

# TRUTHWORKER.

THEATRE CO.



## PRESS KIT

# PRAISE FOR TRUTHWORKER THEATRE COMPANY

## Reviews from Distinguished Allies

“Samara Gaev's Truthworker Theater Company is a beacon of hope in a culture plagued by indifference and economic distress. These brave young artists are turning the turmoil of generation WHY? into poetry, dance and theater. Their voices strike like lightning, their movement molds time and space; they spin webs with their imagination to transform social ills into conscious solutions. Truthworker shines light on a growing grassroots revolution, already underway. Do everything you can to support this work!”

-Maija Garcia, Creative Director, [FELA!](#), Director, [Organic Magnetix](#)

“Truthworker consistently succeeds at what all good companies strive for: engaging the next generation in theater that is a catalyst for real social change. Ms. Gaev instills passion, courage, and confidence in her young collaborators with such power that it transcends the stage and pierces audiences.”

- Jonathan Solari, Artistic Director, [New Brooklyn Theater](#)

“Theater is so important to mirror the joys, sorrows, fantasies and realities of our lives and it is one of our greatest assets to help young people examine current issues and find their own voices. It allows them to develop a point of view, do the research and articulate that view in safe spaces to challenge, provoke and sometimes validate what we think and why. Truthworker Theatre is meeting a great need providing these opportunities for our youth. I applaud the work Samara Gaev is doing with these young voices and encourage her to continue this amazing work.”

- Stephanie S Hughley, VP Education & Humanities, [Brooklyn Academy of Music](#)

“**IN|PRISM** shattered me with its truth and sincere portrayal of one man’s journey from foster-care to life on San Quentin’s Death Row. Through original poetry, heart-grabbing rhythms (feet, hands, lips, even tongues are used for rhythmic effect), original music and songs, lightning-pace raps performed in unison by two or more people, and some of the most sincere, raw, flawless acting I have seen in a long time, these young people immerse the audience in the devastating, sometimes comic, always emotional world of incarceration.”

~Brent Buell, President: Doing Life Productions & NYC Producer/Director

“Truthworker Theater Company cultivates critical voices of young people who transform their personal experiences and collective wisdom into masterworks that move us to the core. I am incredibly inspired by the dedicated brilliance of the company under the remarkable directorship of Samara Gaev who's skill and passion for translating social problems into liberatory platforms will have impact that ripples out in the lives of every young person she reaches, and every audience member who experiences the vividness of their work.”

~ Naima Penniman, Co-Founder Co-Artistic Director, [Climbing PoeTree](#)



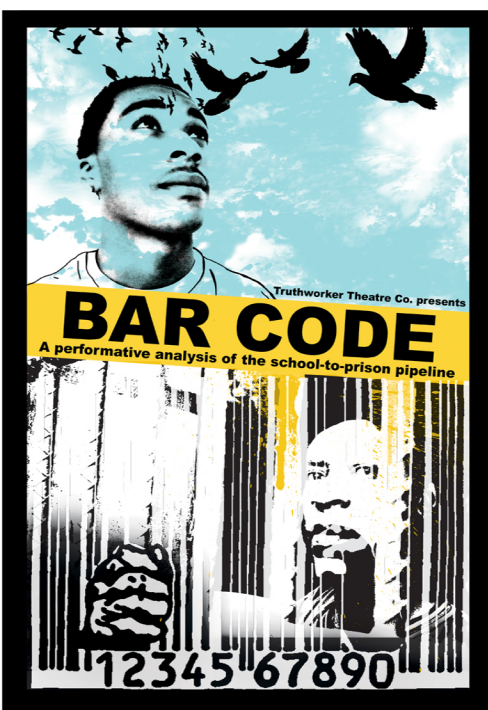


WHO IS

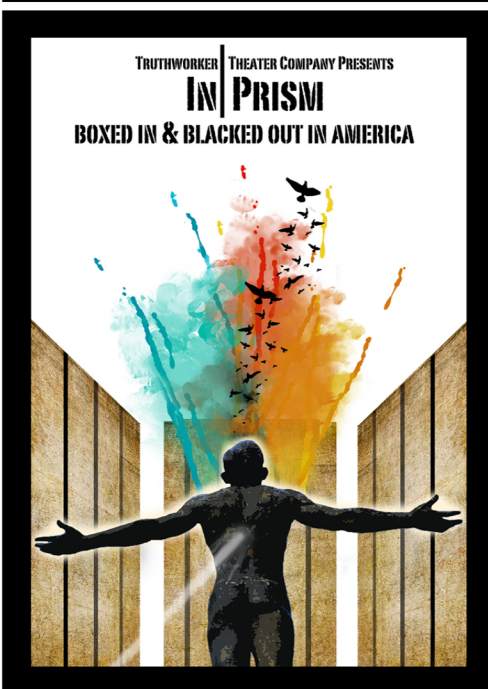
# TRUTHWORKER THEATRE COMPANY?

**TRUTHWORKER THEATRE COMPANY** is a social justice based, hip-hop theatre company for high school & college-aged youth in Brooklyn, NY. Providing youth leadership programming, professional stipends, & rigorous artistic training; Truthworker raises awareness & catalyzes action for racial, gender, & economic justice. Young visionaries directly impacted by mass incarceration write & perform original productions that interrogate the prison industrial complex, challenge systems of oppression, invite healing dialogue, & foster artistic interventions, inspiring solutions for collective liberation. Truthworker is a safe space for young people to be the subjects, not the objects, of their stories as they unpack, problematize, & shift the dominant, often stereotypical narratives in mainstream media. In a country with the largest prison population in the world, Truthworker's bold storytelling is geared towards enlivening creative solutionaries.

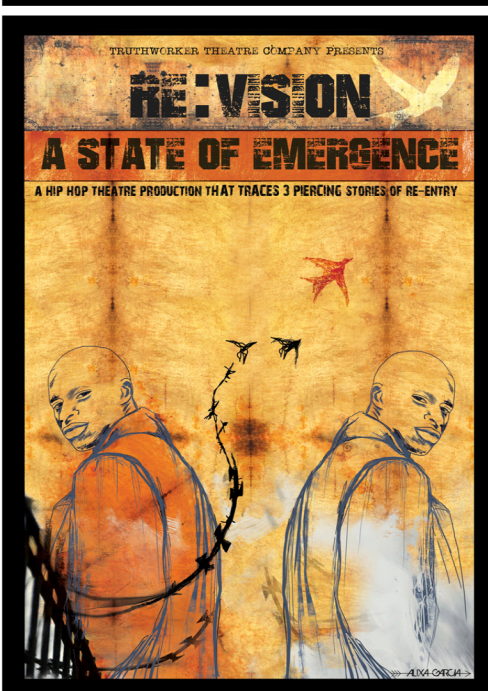
**SAMARA GAEV, Founder, Artistic Director**, is a NYC based activist, educator, theater director, & performer. Her work has taken her to Zimbabwe, Senegal, Hawaii, Brazil, Peru, Cuba, Scotland, & throughout the U.S. Under her direction, Truthworker has written, devised, & self-produced three original hip-hop theater productions: *BAR CODE: A Performative Analysis of the School to Prison Pipeline*, *IN|PRISM: Boxed In & Blacked Out in America*. & *RE:VISION | A State of Emergence*. Together, these plays comprise a provocative trilogy focused on mass incarceration. Samara is honored to have served as Artist/Scholar in Residence at Columbia University's Teachers College: Graduate School of Education, & to be lead teaching artist at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, directing their Arts & Justice theater program. She is also the National Education Coordinator for Question Bridge: Black Males, board member of Project Rhythm, & Curriculum Writer for Hurricane Season: The Hidden Messages in Water. Gaev consults as an anti-oppression trainer with community organizations & institutions nationally, such as Yale University, Beautiful Trouble, & The Nature Conservancy. Samara has trained with such choreographers as Bill T. Jones, Garth Fagan, & Urban Bush Women, & is company member of Organic Magnetix, under the direction of Maija Garcia—Creative Director & Associate Choreographer of FELA!. She has also performed extensively with Universal Arts Co. in Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, co-directed by Obbie & Bessie award winner Robbie McCauley, & The Beat, which brought her to Zimbabwe's Harare International Festival for the Arts. Gaev graduated Magna Cum Laude with a BA from NYU's Gallatin School of Individualized Study. She completed advanced training in Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed from the Paul A. Kaplan Center for Educational Drama & received her Master's Degree in Performance Studies from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, with a thesis that explored trauma, advocacy, & witnessing. Samara is a recipient of the 2009 Next Generation of Leadership Fellowship through the Center for Whole Communities, where she is now faculty. Her active involvement in progressive social change has taken her beyond the classroom & the stage, & towards actualizing the change she wishes to see.



**BAR CODE:** A performative analysis of the school to prison pipeline, poignantly immerses you into the impacted lives of one public school classroom and their burnt out teacher. Drawing connections from Willie Lynch to Trayvon Martin, sourcing interviews with formerly incarcerated youth, and citing research from New York City's key lawyers in the Stop and Frisk trials, **BAR CODE** interrogates cycles of systemic oppression through a compelling narrative that weaves rhyme, multimedia, hip-hop theatre, dance, and personal testimony.



**IN|PRISM: Boxed In & Blacked Out in America**, examines the impacts & practices of solitary confinement and capital punishment in US prisons, tracing one man's remarkable capacity for liberation within the walls of death row. We had the unique and humbling opportunity to have worked with Jarvis Jay Masters, an innocent man on death row, who has been incarcerated since the age of 19 in San Quentin Prison & institutionalized since he was a young boy. He directed this play, based on his life, from inside death row through direct phone calls with the company.



**RE:VISION | A State of Emergence**, explores the profound but often untold journeys that people take after release from prison, addressing reintegration in the age of mass incarceration. We have been sourcing much of our material from the true stories of the young people in the company, most of whom have immediate family members who are currently or formerly incarcerated, and many of whom have been working directly with the company to share their stories and experiences. Through hip-hop theater, compelling narrative, multimedia, dance, and testimony, Truthworker brings three uniquely powerful stories to life—looking deeply at the ricocheting impacts of incarceration and re-entry on family systems. **RE:VISION** is the third production in our trilogy focused on the prison industrial complex.





## **WHERE WE'VE BEEN**

### **Featured Performers/Presenters At:**

#### **FALL 2019**

- JACK, Brooklyn NY
- Long Island Criminal Reform District Conference, Freeport, Long Island
- Columbia University's Justice Center, New York, NY

#### **SUMMER 2019**

- ACLU 100 Year Anniversary, Brooklyn, NY
- FREEnyork Town Hall, New York, NY
- Columbia University's Justice Lab, New York, NY
- FREEnyork Town Hall & Just Leadership USA, Yonkers, NY
- Healing Justice Retreat addressing gender-based violence, Arlington, VT

#### **SPRING 2019**

- National Black Theatre, Harlem, NY
- Penn State University, Philadelphia, PA (Common Field Convening The Art of Survival: Strategies of Creative Resistance & Resilience)
- Anti-Gun Violence Assembly, Liberation High School, Brooklyn, NY
- Vibranium Afrofuturistic Sound, The Keep, Brooklyn, NY

#### **WINTER 2019**

- Bill T Jones collaboration, The Armory, New York, NY
- Just Leadership USA, State Senator's Offices, Long Island, NY (Guerilla Performances to demand bail and discovery reform)
- POWER: Collaboration w/ Patrisse Marie Cullors & Angela Davis, Public Theater, NY, NY
- FREEnyork: New York Communities for Change, State Capitol, Albany, NY
- Beyond The Bars Conference: Until She's Free, Columbia University, New York, NY

#### **SUMMER 2018**

- Rooted in Community, Poughkeepsie, NY
- Black Hole Hollow Apothecary, Arlington, VT
- Word Rock Sword, Brooklyn, NY

## **FALL 2018**

- Gibney Dance: Cracks of Light, New York, NY
- Gibney Dance: Move Beyond Violence Benefit, New York, NY
- San Quentin, San Rafael, CA
- Bioneers Conference, San Rafael, CA
- El Rio, San Francisco, CA
- The Well, Oakland, CA
- East Bay Community Space, Oakland, CA
- Marin Academy, Marin, CA
- Wildseed & Rock Steady Farm Fall Convening, Millerton NY
- SUNY Adirondack, Queensbury NY

## **SPRING 2018**

- NoVo Foundation #MeToo + Philanthropy, New York, NY
- Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center, Baltimore, MD
- Baltimore Youth Arts, Baltimore, MD
- University of Maryland Performance, College Park, MD
- University of Maryland Master Class, College Park, MD
- Policy Link's Equity Equity Summit, Chicago, IL
- Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn, NY
- Liberation High School, Brooklyn NY
- Gibney Dance: Addressing Sexual Violence through the Arts, NYC
- Pyrocatharsis, Germany

## **WINTER 2018**

- National Cathedral Washington DC
- Sophie's Parlor Radio Interview *WPFW 89.3 FM*
- Beyond the Bars Conference, Columbia University, NYC
- Stony Brook University: School of Social Work, LI, NY
- Mass Story Lab in partnership with WNYC, National Jazz Museum, NY, NY
- York College, Queens, NY

## **FALL 2017**

- Astrea Foundation for Lesbian Justice, New York, NY
- Race Forward National Convening, New deYork, NY
- Agnes Varis Performing Arts Center, Gibney Dance, New York, NY
- Teacher's College, Columbia University, New York, NY
- The Flea, New York, NY
- JACK Arts Center, Brooklyn, NY
- Harlem Stage, New York, NY
- HI ARTS, New York, NY



- Re-Imagining A Safe Space Exhibition feat. Truthworker Mini Doc:  
*From Clenched Fist to Compassion*, NYU Tisch School of the Arts, New York, NY

## **SUMMER 2017**

- The Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage: Hip Hop Theatre Festival, Washington, D.C.
- Liberation High School Anti Gun Violence Assembly, Brooklyn, NY
- Grantmakers For Girls Of Color Second National Funders Convening: NoVo, New York, NY
- Power of Hope Social Justice Summer Arts Camp at Commonweal, Bolinas, CA
- Agnes Varis Performing Arts Center, Gibney Dance (Intimate Partner Violence Prevention: Healing & Advocacy through the Arts Conference) New York, NY

## **SPRING 2017**

- Museum of Modern Art PS1: For Freedoms, Queens, NY
- Teacher's College, Columbia University, New York, NY
- Hippodrome Theatre, Roots Weekend: Creating A World Without Prisons, Richmond, VA
- RE:VISION | A State of Emergence 5 Day Spring Run, JACK, Brooklyn, NY
- Climbing Poetree INTRINSIC Record Release Concert: Littlefield, Brooklyn, NY
- Re-Imagining A Safe Space Exhibition feat. Truthworker Mini Doc:  
*From Clenched Fist to Compassion*, Nathan Cummings Foundation, New York, NY
- Watershed Center: Somatic Nonviolent Communication Retreat, Millerton, NY
- Helsinki Club, Hudson NY
- Ingersoll Community Center, Brooklyn, NY

## **WINTER 2017**

- Campaign for Community Control Over the Police, New York, NY
- The Wild Project, New York NY
- New York Live Arts: APAP, New York, NY

## **FALL 2016**

- RE:VISION | A State of Emergence 5 Day Fall Workshop, JACK, Brooklyn, NY
- Mayday Space: Responsible Endowment Coalition's UNCONFERENCE, Brooklyn, NY
- Brooklyn Friends School, Brooklyn, NY

## **SUMMER 2016**

- The Watershed Center: Sierra Club's Anti-Racism Training, Millerton NY
- Wildseed Community Farm and Healing Village, Millerton NY

## **SPRING 2016**

- United Nations: The Colors of Inequity | Costs & Consequences, New York, NY
- Vassar College Presents, Poughkeepsie, NY
- Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center, Poughkeepsie NY
- Hunter College School of Social Work: Art is Justice Symposium, New York, NY
- Liberation High School Anti Gun Violence Assembly, Brooklyn, NY
- Sam Harrell Vigil and Rally, Harlem, NY
- The Wild Project: A Festival of New Poetic Theatre, New York NY
- JACK Arts Center, Brooklyn, NY

## **WINTER 2016**

- The New School: Participatory Engagement: Self Care & Social Justice, New York, NY
- Wildseed Community Farm and Healing Village, Millerton, NY

## **FALL 2015**

- Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio
- Grafton Prison, Grafton, Ohio
- John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, NY
- BAR CODE & IN|PRISM 5 day Fall Season, JACK Arts Center Brooklyn, NY

## **SUMMER 2015**

- Joe's Pub, in collaboration with Toshi Reagon, New York, NY
- Albany Free School, Albany, NY
- Soul Fire Farm, Grafton, NY

## **SPRING 2015**

- Brooklyn Arts Council Awards Ceremony, Brooklyn, NY
- Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz, NY
- United Neighbors of Fall River, Fall River, MA
- Peace by Piece Summit, Fall River, MA
- Oberlin College, Cat in the Cream Theatre, Oberlin, Ohio
- Jerry H. Labowitz Theatre for the Performing Arts, New York University, New York, NY
- IN|PRISM: Boxed in & Blacked Out in America 5 Day Spring Run, JACK, Brooklyn, NY

## **WINTER 2015**

- Highline Ballroom, New York, NY
- Yale University, School of Forestry and Environmental Sciences, New Haven, CT
- NYU Gallatin Arts Festival: Black Lives Matter, New York, NY



## **FALL 2014**

- Columbia University's Research Institute: African American Studies, Harlem, NY
- Zeiterion Theatre: Marion Institute's Connecting for Change Conference, New Bedford, MA
- IN|PRISM: Boxed in & Blacked Out in America 5 Day Fall Run, JACK, Brooklyn, NY

## **SUMMER 2014**

- CUE Arts Foundation, New York, NY
- IN|PRISM: Boxed In & Blacked Out in America Workshop, JACK, Brooklyn, NY

## **SPRING 2014**

- Trayvon Effect Conference: Teacher's College, Columbia University, New York, NY
- Columbia University School of Public Health, New York, NY
- BAR CODE: A Performative Analysis of the School to Prison Pipeline, JACK, Brooklyn NY

## **FALL 2013**

- New Brooklyn Theatre, Bed Stuy Alive Festival, Brooklyn, NY
- Zeiterion Theatre: Marion Institute's Connecting for Change Conference, New Bedford, MA
- BAR CODE: A Performative Analysis of the School to Prison Pipeline, JACK, Brooklyn NY
- LAVA Performance Space, Brooklyn, NY

## **SUMMER 2013**

- BAR CODE: A Performative Analysis of the School to Prison Pipeline, JACK, Brooklyn NY
- Ditmas Park Arts Fair, Brooklyn, NY





# **CONTACT TRUTHWORKER THEATRE CO.**



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