



PRESS RELEASE

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Victory Gardens, The League of Chicago Theatres, Silk Road Rising and Lifeline Theatre present a new conversation series, Race and Representation in Chicago Theater

Chicago, IL– **Victory Gardens Theater, The League of Chicago Theatres, Silk Road Rising and Lifeline Theatre** are collaborating on a new conversation series, *Race and Representation in Chicago Theater*, that will discuss the issues of race and representation in Chicago's theater community. The series, featuring panelists to include actors, playwrights and directors, will focus on the importance of cultivating, developing and producing work that "looks like Chicago," and will frame for both artists and audiences the importance of accurate representations in the work we experience together. *Race and Representation in Chicago Theater* comprises two events, **Playing Race**, to be hosted at Victory Gardens on Thursday, January 31 following the 7:30PM performance of *Disconnect*; and **Building a Theatre of Inclusion: Perspectives on Asian American Casting and Producing**, to be held at Silk Road Rising on Monday, February 18 at 7:00PM.

"The League is honored to be a part of these important discussions about race and theatre in Chicago. The Chicago Theatre Community is renowned for its collegiality and openness, however, we all acknowledge that we have a long way to go to toward true inclusivity," says **Deb Clapp**, Executive Director of The League of Chicago Theatre. "These issues cannot be left to work themselves out but must be talked about in an open forum for real change to take place."

Victory Gardens Artistic Director **Chay Yew** adds, "We are proud of the many significant achievements in Chicago theatre. But one area that needs more investment by every theatre is the practice of cultural inclusion and diversity. Victory Gardens is pleased to join our colleagues in this series of productive dialogues to reflect the true diversity of our city, on our stages."

The first panel discussion in the series, *Playing Race* addresses recent casting scandals across the country. Alarms went off in a recent La Jolla Playhouse production of *Nightingale* when white actors played Asian characters. In Chicago, the issue was raised with Oak Park's Circle Theatre's Bollywood treatment of *Pippin*. The panel will ask where we, as a nationally important theater community, stand on nontraditional casting? Is nontraditional casting a form of minstrelsy, or is it harmless cultural appropriation?

Panelists include E. Faye Butler, Sharen Jensen of The Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts, Steppenwolf Associate Artistic Director Erica Daniels, and Kamal Hans of Rasaka.

Playing Race will take place on Thursday, January 31 following the 7:30PM performance of Anupama Chandrasekhar's *Disconnect* in the Zacek McVay Theatre. Tickets for the entire evening (which will feature pre-show appetizers from local restaurant Tandoor) are \$30, but can be purchased for \$15 using code "PlayingRace." Tickets are available at victorygardens.org or by calling the box office at 773.871.3000.

On February 18, 2013, Silk Road Rising, the League of Chicago Theatres and Lifeline Theatre will host Building a Theatre of Inclusion: Perspectives on Asian American Casting and Producing, a panel discussion that will address challenges faced by Asian American actors, particularly as regards casting, questions that theatres face in producing plays with Asian American content, as well as broader community concerns with productions that are not perceived as culturally authentic.

Panelists will include: David Henry Hwang, Playwright; Jamil Khoury, Artistic Director of Silk Road Rising; Eliza Shin, Actor; and Chay Yew, Artistic Director of Victory Gardens Theatre. The panel will be moderated by Danny Bernardo, actor and resident playwright at Bailiwick Chicago.

Building a Theatre of Inclusion will take place on Monday, February 18 at 7:00 PM at Silk Road Rising, in the Historic Chicago Temple Building, 77 West Washington Street. Tickets are free and can be reserved by emailing ben@chicagoplays.com.

About Victory Gardens and the American Premiere of *Disconnect*

Victory Gardens continues its 2012-13 season with the American Premiere of *Disconnect*, written by Anupama Chandrasekhar and directed by Ann Filmer. The production runs January 25 – February 24, 2013 at the Victory Gardens Biograph Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln Avenue in Lincoln Park. **The Press Opening is Monday, February 4, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.**

Forty-something Avinash is hopelessly out of step in a company that demands success, energy, and youth. To bring his game up, he is transferred to work with the bright young graduates in Illinois—down on the fourth floor. In the windowless, nighttime offices of a call center in Chennai, India, is a bustling world of energetic Indian workers dreaming the American Dream and faking U.S. accents to target their American "marks" maxed out on credit cards. Anupama Chandrasekhar's *Disconnect* is a powerful and witty drama about the consequences of consumer culture and the intricacies of our interconnected global economy.

About Victory Gardens Theater

Under the leadership of Artistic Director Chay Yew, Victory Gardens is dedicated to artistic excellence while creating a vital, contemporary American Theater that is accessible and relevant to all people through productions of challenging new plays and musicals. With Victory Gardens' first new Artistic Director in 34 years, the company remains committed to the development, production and support of new plays that has been the mission of the theater since its founding, continuing the vision set forth by Dennis Zacek, Marcelle McVay, and the original founders of Victory Gardens Theater.

Victory Gardens Theater is a leader in developing and producing new theatre work and cultivating an inclusive Chicago theater community. Victory Gardens' core strengths are nurturing and producing dynamic and inspiring new plays, reflecting the diversity of our city's and nation's culture through engaging diverse communities, and in partnership with Chicago Public Schools, bringing art and culture to our city's active student population.

Since its founding in 1974, the company has produced more world premieres than any other Chicago theater, a commitment recognized nationally when Victory Gardens received the 2001 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. Located in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, Victory Gardens Biograph Theater includes the Zacek-McVay Theater, a state-of-the-art 299-seat mainstage and the 109-seat studio theater on the second floor, named the Richard Christiansen Theater.

In 2012, Victory Gardens appointed new Ensemble Playwrights Philip Dawkins, Marcus Gardley, Samuel D. Hunter and Tanya Saracho, for seven-year residencies. The Playwrights Ensemble

Alumni includes Claudia Allen, Lonnie Carter, Steve Carter, Gloria Bond Clunie, Dean Corrin, Nilo Cruz, Joel Drake Johnson, John Logan, Nicholas Patricca, Douglas Post, James Sherman, Charles Smith, Jeffrey Sweet and Kristine Thatcher.

For more information about Victory Gardens, www.victorygardens.org. Follow up on Facebook at [Facebook.com/victorygardens](https://www.facebook.com/victorygardens) and Twitter @VictoryGardens.

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The League of Chicago Theatres' Mission Statement

The League of Chicago Theatres is an alliance of theaters which leverages its collective strength to promote, support and advocate for Chicago's theater industry locally, nationally and internationally. The League of Chicago Theatres Foundation is dedicated to enhancing the art of theater in the Chicago area through audience development and support services for theaters and theater professionals.

For a comprehensive list of Chicago productions, visit the League of Chicago website, www.chicagoplays.com. Discounted tickets are available at www.hottix.com.

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