

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**KARAMU HOUSE PRESENTS WORLD PREMIERE OF
“GREENWOOD: AN AMERICAN DREAM DESTROYED”**

Written by award-winning playwright, Celeste Bedford Walker, the virtual theatre production tells one family’s story of the Black Wall Street Massacre—available on-demand through mid-July

(*Cleveland, Ohio*)—Beginning Thursday, June 17, 2021 at 7PM ET/4PM PT, audiences across the country can stream the world premiere of “Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed,” produced and performed by Karamu House, America’s oldest Black producing theatre. Written by the award-winning playwright, Celeste Bedford Walker, “Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed” tells the gut-wrenching, intimate story of one family during the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921. The production is presented through the generous support of Bank of America.

At the 100th year commemoration of the Tulsa Race Massacre, audiences will meet the Boley Family, one of Tulsa Oklahoma’s Greenwood District’s most prosperous Black families, who witnessed the devastation. Beginning on May 31, 1921, the Massacre sent mobs of White residents to loot and burn down the entire District in less than 48 hours. In the wake of the violence, 35 city blocks lay in charred ruins, more than 800 were treated for injuries, and as many as 300 people died—and 600 Black, thriving businesses destroyed.

“Greenwood: An American Dream Destroyed” can be accessed for free, on-demand access on the Karamu House website (karamuhouse.org) through July 11, 2021. In addition, through a unique partnership with Ideastream Public Media, the production can be viewed live on WVIZ PBS on Sunday, June 20, 2021 at 3 p.m. ET. This is made possible through the generous support of KeyBank.

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About Karamu House

Recognized as the oldest African American performing arts institute in the nation, Karamu House is listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places and featured in the Smithsonian’s African-American Museum. Legendary artists including Langston Hughes, Ruby Dee, Robert Guillaume, Ron O’Neal, Bill Cobbs, James Pickens, Jr., Vanessa Bell Calloway and Imani Hakim have been associated with the 106-year-old “place of joyful gathering” (the meaning of “Karamu” in Swahili.)

Today, Karamu is a beating heart for the entire community, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identification, or age. Core programs include socially relevant and professional quality theatre; arts education programming for all ages; and community programming, such as comedy, live jazz, and spoken word performances, that invites participation and engagement, reflection, and a re-commitment to cultural values.

For more information, visit www.karamuhouse.org.

About the Writer

Celeste Bedford Walker's award-winning canon includes over forty plays performed in major venues across the country. She has received numerous commissions to write dramas, comedies and musicals for theaters, schools, museums and organizations. Most recently, she was selected for the 39th Annual William Inge Festival New Play Lab in Independence Kansas for her WWII drama, "*The Red Blood of War.*"

Additional honors and awards include The Beverly Hills/Hollywood NAACP Theatre Awards for Best Playwright/Best Play for positive portrayal of Blacks in the media, the National Black Theatre's Festival's August Wilson Playwriting Award for significant contributions to Black and American Theatre, The Heart of Theatre Salute to Texas Playwrights by the Ensemble Theatre, recognition as a Susan Smith Blackburn Prize finalist and a finalist in the Samuel French OOB Short Play Festival.

Recognized by the U.S. Congress for historical contributions as producer and author of works that bring to light lost stories of African American history, her military drama, "Camp Logan", is featured in the anthology "Acting Up and Getting Down," published by the prestigious University of Texas Press. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild, and in 2017 I was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters, a non-profit honor society founded to celebrate Texas literature and to recognize distinctive literary achievement. Karamu has also produced Bedford Walker's romantic comedy, "Sassy Mamas". Often called universal in appeal, her eclectic work embraces the sacred and the mundane, the serious and the comic, but what they all have in common is an awesome delight in the wisdom and the witlessness of the human condition.

About the Executive Producer and Director

Tony F. Sias is the President and CEO of Karamu House, Inc., America's oldest African American producing theatre. Under the direction and leadership of Sias since 2015, Karamu has been widely accredited for producing professional theatre, arts education, and programming for all communities while honoring the African American experience. Prior to his tenure at Karamu, Sias served in several progressive roles for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) including Director of Arts Education and Artistic Director of Cleveland School of the Arts. As a creative Sias has produced, performed in, and directed more than 100 productions. Additionally, Sias has received the Ohio House of Representatives Tribute for Excellent Leadership in CMSD's All-City Arts Program and the Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for Contributions in Education and Cultural Arts. His work has been highlighted nationally in *The New York Times*, *American Theatre Magazine*, on NBC's *Today Show with Al Roker*, and more. Sias served as a delegate from the U.S. Department of State in Istanbul, Turkey, representing the Council of International Programs in the Youth Arts for Peace Project.

In 2018, he was inducted into The HistoryMakers, the largest African American oral history archive collection in the U.S. In 2019, Sias was named the Cleveland Arts Prize Barbara S. Robinson award winner, was selected as a fellow in the National Arts Strategies Chief Executive Program in partnership with Harvard Business School, and continues his service as a National Board member for the League of Historic American Theaters. Sias earned a Bachelor of Science degree in dramatic art from Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi and a Master of Fine Arts in acting from The Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.