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**Theatre Communications Group Announces  
Participants in the SPARK Leadership Program**  
*Ten theatre leaders of color to engage in ten-month professional development program*

New York, NY – Theatre Communications Group (TCG) is pleased to announce the ten participants in the **SPARK Leadership Program**, one of the programs in TCG's *Leading the Charge: Diversity & Inclusion Initiative*, SPARK will create a more diverse theatre landscape by supporting the professional development of exceptional rising leaders of color who aim to take on executive leadership positions in artistic, management or producing roles at U.S. not-for-profit theatres.

SPARK is developed and administered by TCG with support from **American Express** and **The Joyce Foundation**. TCG will partner with the **Center for Creative Leadership** (CCL) and TCG's Diversity & Inclusion Institute Partner **Carmen Morgan** to create and execute the professional development curriculum.

Building on the success of TCG's *Young Leaders of Color Program*, this pilot program will provide ten leaders who self-identify as leaders of color with the opportunity to participate in a three-tiered curriculum:

- **Knowledge & Skills-Building:** SPARK will provide the necessary practical skills for success in leading a not-for-profit theatre organization.
- **Networking & Professional Connections:** SPARK will provide opportunities to develop empowering relationships with mentors, sponsors and career influencers, as well as with peers who are pursuing similar career goals.
- **Self-Awareness & Inclusion Training:** SPARK will provide tools and resources to empower participants and ensure they promote diversity, inclusion and equity in their work.

"These ten emerging leaders are already making a significant impact on the theatre field with their vision and leadership as artists, administrators, educators and producers," said **Teresa Eyring**, executive director of TCG. "SPARK will help empower them to take the next steps into executive leadership positions, and fight the 'pipeline' misperception that there isn't a pool of highly qualified leaders of color who are ready for those positions. We believe the SPARK Leadership Program, and these ten leaders in particular, will transform the leadership of our field to more equitably represent the diversity of our country."

"American Express is pleased to support TCG's SPARK Leadership Program as part of our commitment to nurture the next generation of nonprofit leaders," said **Timothy J. McClimon**, president of the American Express Foundation. "These 10 leaders will help create a successful, vibrant national theatre community for audiences and artists now and in the future."

"We're delighted to support TCG's work to develop and nurture these talented leaders," **Ellen Alberding**, president of the Joyce Foundation said. "At Joyce, we're committed to broadening art audiences, so communities of color see their stories and experiences reflected within arts institutions of all sizes. One critical component of that work is ensuring arts administrators are as diverse as the audiences that the institution aims to reach. SPARK will help all of us in the arts community reach that goal."

**The SPARK Leadership Program participants are:**



**Snehal Desai** | *Los Angeles, CA*

Snehal Desai is currently the Literary Manager at East West Players. As a Director, Snehal has worked at theaters across the country including: the Old Globe, La Mama, the Old Vic, Ars Nova, Pan Asian Rep, the Lark, PS 122, and Dad's Garage. He is a former resident director with Theater Emory and the Ensemble Studio Theatre. As a writer/performer Snehal has toured his solo show, *Finding Ways to Prove You're Not an Al-Qaeda Terrorist When You're Brown* to audiences across the United States. He is also the author of *Sita/Sati*. A trilogy of plays focused on the history and experiences of Southasians in the United States from colonial times to today. Snehal was the inaugural recipient of the Drama League's Classical Directing Fellowship and a recipient of a 2014

Doris Duke Grant, the Tanne Award, and a Soros Fellowship. He is a member of the Lincoln Center Director's Lab and received his MFA from Yale University.



**Kelvin Dinkins, Jr.** | *Red Bank, NJ*

Kelvin Dinkins, Jr. is a Creative Producer/Theater Manager who developed his passion for arts administration while an undergraduate at Princeton University where he majored in English and received a Certificate in the Theatre from the Lewis Center for the Arts. Kelvin is currently completing his M.F.A. in Theatre Management & Producing at Columbia University's School of the Arts. During his time at Princeton, Kelvin was a performer, Tour Manager, President, and now a member of the Graduate Board of Trustees, for Princeton's Famous Triangle Club. Kelvin's career has brought him to such companies as National Artists Management Company, Intiman Theatre in Seattle, WA (Associate General Manager), National Corporate Theatre Fund (Development

Fellow), and The Civilians (Communications and Development Manager). Kelvin also received a 2013 EMC Arts/ArtsFWD Blogging Fellowship where he also contributed content for HowlRound. Kelvin is currently the General Manager of Two River Theater Company in Red Bank, NJ.



**LaTeshia Dezelle Ellerson** | *Atlanta, GA*

LaTeshia Dezelle Ellerson joined Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company in 2007 as Development Associate and was promoted to Director of Development in 2013. In this position, she develops, oversees and implements the strategic fundraising plan for individual donors, corporations and foundations. LaTeshia began her career as a development professional at United Way of Metropolitan Chicago. During her undergraduate career, she completed administrative internships at Jomandi Productions in Atlanta and Ensemble Theatre in Houston. Professionally as an actress, LaTeshia has performed with The Second City in Chicago and several Christian Theatre Companies in Chicago and Atlanta. LaTeshia also serves as acting coach for the National August

Wilson Monologue Competition produced by True Colors Theatre Company. LaTeshia holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Theatre School at DePaul University in Chicago and Masters of Science in Urban Policy Studies/Nonprofit Leadership from Georgia State University.



**Nelson T. Eusebio III** | *New York, NY*

Nelson T. Eusebio III is a freelance stage director, producer and award-winning filmmaker. He is the former artistic director of Leviathan Lab, an Asian American creative studio. In 2008 he co-founded Creative Destruction, a NYC-based theatre collective. He has directed and developed work at theaters throughout the country, including the Public Theater/NYSF, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Playmaker's Repertory, The Old Globe, and CenterStage. Nelson is a member of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab and the Rhodopi International Theatre Collective, served as a resident director at Ensemble Studio Theatre, and is a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors. He was the 2012 Phil Killian Directing Fellow at the Oregon Shakespeare

Festival. Nelson has a B.A. in Drama from UC Irvine and an M.F.A. in Directing from the Yale School of Drama.



**Karena Fiorenza Ingersoll | Berkeley, CA**

Karena Fiorenza Ingersoll brings over a decade of experience as a leader, fundraiser and producer in the performing arts. She currently serves as the Associate Managing Director of Berkeley Repertory Theatre, where she also line produces and manages all of the new play development efforts under the aegis of The Ground Floor. Most recently, she was the Associate Managing Director of Yale Repertory Theatre, where she oversaw a \$1.6 million artistic budget. Prior to Yale, she worked as the Annual Fund Manager at Aurora Theatre in Berkeley and served as the Executive Director of Robert Moses' Kin, a small modern dance company in San Francisco. Internationally, Karena has lived in Mexico City, working for a non-profit humanitarian group where she focused on business development, strategic marketing and donor cultivation. Karena is a freelance arts management consultant in the Bay Area, the President of the Berkeley Cultural Trust and a proud member of the Bay Area Latino Theatre Artists Network. She holds two bachelor degrees from the University of California at Berkeley and an MFA from Theater Management from Yale University, where she was the recipient of the August Coppola Scholarship and the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts Scholarship.



**Victor Maog | New York, NY**

Victor Maog is the Artistic Director of Second Generation Productions (2g) and a NYC-based freelance director. He's also directed and developed works at the Public, Hartford Stage, Williamstown, Signature, Mabou Mines, Intar, Ma-Yi, Lark, Playwright's Realm, and New Dramatists. He's brought 2g to Joe's Pub, La Mama, 54 Below, and launched the 2ST Uptown Residency Series; and after a six year hiatus, has returned the company to full production with the New Ohio's Ice Factory Festival. Received the NEA/TCG Career Development Award, Altvater Fellowship at Cornerstone, Van Lier Directing Fellowship at 2ST, and the Presidential Award with the Theatre Arts Project, where he served as Artistic Director at age twenty. He's also a respected artist-educator who's worked at schools such as NYU/Tisch, UPenn, Perry-Mansfield, and organizations including the American Theatre Wing, TDF, Roundabout, MTC, and The New Group. [www.victormaog.com](http://www.victormaog.com).



**Jacob G. Padrón | New York, NY**

Jacob G. Padrón is currently a producer on the artistic staff of The Public Theater in NYC. Prior to The Public, he was the Associate Producer at Steppenwolf Theatre Company where he oversaw the programming in the Garage and was the lead producer on Ike Holter's *Hit the Wall*, among many other new play projects. From 2008 – 2011 Jacob was an Associate Producer under Bill Rauch at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival where he was instrumental in producing all mainstage productions. He produced Suzan-Lori Parks' *365 Days/365 Plays* for Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum – a collaboration that included over 50 theater companies to launch the 365 LA festival. He has been a lecturer at Northwestern University and has collaborated with Chicago Dramatists, About Face, Teatro Vista, Baltimore Centerstage, and El Teatro Campesino. Jacob's "whatifesto" about transformation in our field was a part of the keynote address at the TCG national conference in 2011. A graduate of Loyola Marymount and Yale School of Drama, Jacob is the co-founder of Tilted Field, an artists' collective.



**Lisa Portes | Chicago, IL**

Lisa Portes is a Cuban-American director, educator and administrator dedicated to creating a 21st century theatre that incites our curiosity about this great, complex, poly-cultural world. Lisa heads the MFA Directing Program at The Theatre School at DePaul University and serves as Artistic Director of Chicago Playworks for Families and Young Audiences. Formerly she served as Associate Artistic Director of Soho Rep, Artistic Director of Theater E in San Diego and Associate Director of *The Who's Tommy*. Lisa is a founding member of the Latina/o Theatre Commons. She has directed and developed work at Steppenwolf Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Guthrie Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater, McCarter Theater Lab, Playwrights Horizons, the Public Theatre, Sundance Theatre Lab, the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference, and South Coast Repertory Theatres Hispanic Playwrights Project. Lisa received her B.A. in Theater from Oberlin College and her MFA in Directing from the

University of California, San Diego. She lives in Chicago with her husband, playwright, Carlos Murillo and their two children, Eva Rose and Carlos Alejandro.



**Deena Selenow** | *Los Angeles, CA*

Deena Selenow is a director and curator for live performance who creates joyful disasters at the intersection of mythology, pop culture, tragedy and comedy. She has directed opera, theater, concerts, puppetry, performance installation and site-specific happenings in Los Angeles at REDCAT, Highways Performance Space, Company of Angels, Machine Project and CalArts; and in New York at Dixon Place, NYTW's 4th Street Theatre, CSV Cultural Center, NYU and various chashama locations in Harlem, Midtown and Lower Manhattan. Deena was a recipient of the 2006 Baryshnikov Art Center Multi-Disciplinary Artist Fellowship, the 2009/2010 New York Theatre Workshop Emerging Artist of Color Directing Fellowship, and was a participant in the 2013 Walt

Disney Imagineering/CalArts Educational Initiative. BFA: NYU. MFA: CalArts. [www.deenaselenow.com](http://www.deenaselenow.com).



**Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr.** | *Ithaca, NY*

Godfrey L. Simmons, Jr. is Artistic Director of Civic Ensemble, an Ithaca and NYC-based company that believes theatre is everyone's birthright. Civic produces new plays by or about women and people of color; re-imagined classics; and community-based plays. For Civic, Godfrey most recently directed the third documented NYC revival of Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings* at JACK in Brooklyn. From 2005-2009, Godfrey was a Producing Artist in charge of New Artist Development for Obie-Winning Epic Theatre Ensemble, where he appeared in the world premiere of *A More Perfect Union*, *Widowers' Houses* (which Godfrey co-adapted with Ron Russell), *A Hard Heart*, *Einstein's Gift*, Sarah Ruhl's *Passion Play*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *Richard III*. He also co-

wrote and starred in *Dispatches From (A)mended America*, a documentary play about race, the South and the election of President Obama that was produced Off-Broadway by Epic in 2012. A 2012 Fox Fellow, Godfrey has performed Off-Broadway and at regional theatres throughout the east coast including Ensemble Studio Theatre, Playwrights Horizon, Primary Stages, Syracuse Stage, Arena Stage, Round House Theatre, and People's Light and Theatre Company, among others.

The SPARK Leadership Program advisory selection panel evaluated the applicants and made their recommendations. The panel included: **Stephen Albert**, Executive Director, Court Theatre; **Rhodessa Jones**, Co-Artistic Director, Cultural Odyssey and Director, The Medea Project: Theater for Incarcerated Women; **Seema Sueko**, Associate Artistic Director, The Pasadena Playhouse; and **Chay Yew**, Artistic Director, Victory Gardens Theater.

Learn more about the SPARK Leadership Program here: [www.tcg.org/grants/spark](http://www.tcg.org/grants/spark).

**TCG's Leading the Charge: Diversity & Inclusion Initiative** is a multi-year, six-point plan to transform the national theatre field into a more inclusive and diverse community. The Initiative emerges from TCG's longstanding core value of diversity and commitment to supporting the plurality of aesthetic, perspective, race, class, gender, age, mission, as well as organizational size and structure. For more information: <http://www.tcg.org/fifty/diversity.cfm>.

**American Express:** Developing New Leaders for Tomorrow. Under this giving initiative, which recognizes the significance of strong leadership in the nonprofit and social sectors, American Express awards grants focused on training high potential emerging leaders to tackle important issues in their communities. More than 15,000 emerging nonprofit and social sector leaders worldwide have benefitted from American Express leadership programs that address the growing deficit of leadership talent in the nonprofit sector. <http://about.americanexpress.com/csr>.

**The Joyce Foundation** supports the development of policies that both improve the quality of life for people in the Great Lakes region and serve as models for the rest of the country. The Foundation invests in and focuses on today's most pressing problems while also informing the public policy decisions critical to creating opportunity and achieving long-term solutions. The work is based on sound research and is focused on where we can add

the most value. The Foundation partners with others and encourages innovative and collaborative approaches with a regional focus and the potential for a national reach. [www.joycefdn.org](http://www.joycefdn.org).

**Carmen Morgan** is currently the Director of Leadership Development in Interethnic Relations (LDIR), a nationally recognized social justice program. She is also a national consultant on diversity, inclusion, and equity issues. For the past six years, she has served as the Diversity and Inclusion Consultant for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF), where she addresses structural and organizational issues of inclusion and equity. Carmen also serves as the Diversity Consultant for Theatre Communication Group (TCG) where she provides guidance for their national diversity and inclusion initiatives. She also provides training and resources to theaters and non-profit organizations nation-wide.

While at LDIR, Morgan co-wrote and edited *ExpandingLDIRship: A Resource Promoting Positive Intergroup Relations in Communities Through Awareness, Skills and Actions*, which remains the center piece of LDIR's community programming and training. Morgan's leadership work in the interethnic arena involves three civil rights organizations: Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) and Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Martin Luther King Dispute Resolution Center (SCLC/MLKDRC). They have developed programs that are proactive instead of reactive. She has presented at national conferences including the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity, National Association for Multicultural Education, Grantmakers in Health, INCITE! and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Annual Meeting. Morgan is a founding member of the California Chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), a former Human Services Commissioner for the City of Pasadena, and is currently on the fundraising committee for Black Women for Wellness, a community-based organization serving women in South Los Angeles. She remains a committed community activist who has worked within the not-for-profit sector, specifically around social justice issues, for over 15 years. [www.lidir.org](http://www.lidir.org).

For more than four decades, the **Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)** has leveraged the power of leadership to transform individuals, teams, entire organizations and societies to achieve what matters most to them — with results that are powerful, measurable, and enduring. Their innovative solutions are steeped in extensive research and experience gained from working with tens of thousands of organizations and more than a million leaders at all levels — across six continents and more than 130 countries. They draw from a world of experience across cultures, industries and disciplines, to help participants with real world challenges. CCL is ranked among the world's Top 10 providers of executive education by *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* and the *Financial Times*. [www.ccl.org/leadership](http://www.ccl.org/leadership).

For over 50 years, **Theatre Communications Group (TCG)**, the national organization for the American theatre, has existed to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. TCG's constituency has grown from a handful of groundbreaking theatres to nearly 700 member theatres and affiliate organizations and more than 12,000 individuals nationwide. TCG offers its members networking and knowledge-building opportunities through conferences, events, research and communications; awards grants, approximately \$2 million per year, to theatre companies and individual artists; advocates on the federal level; and serves as the U.S. Center of the International Theatre Institute, connecting its constituents to the global theatre community. TCG is North America's largest independent publisher of dramatic literature, with 13 Pulitzer Prizes for Best Play on the TCG booklist. It also publishes the award-winning AMERICAN THEATRE magazine and ARTSEARCH®, the essential source for a career in the arts. In all of its endeavors, TCG seeks to increase the organizational efficiency of its member theatres, cultivate and celebrate the artistic talent and achievements of the field and promote a larger public understanding of, and appreciation for, the theatre. [www.tcg.org](http://www.tcg.org).

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