

*i used to be afraid of the dark  
but i wonder now*

*if i may be a bit too in love with it  
still i miss the light every once in a while  
their absence and presence complicate each other*

*where does one go when the other arrives*

*what if they shook hands*

*what if they hated each other*

*as much as i loved them*

*what if darkness got sunburned*

*what if light closed its eyes*

*what if they were really the same thing...*

THE DU PRISON ARTS INITIATIVE AND  
THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PRESENTS

*If light closed its eyes*

A VERBATIM DOCUMENTARY PLAY  
CREATED FROM 100 INTERVIEWS,  
EXPLORING SHARED HUMANITY  
AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
SYSTEM

*In a living eulogy*

*Simply hold the center in the spectrum of another human*

*There are stories to be told from behind the walls. What?*

*Can you tell me more about that?*

*Simply hold*

*In a living eulogy*

*Simply hold the center in the spectrum of another human*

*Simply hold the center in the spectrum of another human*

*Simply hold the center in the spectrum of another human*

*Simply hold the center in the spectrum of another human*

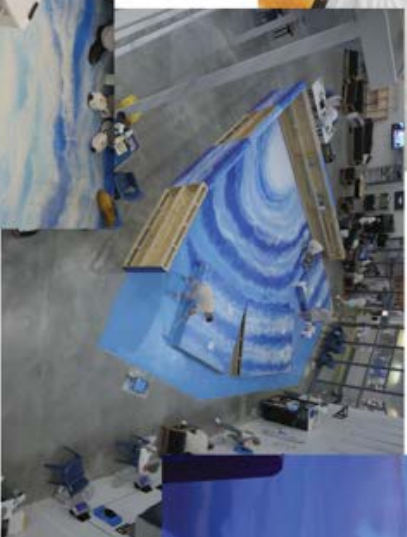
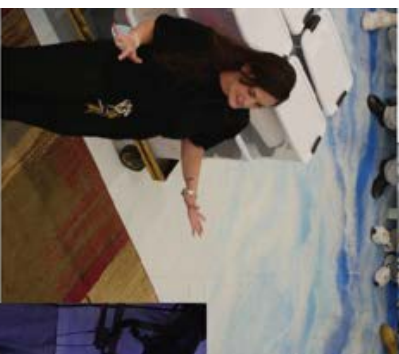
UNIVERSITY of DENVER  
COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES  
Prison Arts Initiative

IN A LIVING EULOGY  
JULY 20TH - JULY 30TH 2022  
IN UNIT 4 OF  
STERLING CORRECTIONAL FACILITY



"Lost" by Sullivan

Incarcerated at Sterling Correctional Facility  
 Chained Voices Fine Art Show 2022



*humanity* *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* *care*  
**I AM i am because you are**  
 BECAUSE' *community*  
 YOU ARE BECAUSE *community*  
 hope A Person YOU ARE BECAUSE *community*  
 is a Person YOU ARE *community*  
 through other *harmony* *systems*  
 Persons *forgiveness*

*community*  
*unity* *identity* *accountability*  
*kali kokha nkanyamas,*  
*tili awiri ntwanthu*





Ubuntu



In Africa there is a concept known as 'ubuntu' - the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievement of others.

-Nelson Mandela

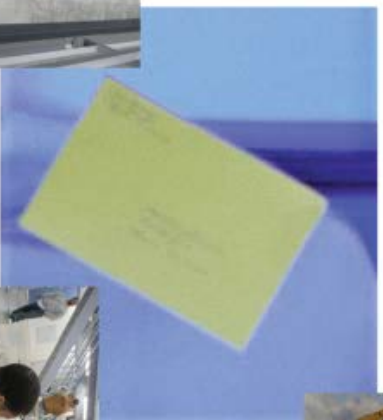


Table of Contents

Artistic Justice	5
Now Streaming	6
DU PAI Programming Platforms	6
Arts-Based Educational Workshops	7
If Light Closed Its Eyes	8
Director's Note	10
Dramaturgy Note	11
Cast & Crew	12
Special Thanks	14
Tribute	15
A Talk With a Hero - <i>from With(in)</i>	16
Behind the Scenes of If Light - <i>from Inside Wire</i>	17
A Note on Scripting - <i>from Inside Report</i>	18
Forever Changed - <i>from Reverberations</i>	19
Ubuntu	20

# University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative

The DU Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI) generates creative and collaborative learning experiences that enrich the lives of people who are incarcerated and shift the conversation about prison. As part of DU's commitment to the public good, our programming opens dialogue between incarcerated people and their communities. We empower individuals to see themselves as leaders capable of creating meaningful change, both inside prison systems and well beyond.

At the DU Prison Arts Initiative, we're dedicated to serving the public good.

- We provide therapeutic and educational creative arts programming to incarcerated people and their families in Colorado state prisons;
- We facilitate dialogue and storytelling between incarcerated people and their communities via exhibits, performances, media and commissioned works;
- We create caring communities for students characterized by learning, creative expression and authentic human connection; We deliver shared, arts-based learning experiences to incarcerated people, correctional staff and DU students;
- We engage leadership of incarcerated people in the development and delivery of programming;
- We offer training and consulting on the use of the arts to liberate people and transform spaces in correctional settings;
- We conduct rigorous research to examine the impact of the arts on personal and social narratives of crime, incarceration, harm and healing.

## CONTACT US

liberalarts.du.edu/prison-arts  
 prisonarts@du.edu  
 303-871-5241  
 DU Prison Arts Initiative  
 2135 East Wesley Avenue, Office 304  
 Denver, CO 80210



UNIVERSITY of DENVER

COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES  
 Prison Arts Initiative



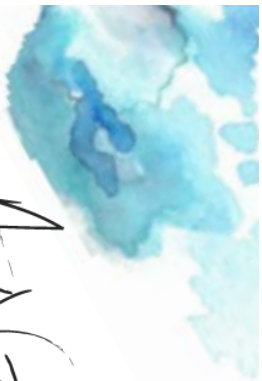
by Michel Aharonian

My life changed when I started working with a different part of my mind; the right side, the creative side. Over the past 3 years, I have taught myself to make artwork using different mediums such as: graphite and colored pencil, and air brush. By doing so, my perspective on daily life has evolved in an incredible way. I have found peace and comfort by challenging my mind and learning something new. I feel like the things I am creating from music to tangible art, resemble an expression and feeling, which I have learned is the true foundation of art.

Over time it has been easier for me to see the beauty in this world we live in. There is so much to be thankful for, that most of us take for granted. By learning to look at things from an artistic stand point, I will never again see daily life the same way. Constantly I am thinking about; composition, positive and negative shading and always wondering how I would attempt to recreate something I see in the world, expressing the true meaning of the saying "Art Imitates Life".



Jaguar: Stephen D. Armijo; Shakra Transcendental; Timothy Montoya/CSP; Aztec Warrior: Raul Chaver/SCF; Life: Joseph McGill/FCF; Drake: Ajtuel J. Flecks/FCF



# A Note on Scripting

by David Carillo

Scripts are copies of the text for plays or movies that define an individual character's role. In "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," Dr. Stephen Covey writes that we "live with many scripts that have been handed to us." However, unlike movie scripts, life roles are not always so clearly defined. That is, we on the inside have been scripted to believe that "this is the way it is" or "that is just how things are done around here," and my personal favorite, "this is prison." Our imaginations and beliefs begin to fill in the blank spaces with those ambiguous scripts, and this leads to confusion, frustration, misunderstandings, and, eventually, negative results.

As such, I define "scripting" as an individual's cultural paradigm, belief or expectations for the responsibilities that exist for a particular role. For example, if I believe that collective society believes that prison is supposed to be hard and dangerous, then my role must be of a hardened and dangerous man. As I begin to believe that this is what is expected and play this role out, I begin to do what hardened and dangerous men do. Eventually, people, and I, get hurt. Likewise, if a correctional officer (CO) believes that his or her coworkers believe that prison is a hard and dangerous place, that CO believes his or her role is to be hardened and to treat prisoners as if they are all hardened and dangerous. The CO then becomes abusive and oppressive, helping to ensure that prison becomes, and stays, a hard and dangerous place.

The good news is that those roles are not set in stone. In "The 7 Habits," Covey teaches that we can rescript those roles. We do not have to be defined by some twisted script that someone else wrote years ago. New expectations for a role's responsibilities can and must be rewritten — re-scripted. As a prisoner, I have the opportunity and the capability for becoming the best of anything I choose to use my additional free time for. A prisoner can be the greatest athlete; a prisoner can be the greatest philosopher; a prisoner can be the greatest legal mind - the script is limited only by our imaginations.



ARTISTIC JUSTICE IS A PRACTICE  
(A THEORY AND A PRACTICE) THAT  
STRIVES TO CREATE INDIVIDUAL  
AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION  
AND HEALING IN AND AROUND  
THE JUSTICE SYSTEM THROUGH  
STORYTELLING.

**Welcome to *If Light Closed Its Eyes*. This project has given us so much and as a result, we have so much we want to share with you. One of these gifts is the praxis of Artistic Justice. The creation process made evident what many of us, especially Dr. Ashley Hamilton, have known on an intuitive level for many, many years. It's a lot to cover, but here are a few thoughts. Stay tuned though, there's much more developing!**

Hello! It's an honor to be writing this little piece about a very huge thing. Welcome to Artistic Justice, this shared liminal space that is often unseen. Through the praxis of Artistic Justice we are venturing together through this ethereal veil. We are journeying to a place where we can be part of fixing a system. Where we can create community healing through intentional shared spaces that bring us together. Shared spaces that give us the gift to see each other as the complex human beings we are.

Let's pierce the veil together, heal together, practice the arts together, and create community together. Artistic Justice is transformational. Let's discover who we are, and how we can heal ourselves and this system. Together! Welcome!

Terry W. Mosley Jr.

DU PAI Artistic Development Team

I have seen first hand the impact of the DU Prison Arts Initiative group at Sterling Correctional Facility, and how it is dramatically influencing a cultural change in the criminal justice system through their work. This group of residents and DU staff have worked tirelessly, and shown true resilience during the pandemic to produce a product for their audience that is eye opening, mindset shifting, and of great quality for their audience. The adversity this team has been faced with, whether it being from the current pandemic, ever changing facility operations, or the exhausting task of challenging societal and prison norms, have proven to be no match for this team. They demonstrate great professionalism, tact, and steadfast empathy through their work.

Major Braden Piel

New Streaming



THESE WALLS is an original, short-film retrospective of Colorado's oldest prison, Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility. The film was devised, written, and performed by artists who were incarcerated there during the facility's 150th year. The film draws from historical accounts and contemporary personal narratives in order to investigate one man's search for humanity through an unexpected correspondence within the walls of a prison hewn from the canyon that became Canon City. THESE WALLS asks audiences to consider the ways care and accountability can create healing and hope in our criminal justice system. THESE WALLS is produced and created by the DU Prison Arts Initiative in partnership with the Colorado Department of Corrections. You can watch THESE WALLS at [bit.ly/3PSIXNV](http://bit.ly/3PSIXNV).



**Within(in) Podcast**  
*Shifting the Conversation on who is in Prison...*

The *Within(in)* Podcast is committed to meaningful, complex and enlightening conversations with incarcerated people connecting individuals to each other and to the public.

Listen at [thisiswithin.com](http://thisiswithin.com), on Apple iTunes and Soundcloud.



Our mission is intellectually challenging forum for information, entertainment and inspiration, written by and for the people who live and work within the Colorado Department of Corrections. We strive to be good stewards of the truth, while recording history and news that affects us all.

IR and *Reverberations* available at: [insidereportnews.com](http://insidereportnews.com)



Chained Voices is an advocacy and empowerment art show based in Denver.

The 2022 Chained Voices Show is currently taking place at the McNicholls Center in Denver through the 20th of August.

Chained Voices submissions are featured throughout this program. For more information visit: [www.chainedvoices.org](http://www.chainedvoices.org).

Behind the Scenes of *It's Light*

In March of 2022, Professor Joe Salvatore visited Sterling Correctional Facility to lend his expertise to *If Light Closed Its Eyes*. While here, he sat down and had a conversation with Justin Moore of the *Inside Wire* team. This is a brief excerpt of that talk:



**Joe Salvatore:** You know I used to think oh theater has to happen in a theater right, theater has to happen in in a traditional theater you know and that's you know has looks like a theater and as I've gotten older and sort of more you know I like working in a theater less and less um because it it you know so many people that that that love theater experience theater experience it as like Broadway you know or like professional theater quote on quote and you know I think like Broadway is is kind of like an amusement park ride you know like you can go back and ride you know your like favorite roller coaster multiple times like which is what people do with things like phantom of the opera or whatever and I'm not I'm not trashing those things I'm just saying that like that's what it's akin to right and I think that theater has the capacity to go beyond that to uh help us to think critically about the world help us think critically about assumptions and bias's we may carry about each other um has the capacity allows us to um expand our worldview in a way that we couldn't otherwise do um if we did not experience live performances right film film does this, television does this but there's something about being in a space with people who are performing and breathing the same as them that is super unique um and it this this has been happening it it is a natural human impulse theater is a natural human impulse and I think that when we don't engage in that natural human impulse we cutting ourselves off from the capacity to expand our worldview...

**Joe Salvatore** is a Professor at NYU and the Director of NYU's Verbatim Performance Lab. In addition to being a brilliant teacher, he is also an accomplished director having directed many plays both on and off Broadway.

# A Talk with a Hero

Not many people in life get a chance to talk to their heroes. However, that's exactly what happened in November of 2021 when *With(in)* co-host Denise Presson along with Trevor Jones and several other members of Colorado's Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program (JCAP) sat down to talk to Bryan Stevenson.



**Bryan Stevenson:** ...my great criticism of what's happened in America is that for too long, our policy makers and legislators have acted as if they can put crimes in jails and prisons. And when you hear people debating about what kind of punishment to give a crime, it gets very easy to say, "Oh, let's condemn that... life without parole for that... death penalty for that... seven years for that... fifty years for that... forty years for that..." and our policy making has been compromised by this false belief that we can put crimes in jails and prisons. And what we all know and understand is that you can't put a crime in jail or prison. You can only put people in jails and prisons, and people are not crimes. People can commit crimes, and they can be held accountable for those crimes, but if you don't recognize the difference between a crime and a person... you're going to do a lot of things that are unjust. And I think what has moved me more than anything, is seeing up close the unjust, unfair, cruel things we have done to people and that just makes it hard for me to stop...

For the full interview listen to *With(in)* Episode 19, *The Stone Catcher*

**Bryan Stevenson** is an attorney, civil rights activist, and the author of *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. Stevenson also founded the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI).



**Inside Wire: Colorado Prison Radio** is the first statewide prison radio station in U.S. history. Inside Wire beams music, stories, news and entertainment into prisons across Colorado...and broadcasts its sounds to listeners outside facilities as well, across the U.S. and beyond. Our programs are created by incarcerated media producers, who uphold the highest aesthetic and journalistic standards as they amplify the diverse voices, stories and creations of those living and working inside the walls.

To tune in to Inside Wire, visit: [coloradoprisonradio.com](http://coloradoprisonradio.com) or download the app from Google Play and the App Store.



**Reverberations** is a high quality literary and visual arts magazine with engaging, thought-provoking ideas, providing a critical and creative outlet for incarcerated individuals and serving as voice for a community of writers and scholars, artists and visionaries, to grapple with big questions, stimulate minds and spark imaginations. *Reverberations* nurtures emerging writers through feedback and guidance, explores exquisite beauty even in darkness and provides substantive literature to readers inside and outside Colorado's prisons.

## Arts-Based Educational Workshops and Courses

Our arts-based educational workshops are 15 week courses that create collaborative communities and serve as safe spaces for therapeutic healing and innovative thinking. Through a myriad of art forms, these courses are the first encounter most incarcerated folks experience with DU PAI, giving opportunities for healing and personal growth fostered within the curriculum. Some of the specific classes offered in the past are:

- Ensemble Theatre
- Creating Action through Words and Movement
- Arts and Spirituality
- Learning to See through Drawing
- Art and Resilience

These workshops are offered in person at 12 CDCO facilities, and during the pandemic were accessible to every CDCO facility via correspondence class.

The 15 week courses are such an important part of what DU PAI does. These workshops allow for remarkable self-exploration in an environment that is generally believed to be unsafe for such displays of vulnerability. They are the entry point and foundation for the ethos of DU PAI which includes transformation, agency and shared humanity among many others. These classes have served thousands of incarcerated students across the state of Colorado.

*Light Maged  
To Eyes*

Created by

*Matthew Labonte, Terry W. Mosley Jr., Dr. Ashley Lauren Hamilton,  
Craig Forbes and Deshon McKinnie*

**Please be aware this play deals with very sensitive and sometimes graphic subject matter. Take care of yourself and your loved ones. If you need assistance or someone to talk to, please contact one of the DU PAI staff located in the theatre.**



In December 2019, a group of over fifty incarcerated men gathered at Sterling Correctional Facility – a men’s maximum security prison in Sterling, Colorado – under the guidance and facilitation of Dr. Ashley Hamilton and began to imagine creating their own interview-based theatre play. After many hours of workshop sessions exploring the field of interview-based theatre, the large ensemble decided to create a play exploring the idea of shared humanity across the criminal justice system in an attempt to portray a 360° view of the prison system and mass incarceration at this moment in time in Colorado and the United States. What they found was a system deeply grappling with its identity and values, but swimming in humanity.

The Covid19 pandemic forced the large ensemble into isolation and various states of separation for most of 2020 and 2021. A small group of incarcerated men (Matthew Labonte, Terry W. Mosley Jr., Andrew Draper, George Chavez, Michael Clifton Angel Lopez and Brett Phillips) along with Dr. Hamilton were able to continue forward collecting and transcribing interviews through all of 2020 and 2022. The interview team conducted 100 interviews across the prison system and community. Almost every interview was conducted by an incarcerated person with Dr. Hamilton present. Then, a small team of incarcerated men (Matthew Labonte, Terry W. Mosley Jr., Craig Forbes and Deshon McKinnie) and Dr. Hamilton began the process of distilling this wealth of material down to a final, stageable script. After much deliberation and a few different iterations, they finally

To the many members of our ensemble who joined us at some point during this 2½year journey know we carry you with us:

*Tribute*



- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Darius Ratcliff      | Emmitt Compito      |
| Atorrus Rainer       | Chuck Martinez      |
| Joel Becker          | Matt Alfaro         |
| Gerome Brooks        | Michael Hadnot      |
| Phillip Carter       | Eric Jensen         |
| Torriano Davis       | Nicholas Martinez   |
| Secundino Martinez   | Jesse Oliver        |
| Isaac McCoy          | Trinidad Ramos      |
| Terrence Wilder      | Ryan Schenk         |
| Vern Mitchell        | Christopher Weedman |
| Brandon Kreuzer      | John Wiles          |
| Estfanio Ogbaselasie | Israel Massingil    |
| Luke Barela          | Kofi Donkor         |
| Richard Vandervoort  | Taylor Doucet       |

We would like to dedicate this production to our dear friend and dance team member, Joseph “Ponyboy” Roybal, who passed away on July 4th, 2020. You left your footsteps glowing in all of our souls. May you dance joyfully in the forever-after...





## Special Thanks

Thank you to the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC) for investing so deeply in DU PAL and specifically in this project. We are here now because you believed this project was something truly special. You made it possible for us to continue in the most difficult circumstances, in particular, throughout the Covid19 pandemic and on-going staff shortages. Thank you to the Sterling Correctional Facility (SCF) staff for technical, logistical and moral support throughout this process. There are too many of you to list here, but please know you are seen and appreciated. We could not have done this without you.

Jessica Book	Allen Harms	William Sherwood
Ed Caley	Diane Lindsey	Annie Skinner
Greg Carwin	Danielle Litman	Shannon Silva
Cris Clare	Jeff Long	Melissa Smith
Ryan Conarro	Joan Dieter Mazza	Andre Stancil
Harlan Damon	Steven McDonald	Lilly Stannard
Eric Davis	Charles Neece	Colin Steib
Josh Dorcay	Brent Nicholas	Ryan Suppes
Casey Frese	JoyBelle Phelan	Noah Toops
Susan Fuller	Braden Piel	Dean Williams
Clare Hammoor	Julie Rada	Carter Zanella
Matt Hansen	Seth Ready	Jason Zwirn

DU PAL would also like to thank New York University's **Verbatim Performance Lab (VPL)** for collaborating with us. The VPL generously provided interview training, transcription support, dramaturgical support and actor coaching. VPL also hosted a virtual reading of an early draft of *If Light Closed Its Eyes* through its Open Studio Series in April 2021. The VPL is a project of the Program in Educational Theatre, Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions, in the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development at New York University. The VPL creates verbatim documentary theatre that disrupts assumptions, biases and intolerances across a spectrum of political, cultural and social narratives.

### Creative Consultant

Joe Salvatore

### Transcription Support

Lara Gavagan, Ryan Howland, Lucy Medeiros, Alex Oleksy, Bridget O'Neill & Lilly Stannard

### Actor Coaching

Lauren Gorelov, Ryan Howland, Keith R. Huff & Joe Salvatore



are taken directly from the interviews they gave the team.

The one exception to this is The Interviewer. The Interviewer, David Zion, acts as a guide or narrator through the world of the play. David never leaves the stage because the stage, in many ways, is his mind. David is a composite character who combines stories and lived experiences of the original *If Light Closed Its Eyes* interview team, but in particular focuses on the life experience of two of the interview team. David acts as a mirror for the interviewee characters, but is also moved and changed by everyone he meets in the play. His journey and change throughout the play represents the impact of the process on the original creative team.

Change is rarely an easy process and life is full of reckonings. Welcome to ours. I don't think any of us can do it alone. And we surely can't close our eyes to it.



# Director's Note



The word theater is derived from the ancient Greek word "theatron". Theatron translates, literally, into "a seeing place". Welcome to our seeing place. We have been waiting for you, working toward this moment, for over two and half years. And, there is much for you to see here.

Over two and a half years ago -- in late 2019, in a very different world -- a group of fifty incarcerated men, and three DU Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI) Faculty (Joanna Rotkin, Joan Dieter Mazza and myself) set off at Sterling Correctional Facility (SCF) to create an interview-based theatre play, to tell a story that had never been told before. The original goal of this project was to collect only twenty-five stories and to produce a play in June of 2020. We all know what comes next. I had come to my collaborators -- this large group of incarcerated men -- with a simple question "what story are we feeling called to tell?". Over the first few months of 2020 our team went on a journey to learn and study the form of interview-based theatre (also known as verbatim theatre, documentary theatre and ethnodrama). Interview-based theatre is quite simply theatre built from interviews, built from the stories of real people with real things to say to the world. Interview-based theatre is my favorite way to make stories. Why? Because it lives in a space of capturing, exploring and sharing our pure, complex humanity. It creates a space in time for people to tell their stories in their own words, it allows us as creators and audience to reflect on our shared moment in time, and the humanity of those right next to us.

As a creative team we decided that the story we were feeling called to tell was one of shared humanity and the criminal justice system, built on the rich foundation of the South African philosophy of Ubuntu -- a Nguni Bantu term -- translating to "I am because you are". Ubuntu is often associated with Nelson Mandela, the fall of apartheid and Mandela's time in prison. The concept of Ubuntu felt like the perfect holding for our story, especially as a vehicle to carry us through the turbulence of our current social and political moment.

As a community, we set off to capture and understand a 360-degree view of the criminal justice system in this moment in time. Over the next nine months, into early 2021, our interview team -- six incarcerated men and myself -- ended up conducting over 100 interviews with incarcerated people, CDOC staff, victims/survivors of harm, family members of incarcerated people and victims, district attorneys, lawyers, senators, politicians, educators, spiritual leaders and more. We wanted to understand their experiences within the criminal justice system and what that reveals about our shared humanity. Then, throughout 2021 our creative team spent countless more hours crafting, designing and producing our verbatim script -- and now full theatrical production -- from those interviews.

When we set off to collect these stories two and half years ago -- with the intention of creating a seeing place for our audience -- we had no idea the nuanced ways this project would reveal, reckon and heal us -- our creative team and community. We had no idea that these stories would become their very own seeing place. Holding these 100 stories -- and



## DANCE ENSEMBLE

- Contarius Alexander
- Davis Andrew
- Taylor Bandy
- Lynell Hill
- Angel Lopez
- Jose Mandujano
- Tyrell McCrea
- Antonio Paul
- Jason Sloan
- Jamal Watkins

## DESIGN ENSEMBLE



- Technical Director** Timothy Nicholls
- Assistant Technical Director** Dante Owens
- Set and Props Design** Craig Forbes
- Costume Design** Andrew Draper
- Costume Design Consultant** Janice Lacey
- Lighting Design** Mannie LeGrand and Shakiel Madden-Vaughn
- Lighting Design Consultant** Shannon McKinzie
- Sound and Music Design** Chuck Garlick, Lynell Hill and Deshon McKinzie
- Musical Contributors** Michael Tenneson and Tyrell McCrea
- Dramaturgy** Matthew Labonte and Terry Mosley Jr
- Run Crew** Leroy Maestas, Robert Martinez, J.R. Gilbertson, William Daniels, Ryan Flint, Richard Ritter, Dean Carbajal, Joseph Hill, Jonathan Cox, Heh Saw, Marquise Davis, Jovân McGlothlin, Kevin Peterson, Brandon Allen, DeShawn House, Jermaine Richetts, Daeshawn Howard, Clyde Bradford, Julian Ballard-Wheeler, Joseph Hinton, Nathaniel Brown, Emiliano D. Urioste



# If Light Closed

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Director and Producer	Dr. Ashley Hamilton
Assistant Director	Ryan Krueger
Producer & Production Manager	Tess Neal
Assistant Production Manager	Madalayne Heiken
Director of Dance	Joanna Rotkin
Stage Manager	George Chavez
Assistant Stage Manager	Ryan Krueger
Head of Script Creation	Matthew Labonte
Writing Team	Terry Mosley Jr., Craig Forbes and Deshon McKinie
Documentary Team	Drummond West, William Davenport and Geoffrey Johnson

## ACTING ENSEMBLE

Mr. Banner, Incarcerated Man	Jamal Watkins
Big Dre, Correctional Employee	Cedric Watkins
Bill Callahan, District Attorney	Mike Severson
Brooklyn, Incarcerated Man	Antonio Stancil
CO Avery, Correctional Officer	Jake Strength
Dan Wilson, Executive Director of Prisons	Dean Williams and Justin L. Moore
Ethan's Mom, Victim's Mother	Ashley Hamilton
Gary Rose, Incarcerated Man	Brett Phillips
Icarus, Unbroken Inmate, Incarcerated Man	Deshon McKinie
Ireverent Reverend,	Matthew Labonte
Unitarian Universalist Minister	Terry Mosley Jr.
The Interviewer, David Zion, Incarcerated Man	Quent Scages
Kravitz, Incarcerated Man	Terrence Richardson
Lucian, Incarcerated Man	JoyBelle Phealan
Mama K, Victim's Mother	Rerry Martin
Marella, Formerly Incarcerated Woman	Matthew Haley
Michael Stewart, Incarcerated Man	Anthony Shapiro
Papa G, Victim's Father	Craig Forbes
The Painter, Incarcerated Man	Michael J. Clifton
Rodin, Incarcerated Man	Felicion Charles
Vell, Incarcerated Man	



turning them into this play -- has been the greatest honor of my lifetime. This project has revealed more than stories of our shared humanity, it has created a place for us to see in the dark, through the light. Welcome, we are so glad you are here to see.

Dr. Ashley Hamilton  
Director, Lead Interviewer and Executive Producer of *If Light Closed Its Eyes*  
Executive Director of DU Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI)

*Dramaturgy Note*

This play has been vast. Over two and a half years of mine and many others' lives, but that doesn't even begin to capture it. This has been immersive, complex, disturbing, impossible, revealing, and beautiful through and through. Maybe this is what it was like to come into this world in the first place, to be born. Soon it will be over. And while there's something sad in that, I don't think it will ever really be over.

I asked myself the question the other day, "Where does *If Light Closed Its Eyes* end and where do I begin?" That's how deep in my bones it is. I feel as if I am inextricably bound up in all of it. It's kind of ironic...we set out to collect and tell other people's stories and we found our own. That's the deepest truth of *The Interviewer*.

I have spent so much of the last two and a half years of my life with the 100 people we've talked to, and it's strange to think that for many of them I'm just a guy who interviewed them one day for about an hour. I quote them like wise sages or sacred religious texts. I feel as if I know them. I have studied the most profound lessons they've given. How could they be unaware of how much I honor them? How could they not know all of this is living in them? That they are living so abundantly in me?

One hour. That's the average length of time we had with each of these people. It was the simplest invitation - come in, sit down and share a bit of your story. This proved to be a singularly powerful act. We discovered most people have no place for these types of conversations anywhere in their lives. We as a society, as an extended community have to create space for them. They are necessary. Vital.

It is an extremely vulnerable and brave act to talk to someone about the most tender, most delicate and sometimes most shameful parts of your life. I found it impossible to receive this gift from others and not be compelled to reciprocate in some manner. To all of you who shared so generously, who gave so freely of yourselves in the interest of this project, I want you to know something:

*You have changed my life.*  
Each one of you is a part of me now. I carry you in my head and in my heart. You shape the way I move through the world on a daily basis and you will be my life's thesis.  
Thank you. Truly -

I am because you are...

Matthew Labonte  
Interview Team Member & Head of Script Creation