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**OBSIDIAN THEATRE ANNOUNCES FIRST MAJOR PROJECT UNDER NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
MUMBI TINDYEBWA OTU**

# 21 BLACK FUTURES

**21 playwrights, 21 directors, 21 actors  
21 visions of the future of Blackness**

**Monodramas written by Peace Akintade, Keshia Cheesman, Lisa Codrington, Miali-Elise Coley-Sudlovenick, K.P. Dennis, Cheryl Foggo, Shauntay Grant, Lawrence Hill, Kaie Kellough, Stephie Mazunya, Tawiah Ben M'Carthy, Motion, Omari Newton, Amanda Parris, Joseph Jomo Pierre, Donna-Michelle St. Bernard, Jacob Sampson, Djanet Sears, Luke Reece, Cherissa Richards, and Syrus Marcus Ware**

Toronto ON – In the wake of a historic 2019-2020 season which saw the company produce three acclaimed productions, win the **Jon Kaplan Audience Choice Award** (*Passover*), **two Dora Awards** (*Caroline, Or Change*) and **four Toronto Theatre Critics Awards** (*Caroline, Or Change* and *Pass Over*), as well as saying goodbye to long-time Artistic Director **Philip Akin** and welcoming incoming Artistic Director **Mumbi Tindyebwa Otu**, Obsidian Theatre is pleased to unveil the first programming to be developed under Tindyebwa Otu's leadership and to offer a window into the company's plans for the future.

At a unique moment in history, Black stories are needed more than ever. The necessity for the Black community to heal, to connect and to re-envision a future outside of current systems is raw, real, and fully felt.

As the company enters its 21<sup>st</sup> year of operations, in February 2021, during Black History Month, Obsidian Theatre will premiere **21 BLACK FUTURES**. An anthology of 21 filmed monodramas, commissioned from 21 multigenerational Black playwrights across the country, directed by 21 Black directors and performed by 21 Black actors. Premiering digitally, 21 BLACK FUTURES will respond to the question, "***What is the future of Blackness?***"

The 21 playwrights commissioned under the project are **Peace Akintade** (Saskatchewan), **Keshia Cheesman** (Calgary), **Lisa Codrington** (Toronto), **Miali-Elise Coley-Sudlovenick** (Nunavut), **K.P. Dennis** (Victoria), **Cheryl Foggo** (Calgary), **Shauntay Grant** (Halifax), **Lawrence Hill** (Hamilton), **Kaie Kellough** (Montreal), **Stephie Mazunya** (Montreal), **Tawiah Ben M'Carthy** (Toronto), **Motion** (Toronto), **Omari Newton** (Vancouver), **Amanda Parris** (Toronto), **Joseph Jomo Pierre** (Toronto), **Donna-Michelle St. Bernard** (Hamilton), **Jacob Sampson** (Halifax), **Djanet Sears** (Toronto), **Luke Reece** (Toronto), **Cherissa Richards** (Manitoba), and **Syrus Marcus Ware** (Toronto).

*“21 BLACK FUTURES encapsulates a lot of what I hope to develop and grow in this next phase of Obsidian Theatre,” says Tindyebwa Otu. “Under the previous visionary leadership of Alison Sealy-Smith and Philip Akin, Obsidian has a long-standing tradition of introducing new Black artists into the ecology. This project takes that tradition to a new level, making a large gesture that speaks to the work I want to continue to do with the company. As we continue forward, I want to reach out and find more new Black voices nationally, give them the support they need to grow and a wide-reaching platform on which they can be seen. I also want to create opportunities to experiment with content and form and to consider the possibility of a Black aesthetic.”*

*“With this one project we will be spotlighting the work of 63 Black artists from across this country - some of whom are part of Obsidian’s legacy and many who are part of our future. What I believe we will find within that wide and multi-generational range of artists is the beginning of an exploration into the diversity of the contemporary Black voice. It allows us to really lean into Black identity and explore what that means in the future. I hope what naturally flows from this project and this cultural moment is that we can continue to grow Obsidian’s capacity as an organization and flood the country with thriving Black theatre artists as diverse as our community is today.*

21 BLACK FUTURES is a project born of the current moment. Announced as the incoming Artistic Director for Obsidian in January of 2020, by the time Tindyebwa Otu began her tenure at the beginning of July, the coronavirus pandemic had effectively cancelled all forthcoming live theatre productions and a global outcry against anti-Black racism was at the forefront of cultural and political discussions. *“I felt an urgent need to respond to the moment we’re in and to create an opportunity for Black artists to respond.”* says Tindyebwa Otu.

Like many theatre companies, Obsidian Theatre had to postpone the final production of their 2019-2020 season - Jay Northcott directing Christina Anderson’s *Blacktop Sky* for the second installment of their Darktown Initiative. The company had also announced a season launching co-production with Canadian Stage of the 2019 Pulitzer prize-winning drama *Fairview* by Jackie Sibblies Drury, which was to have been directed by Shaw Festival Associate Artistic Director Kimberley Rampersad – now also postponed until live performance can resume. A planned remount of *School Girls; or the African Mean Girls Play* with Nightwood Theatre and Soulpepper Theatre has been cancelled.

In August the company co-produced *Black Magic – A Conversation with Black Artistic Directors in Canadian Theatre*, with Cahoots Theatre. *Black Magic* remains available for viewing [online](#).

As the pandemic continues to impact traditional theatrical production, for the next several months Obsidian will focus on the development and production of 21 BLACK FUTURES, workshopping the scripts through the fall in preparation for rehearsals and filming. **TO Live** has partnered with Obsidian on this project as the venue sponsor for the filming.

Additionally, Obsidian will continue development of the new Black opera *Of The Sea* by Kanika Ambrose and Ian Cusson, a co-commission and co-production with Tapestry Opera; new musical *Dixon Road* with book, music, and lyrics by Obsidian Artistic Producer Fatuma Adar, in collaboration with The Musical Stage Company; and new play *Blood and Memory* by Dainty Smith. Obsidian’s Playwright Unit will also continue this season featuring writers Leighton Alexander Williams and KayGeni.

More information about 21 BLACK FUTURES including the line-up of directors, cast, and streaming platform, will be announced later this year.

For more information about Obsidian Theatre, visit [obsidiantheatre.com](http://obsidiantheatre.com)

### **About Obsidian Theatre**

Obsidian is Canada's leading culturally specific theatre company. Our threefold mission is to produce plays, to develop playwrights and to train emerging theatre professionals. Obsidian is passionately dedicated to the exploration, development, and production of the Black voice. Obsidian produces plays from a world-wide canon focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on the works of highly acclaimed Black playwrights. Obsidian provides artistic support, promoting the development of work by Black theatre makers and offering training opportunities through mentoring and apprenticeship programs for emerging Black artists.

Obsidian Theatre Company was born out of a passionate sense of artistic responsibility – a responsibility to bring the Black voice, in its many artistic dialects, to Canada's cultural forefront. Obsidian encourages Black artists to expand their vision of what they perceive, create and present to a national audience. Obsidian continues to play a prominent role in Canada's theatrical mosaic by showcasing the work of both emerging and established Black artists.

Since its inception, our development programs have led many artists to expand their professional development and create new Canadian works. Through our training programs, we produce plays, develop playwrights and train emerging theatre professionals.