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312.443.5151 or [Press@GoodmanTheatre.org](mailto:Press@GoodmanTheatre.org) **April 28, 2025**

IMAGES: [Press Room](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/3enhkdrf232tzzaij7dol/AKkQxFQgNDdtzdJq-Bg2JgM?rlkey=yxtp1f6hak0vgp0m9esne5rvo&st=1gwtxl7f&dl=0)

***BUST* BY PULTIZER PRIZE FINALIST ZORA HOWARD, DIRECTED BY LILEANA BLAIN-CRUZ, OPENS TONIGHT!**

**\*\***[**NEW PHOTOS AND VIDEO**](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/3enhkdrf232tzzaij7dol/h?rlkey=co9q08y952ok490mjqw5kftsx&st=8x68t7em&dl=0) **ARE NOW AVAILABLE FOR THE WORLD-PREMIERE CO-PRO WITH ALLIANCE THEATRE,**

**PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH SONIA FRIEDMAN PRODUCTIONS, KHALIAH NEAL AND THOMAS SWAYNE\*\***

**\*\*\*SPECIAL EVENTS AROUND THE PRODUCTION INCLUDE BLACK AFFINITY NIGHT (MAY 9) AND MORE\*\*\***

(Chicago, IL) Pulitzer Prize finalist playwright **Zora** **Howard**’s groundbreaking, laugh-out-loud new drama, *BUST*, directed by **Lileana Blain-Cruz**, opens tonight. A finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, co-produced with Atlanta’s Alliance Theatre and produced in association with Sonia Friedman Productions, Khaliah Neal and Thomas Swayne, the cast for the world-premiere production features **Mark Bedard**, **Cecil Blutcher**, **Caroline Clay**, **Bernard Gilbert**, **Caitlin Hargraves**, **Jorge Luna**, **Victoria Omoregie**, **Keith Randolph Smith**, **Raymond** **Anthony Thomas**, **Ivan Cecil Walks** and **Renika Williams-Blutcher**. A full cast list appears below, along with a list of special events around the production--including Black Affinity Night on May 9. New photos and video, [accessible here,](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/3enhkdrf232tzzaij7dol/h?rlkey=co9q08y952ok490mjqw5kftsx&st=r2hjnkx1&dl=0) are now available for the production. *BUST* appears through May 18 in the Goodman’s 856-seat Albert Theatre. Tickets ($25 - $85; subject to change) are available at GoodmanTheatre.org/Bust or by phone at 312.443.3800. Goodman Theatre is grateful for the support of Allstate (Major Corporate Sponsor), the BOLD Theater’s Women’s Leadership Circle, an initiative of the Helen Gurley Brown Foundation (BOLD Ventures Grant), Laurents/Hatcher Foundation (Theater Development Grant), WBEZ Chicago (Media Sponsor) and The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust (Lead Funder of IDEAA Programming).

"At its core, BUST is a meditation on rage," said playwright **Zora Howard**. "It asks, 'What if Black people could use the rage that we carry, with which we are in such constant and intimate relationship, for our own constructive and collective gain?' It is an offering—an invitation for all of us to consider how we might harness our rage, what we can move with it.”

Added Director **Lileana Blain-Cruz**, “There’s a real invitation at the center of this play to experience something new, to be part of a radical act of imagination. In BUST, the audience has the opportunity to recognize themselves in these characters. We get to simultaneously live inside their humanity and the absurdity of what it means to be alive in the world today.”

It’s not only hell that breaks loose in Ms. Howard’s form-defying new drama.Retta and Reggie are enjoying a quiet evening on the porch when their neighbor is pulled over by the police. Everything goes as you might expect—until the unexpected happens. A recording of the event goes viral, sending everyone into a frenzy in this riotous, “daring and experimental” (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*) new play exploring where we can go when pushed to the limits of our rage.

“BUST is absolutely unlike anything I’ve ever seen on a stage before. In one sit-down at the theater, this thrilling new play ranges from high comedy to transcendent drama—beginning in ways that feel familiar and moving to whole new worlds. Zora Howard’s masterful writing is in gifted hands with Lileana Blain-Cruz, one of the most sought-after directors working today,” said Artistic Director **Susan V. Booth**.

The *BUST* castfeatures **Mark Bedard** (*TV/HBO Max: The Gilded Age*) as Tomlin/Jack, **Cecil Blutcher** (*TV/Paramount+: The Game, Signature Theatre Co.: The Hot Wing King*) as Trent, **Renika Williams-Blutcher** (*Starz: P-Valley*) as Krystal, **Caroline Stefanie Clay** (*Broadway: The Little Foxes* and *Doubt*) as Retta, **Bernard Gilbert** (*TV/Showtime: The Chi, Goodman Theatre: How to Catch Creation*) as Zeke, **Caitlin Hargraves** (*Alliance Theatre: A Christmas Carol, TV/HBO Max: Mi Casa*) as Ms. Pinto, **Jorge Luna** (*TV/Netflix: Zero Day*) as Ramirez, **Victoria Omoregie** (*Alliance Theatre: Fat Ham, The Huntington Theatre: John Proctor is the Villain*) as Paige, **Keith Randolph Smith** (*Film: Malcolm X, Alliance Theatre: God of Carnage, National Theatre, London: Jitney*) as Mr. Woods, **Ray Anthony Thomas** (*Film: American Fiction, The Harbinger* and *Pariah*) as Reggie,and **Ivan Cecil Walks** *(The Huntington Theatre: K-I-S-S-I-N-G)*as Boobie. Understudies include **Jodi Gage**, **Cory Hardin**, **Gabrielle Lott-Rogers**, **Vernon Mina**, **Patrick Newson, Jr.**, **Joseph Primes** and **Jazzy Rush**.

**SPECIAL EVENTS FOR *BUST***

***Play On Words: A Conversation with Poet Michael Dean***

**Friday, May 2 | 6 – 7:15pm; $5 ticket includes light refreshments with wine hosted by Doña Amalia**

Meet up-and-coming poet Michael Dean, who will share their poetic response to *BUST*. As the poet takes us on a journey through their personal history and writing process, join a conversation that explores possibility and the artistic experience. Reservations are required.

**Black Affinity Night**

**Friday, May 9 | 6pm Reception, featuring a Q&A with Artists of BUST; 7:30pm Performance**

Celebrate Black excellence with local Chicago creatives in an evening of connection and celebration. Mingle with fellow art and culture enthusiasts in a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere. Meet and connect with local artists, performers, and cultural advocates while enjoying meaningful conversations.

**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**[**LEARN MORE**](https://www.goodmantheatre.org/event/play-on-words-conversation-with-the-poet/)

**Zora Howard** (Playwright) is a Harlem-bred writer and director. Plays include *STEW* (2021 Pulitzer Prize Finalist; P73 Productions), *THE MASTER’S TOOLS* (Wiener Festwochen; WTF), *HANG TIME* (The Flea), *THE MOTIONS*, and *GOOD FAITH*. Her work has been developed at Ojai Playwrights Conference, Stillwright, Mercury Store, and Cape Cod Theatre Project, among others. In 2020, her feature film Premature, which she co-wrote with director Rashaad Ernesto Green, opened in theaters following its world premiere at the 2019 Sundance Film Festival. Howard is a Lilly Award and Helen Merrill Award recipient, a former MTC Judith Champion Fellow and Lark Van Lier New Voices Fellow and alumna of the P73 I-73 Writers Group. She is currently under commission from Seattle Rep and Chautauqua Theatre Company. [zoramakes.com.](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fzoramakes.com%2F&data=05%7C02%7CDeniseSchneider%40goodmantheatre.org%7C023a6cfecf4d4edac2db08dd62eb9df4%7C8305ef74c2704cdb9f2107217cc0965a%7C0%7C0%7C638775486325628461%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BI4JE9762FWRgjQ9mnAbz8YwFfYkPs%2B9BEmTNw4esFc%3D&reserved=0)

**Lileana Blain-Cruz**is a director from New York City and Miami. She is the recipient of the Drama League’s 2022 Founders Award for Excellence in Directing and is currently the resident director of Lincoln Center Theater. Blain-Cruz was named a 2021 Doris Duke Artist, a 2020 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist, and a 2018 United States Artists Fellow. Recent projects include: *El Niño* (Metropolitan Opera); *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Lincoln Center, Tony nomination); *Stranger Love* (LA Philharmonic); Flex (Lincoln Center, Audelco Award Nomination); *Create Dangerously* (Miami New Drama); White Girl in Danger (Vineyard / Second Stage); *The Listeners* (Opera Norway); *Dreaming Zenzile* (NYTW/National Black Theatre); *Marys Seacole* (LCT3, Obie Award); *Wayne Shorter and esperanza spalding’s …(Iphigenia)*(MASS MoCA, Arts Emerson, The Kennedy Center); *Hansel and Gretel* (a film for Houston Grand Opera); *Afrofemononomy*(PSNY); *Anatomy of a Suicide*(Atlantic Theater Company); *Fefu and Her Friends* (TFANA); *Girls* (Yale Rep.); *Faust*(Opera Omaha); *Fabulation, Or the Reeducation of Undine*(Signature Theatre); *Thunderbodies and Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again.* (Soho Rep.); *The House That Will Not Stand* and *Red Speedo* (New York Theatre Workshop); *Water by the Spoonful*(Mark Taper Forum/CTG); *Pipeline* (Lincoln Center); *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World AKA The Negro Book of the Dead*(Signature Theatre, Obie Award); *Henry IV, Part One* and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *The Bluest Eye*(The Guthrie); *War*(LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater and Yale Rep.); *Salome* (JACK); *Hollow Roots* (Under the Radar Festival at The Public Theater). Upcoming: *Purple Rain*.

**Full Company of *BUST*** (in alphabetical order)

By Zora Howard

Directed by Lileana Blain-Cruz

**Mark Bedard**…Tomlin/Jack  
**Cecil Butcher**…Trent  
**Caroline Clay**…Retta  
**Bernard Gilbert**…Zeke  
**Caitlin Hargraves**…Ms. Pinto/Newscaster  
**Jorge Luna**…Ramirez  
**Victoria Omoregie**…Paige  
**Keith Randolph Smith**…Mr. Woods  
**Raymond Anthony Thomas**…Reggie  
**Ivan Cecil Walks…**Boobie  
**Renika Williams-Blutcher**…Krystal  
  
Understudies for this production include **Jodi Gage**, **Cory Hardin**, **Gabrielle Lott-Rogers**, **Vernon Mina**, **Patrick Newson, Jr.**, **Joseph Primes** and **Jazzy Rush**.

**Creative Team**

Associate Director…**Malkia Stampley**

Set Designer…**Matthew Saunders**

Costume Designer…**Dominique Fawn Hill**

Lighting Designer…**Yi Zhao**Associate Lighting Designer…**Jonah Bobilin**

Sound Designer…**Mikaal Sulaiman**  
Ethnomusicologist…**DJ Reborn**  
Special Effects Designer...**Jeremy Chernick**  
Fight Choreographer...**Rocio Mendez**

Casting is by **Jody Feldman**, CSA and **Lauren Port**, CSA. **shiku thuo** is the Production Stage Manager.

**ENHANCED AND ACCESSIBLE PERFORMANCES AT GOODMAN THEATRE**

**ASL-Interpreted Performance: Friday, May 9 at 7:30pm**– Professional ASL interpreter signs the action/text as played.

**Touch Tour\* and Audio-Described Performance: Saturday, May 10, 12:30pm Touch Tour; 2pm performance**– The action/text is audibly enhanced for patrons via headset.

**Spanish-Subtitled Performance: Saturday, May 10 at 7:30pm**– An LED sign presents Spanish-translated dialogue in sync with the performance.

**Open-Captioned Performance: Sunday, May 11 at 2pm**– An LED sign presents dialogue in sync with the performance.  
  
*Visit Goodman theatre.org/Access for more information about Goodman Theatre’s accessibility efforts.*

**ABOUT ALLIANCE THEATRE**

Founded in 1968, Alliance Theatre is the leading producing theater in the Southeast, reaching more than 165,000 patrons annually. The Alliance is led by Jennings Hertz Artistic Directors Tinashe Kajese-Bolden and Christopher Moses and Managing Director Mike Schleifer. The Alliance is a recipient of the Regional Theatre Tony Award® for sustained excellence in programming, education, and community engagement. In January 2019, the Alliance opened its new, state-of-the-art performance space, The Coca-Cola Stage at Alliance Theatre. Known for its high artistic standards and national role in creating significant theatrical works, the Alliance has premiered more than 140 productions including eleven that have transferred to Broadway. The Alliance education department reaches more than 90,000 students annually through performances, classes, camps, and in-school initiatives designed to support teachers and enhance student learning. The Alliance Theatre values community, curiosity, collaboration, and excellence, and is dedicated to representing Atlanta's diverse community with the stories we tell, the artists, staff, and leadership we employ, and audiences we serve. [www.alliancetheatre.org](http://www.alliancetheatre.org/)

**ABOUT GOODMAN THEATRE**

Chicago’s theater since 1925, **Goodman Theatre** is a not-for-profit arts and community organization in the heart of the Loop, distinguished by the excellence and scope of its artistic programming and community engagement. Led by Walter Artistic Director **Susan V. Booth** and Executive Director **John Collins**, the theater’s artistic priorities include new play development (more than 150 world or American premieres), large scale musical theater works and reimagined classics. Artists and productions have earned two Pulitzer Prizes, 22 Tony Awards and more than 160 Jeff Awards, among other accolades.

The Goodman is the first theater in the world to produce all 10 plays in August Wilson’s “American Century Cycle.” Its longtime annual holiday tradition *A Christmas Carol*, now in its fifth decade, has created a new generation of theatergoers in Chicago. The Goodman also frequently serves as a production and program partner with national and international companies and Chicago’s Off-Loop theaters.

Using the tools of theatrical practice, the Goodman’s Education and Engagement programs aim to develop generations of citizens who understand and empathize with cultures and stories of diverse voices. The Goodman’s Alice Rapoport Center for Education and Engagement is the home of these programs, which are offered for Chicago youth—85% of whom come from underserved communities—schools and life-long learners.

Goodman Theatre was built on the unceded homelands of the Council of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi Nations. We recognize that many other Nations consider the area we now call Chicago as their traditional homeland—including the Myaamia, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Sac and Fox, Peoria, Kaskaskia, Wea, Kickapoo and Mascouten and remains home to many Native peoples today. The Goodman is proud to have a relationship with Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum. Located in Evanston, the Museum honors the survival and perseverance of Indigenous communities and promotes a greater understanding of Indigenous peoples: gichigamiin-museum.org.

Goodman Theatre was founded by William O. Goodman and his family in honor of their son Kenneth, an important figure in Chicago’s cultural renaissance in the early 1900s. The Goodman family’s legacy lives on through the continued work and dedication of Kenneth’s family, including Albert Ivar Goodman, who with his late mother, Edith-Marie Appleton, contributed the necessary funds for the creation on the new Goodman center in 2000.

**Julie Danis** is Chair of Goodman Theatre’s Board of Trustees, **Lorrayne Weiss** is Women’s Board President and **Kelli Garcia** is President of the Scenemakers Board for young professionals.

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