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**For Immediate Release**

## **Moorpark College Theatre Arts and Ventura Youth Correctional Facility Collaborate to Bring Original Theatre to Ventura County and Beyond**

**Moorpark, Calif. (April 13, 2021)** –Moorpark College Theatre Arts Department and the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility (VYCF) are proud to announce their upcoming collaboration. The Student One Acts, which occur every semester, will feature two one act plays written and performed by VYCF students on April 30. It is believed that the Moorpark College Theatre Arts Department is the only college or university producing works from an underserved community.

Two years ago, VYCF asked Moorpark College faculty to teach college courses at the youth facility in Camarillo, and the Theatre Arts Department seized the opportunity. Professor Suzanne Fagan had experience bringing theatre to underserved and justice-involved communities and knew that students at both organizations would benefit from the experience.

“In our theatre production course, THA M10, students get to direct and act in one acts that were written by students from the previous semester. I want our college students to know how powerful theatre is in building relationships and empathy and for healing,” Fagan said. “I know that for everyone in the cast, they look forward to the hour a week they get to spend with each other via Zoom. They work on the play, talk about their ideas and get to know each other.”

The collaboration was made possible through the enthusiasm of Moorpark College Adjunct Professor Moira MacDonald, who has been teaching on campus and online courses at the facility, and Anthony Marengo, VYCF transition education coordinator.

“I loved working with this group of young storytellers,” said MacDonald. “They really took the tools of the writing process, embraced them and ran with them. There is so much untapped brilliance and excitement here.”

“These plays reveal a deep sense of human understanding and allow youth to process their pain and healing through art,” added Marengo.

The two VYCF playwrights, Stella H. and Nathaniel G., are able to attend rehearsals weekly

with their casts via Zoom. Rachael Gula, director of Stella's piece, *Hell's Broken Heart*, said, "Connecting with Stella, our playwright, has been an all-around incredibly rewarding experience. It is such a privilege to have the opportunity to collaborate with such talented and creative students. We are grateful for this collaboration to bring culturally rich and diverse stories to our community."

Ricci Bester-Adams, director of Nathaniel G.'s piece, *Tilikum*, added, "As a Black woman, directing this piece is truly an honor. It is my first time as a director, and it has meant so much to bring this play to life with the playwright and my cast."

VYCF students have attended other college classes through Moorpark College and the Ventura County Community College District (VCCCD). They have the ability to work on proficiency awards, certificates and associate degrees. VYCF is part of the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

DJJ provides education and trauma-informed treatment to California's youthful offenders up to the age of 25 who have the most serious criminal backgrounds and most intense treatment needs. DJJ operates a Local Education Agency recognized as the California Education Authority. It contains three high schools that the Western Association of Schools and Colleges has accredited. High school graduates have opportunities to earn vocational certifications and college credits. In the past year, DJJ youth have earned 279 college credit hours transferrable to institutions in the CSU and UC systems through partnerships with California Community Colleges, such as VCCCD.

Registration details are available at Moorpark College's Student One Acts at [moorparkcollege.edu/theatrearts](http://moorparkcollege.edu/theatrearts). For more information on how to get involved, contact Fagan at [sfagan@vccd.edu](mailto:sfagan@vccd.edu).

### **About Moorpark College**

*Moorpark College is one of three colleges in the Ventura County Community College District and annually serves more than 14,000 students. Founded in 1967, Moorpark College is fully accredited and has the highest six-year completion rate within the California Community College System. The Campaign for College Opportunity named Moorpark College a 2020 Champion of Higher Education for the Associate Degree for Transfer Pathway. It is also a designated Hispanic-Serving Institution. The college's signature career/technical programs include nursing, radiologic technology, biotechnology and journalism. The college's America's Teaching Zoo is the only associate degree exotic animal training program in the country. To learn more, visit [MoorparkCollege.edu](http://MoorparkCollege.edu) or follow @MoorparkCollege on social media.*

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