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### Center for Performing Arts to host Chicago Race Riots-inspired musical

Office of Marketing and Communications  
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University Park, IL,  
March  
08,  
2022

# Center for Performing Arts to host Chicago Race Riots-inspired musical



[Governors State University's \(GSU\) Center for Performing Arts](#) invites the campus community to preview, RED SUMMER, a play which takes place during the Chicago Riots of 1919.

The event includes a staged musical number from the show (which will premiere on the Center's stage in September 2022); a panel comprising of the artistic team; facilitated conversations with educators and community organizers; and resources that go beyond conversation.

The protagonists of the drama are two WWI soldiers—one Black, one White—who return from the battlefields of Europe only to find themselves caught in the violence of a Chicago that is struggling to accommodate the Great Migration, the return of WWI veterans, a downturn in the economy, and long-standing ethnic tensions. Having fought on the same side in The Great War, they are now pitted against each other as their friends, family, and neighbors wage block-by-block warfare, and the city's ethnic enclaves rage and burn.

Today, more than 100 years later, the same issues simmer and smolder in every metropolitan area in the country.

Playwrights Shepsu Aakhu and Andy White have been friends and colleagues in the Chicago theatre scene for more than 30 years. They sought an opportunity to collaborate but had not found the right project until 2017. It was then that Aakhu and

White began co-writing RED SUMMER as a response to America's continued racial divisions.

Shepsu Aakhu is a prolific African-American playwright and founder of MPAACT (Ma'at Production Association of Afrikan Centered Theatre). He has written many plays chronicling the Black perspective of growing up in Chicago. Several of these plays have been presented at the Center in seasons past including Speaking in Tongues: The Chronicles of Babel, Tad in 5<sup>th</sup> City, and Starting Over. Andy White is a Jewish-American playwright, who has placed race relations at the heart of his writing as well.

Aakhu said:

“[The year] 2019 was the centennial of the ‘Red Summer,’ which earned its name due to the blood that ran freely in the streets of Chicago (and many other American cities). Yet these events are largely forgotten and unknown to the general populace—even to those who live in the cities in which they took fierce hold. As the saying goes, those who forget history are doomed to repeat it—and, arguably, one of the reasons racial conflicts continue to erupt in Chicago (and in every other urban metropolis in America) is because we choose to bury this history rather than look at it and understand it. This story must be told because it sheds light on a chapter of our shared history that is too often overlooked, in the hope that an honest look at our past will make it possible to have a clearer vision of our future.”

For more information or to reserve your spot, visit [www.govt.edu/RedSummer](http://www.govt.edu/RedSummer)

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### **PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE AND TICKET INFORMATION**

Beyond Conversation: *Red Summer*

Saturday, March 26, 2022

1–2:30 p.m. Center for Performing Arts

- Performance Sneak Peek
- Panelists and Q&A with creative team

2:30 p.m. Hall of Governors

- Refreshments
- Facilitated Conversations
- Resources

Governors State University, Center for Performing Arts 1 University Parkway University Park, IL 60484

*\*Tickets are free but reservations are required. To reserve your seat, visit [www.govst.edu/RedSummer](http://www.govst.edu/RedSummer).*