

# Heyliger

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**Y**vette Heyliger is a grant-winning playwright, a director, and a producing artist. Ms. Heyliger's critically acclaimed play, *What Would Jesus Do?*, was selected for main stage production in the National Black Theatre Festival 2007 in Winston-Salem, NC. *What Would Jesus Do?*, written and directed by Ms. Heyliger, had its world premiere in Los Angeles in recognition of World AIDS Day 2006 and the 25th Anniversary of HIV/AIDS in America. Ms. Heyliger's play, *Hillary and Monica: The Winter of Her Discontent*, received its New England premiere at Gloucester Stage. Ms. Heyliger was nominated "Best Director" for *Coming Clean* by Steven Shapiro, a finalist in the Riant Theatre's Strawberry One-Act Festival 2007.

Ms. Heyliger was awarded the Regional Resource Network's HIV/AIDS Capacities Building Mini-Grant to present, *What Would Jesus Do?: HIV/AIDS and Our Seniors* in conjunction with Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, NY. An unprecedented "celebrity reading" of the play was done at the 2005 National Black Theatre Festival, thrusting the issue of HIV/AIDS on to Black Theatre's national stage.

Ms. Heyliger won a grant from Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's The Fund for Creative Communities to assist in producing, *What Would Jesus Do?*, in association with Theatre of the Riverside Church in observance of World AIDS Day 2005. This grant was a fiscally sponsored project of Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement (HCCI); additional in-kind assistance for this production was provided by The Riverside Church HIV/AIDS Task Force and a grant was awarded by The Riverside Sharing Fund/Riverside Mission and Social Justice Commission of The Riverside Church in the City of New York.

Voza Rivers/New Heritage Theatre Group presented *What Would Jesus Do?* to a standing-room-only audience at the Museum of the City of New York as part of the Roger Furman Play Reading Series 2005.

*What Would Jesus Do?* was written as a result of a grant Ms. Heyliger received from the New York State Council on the Arts/Individual Artist Program, with additional assistance from a Harlem Arts Alliance/Rockefeller Foundation re-grant. Ms. Heyliger has presented excerpts (monologues and/or scenes) of *What Would Jesus Do?* for HIV/AIDS prevention programs at colleges, churches, prisons, health fairs, youth and senior centers, workshops and conferences.

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Ms. Heyliger's published play, *Autobiography of A Homegirl*, was featured in Smith and Kraus' *Best Women's Stage Monologues 2003* and *Best Stage Scenes 2003*. ["Here are fantastic pieces by well-known playwrights... as well as just-as-fantastic monologues by exciting new voices such as... Yvette Heyliger!"]

*Autobiography of A Homegirl* was selected for presentation at the National Black Theatre Festival 2001; prior to that it had been showcased in Women of Color Theatre Festivals in many New York theatres including: Henry Street Settlement, Black Spectrum Theatre, and Theatre of the Riverside Church. In 1996 Ms. Heyliger was nominated "Best Playwright" in the NAACP Theatre Awards for the Los Angeles production of *Autobiography of A Homegirl*, which was partially funded by Bill Cosby and also received a grant from the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. *Homegirl*, was chosen "Best of the Weekend" by the Los Angeles Times, which was a particular honor as it was Twinbiz' debut production. Ms. Heyliger also made her directorial debut with that production. Early in the play's development. Ms. Heyliger won a grant from Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Manhattan Community Arts Fund present *Autobiography of A Homegirl*, as part of the Voza Rivers/New Heritage Theatre Group's 1995 "Voices of Griots" Roger Furman Reading Series.

Ms. Heyliger presented, in association with Voza Rivers/New Heritage Theatre Group, her play, *Hillary and Monica: The Winter of Her Discontent*, as part of the UnConvention: An American Theatre Festival. *Hillary and Monica* was presented at the National Black Theatre Festival 2003 in Winston-Salem, NC. In 2001 *Hillary and Monica* kicked off the National Black Theatre Festival's Reader's Theatre Series; prior to that it was presented at the Ensemble Studio Theatre in their festival, "Going To The River," which celebrates the works of African American women playwrights, as well as in the Women of Color Arts Festival 2001 at Producer's Club, Musical Theatre Works and Henry Street Settlement. *Hillary and Monica: The Winter of Her Discontent* had its genesis as a writing exercise in Woodie King, Jr.'s New Federal Theatre Playwrighting Workshop with Ed Bullins. In 2005 the play was presented in a staged reading for New York University's "Dramatizing History I" class which explores how creating a work based on historical characters poses specific challenges for the playwright.

Ms. Heyliger's play entitled, *Father's Day*, was written as a result of a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts/Individual Artist Program, and was subsequently produced by Frank Silvera Writer's Workshop during their 1990-1991 season.

Ms. Heyliger was selected to receive a merit scholarship to Fred Vogel's Commercial Theatre Institute, an intensive 14-week training

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program for commercial theatre producers. Ms. Heyliger was selected to participate in the first Lincoln Center Theatre Director's Lab, NY. Formerly an actress, Ms. Heyliger's claim to fame was a stint on the NBC hit *Cosby Show* where she played Bill Cosby's sister-in-law, Aunt Sarah. She studied the Sanford Meisner Technique with William Esper. Ms. Heyliger received her Master of Arts and Bachelor of Arts degrees from New York University.

With regard to her work as a playwright, Ms. Heyliger has been requested as a speaker at colleges and universities including: Vassar College, New York University, Wesleyan University, and Rutgers University, to name a few. She works as a teaching artist in the public and private schools of New York and formerly at Riker's Island Prison.

Ms. Heyliger is a member of the Dramatists Guild/Authors League, AEA, SAG, AFTRA, Harlem Arts Alliance, AUDELCO and is an associate member of the League of Professional Theatre Women.

Ms. Heyliger founded and is partners with her twin sister, Yvonne Farrow, in TWINBIZ, a production company which was established to create and produce original projects for stage, television and film which educate, entertain and serve.