playwright in Residence at Open Door as well as an Artistic Associate. *Eye of the Storm*, was first produced at Open Door in 2009 His recent credits include: adaptation of *Black Nativity* for Congo Square Theatre, 2011 production at The Goodman Theatre; a commission from Steppenwolf Theatre as a composer for *Harriet Jacobs* for The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC and as the Music Director for its Chicago production. He is a Jeff Award nominee for *Being Beautiful* (outstanding new work). His play *Georgia Tom* at the Bailiwick Theater received a Jeff Recommendation. He has received Black Theater Alliance Awards for *Train Is Comin'* (Best Musical), and *Being Beautiful* (Best Performance and Best Play). Both were produced at The Chicago Theatre Company. He is the recipient of an After Dark Award for Best Performance in a Musical for his performance in *Being Beautiful*. He is a full-time faculty member at Dominican University.



Bayard Rustin

BAYARD RUSTIN (1912-1987) Known as the “Architect of the March on Washington,” Bayard Rustin was a tireless crusader for civil rights in the nonviolent tradition of Mohandas Gandhi. Rustin initiated the Freedom Ride movement by leading 1947’s Journey of Reconciliation, and played an instrumental role in the organization of 1963’s Great March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. After the great legislative civil rights victories of the mid-1960s, he began to focus specifically on the financial problems of unemployed African Americans and working-class Americans in general. His later work with the A. Philip Randolph Institute tackled both racial and economic injustices, and he fought tirelessly for the civil rights of members of the gay community.

About eta Creative Arts Foundation

eta Creative Arts Foundation is a community-based arts institution that gives creative voice and narrative to the African American experience while equipping both youth and adults to continue this tradition through artistic and technical education. eta’s mission is to preserve and promulgate the African American aesthetic in the city of Chicago while promoting artistic and technical training in theater arts. Toward this end, we support and produce stage performances that advance valid and authentic representations of African American lifestyles, experiences, and aspirations. We have maintained a consistent and vital presence in cultural arts development in Chicago for over four decades.