

STEVE DRIFFIN, 2021 AWARDEE

THEATRICAL PROJECT: "DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS: A REQUIEM FOR BLACK AND BROWN MEN"

In Steve's play, which is based on true accounts, four Black men share stories of deeply painful experiences and the impact on their lives. According to Steve, the play "peels back the layers and allows the audience into the deeper feelings of Black men who are often silent." After each performance, Steve and the actors join the audience for a "talk back".

Steve's update:

"The funds that I was granted from the Bitsie Clark Fund was more than a grant, it was a door opener. It served as an artistic springboard that led to so many other opportunities that I never anticipated. Funding not only opened the doors to Quinnipiac University, but we performed at Whitney Center and Long Wharf Theater, and most recently, my first Off Broadway performance in New York City.

These venues had completely different audiences, but the talk-back at each was impactful. People have been emotional. Men have cried and have said things like, 'So you did a story about my life', or 'I'm tired of wearing a mask' or 'I wish I would've seen this play thirty years ago', or they simply shared their own personal 'cuts'. The Bitsie Fund allowed, for the first time, four Black men to stand and be vulnerable, raw, and unapologetic on stage.

The grant allowed me to work with and meet wonderful people and cultivate meaningful relationships. It provided a safe space for Black male actors to share their experiences and gave the opportunity to financially compensate the actors for their talent, who, oftentimes, were not consistently compensated for past performances.

This grant also provided compensation for the production team who worked hard behind the scenes in rehearsals and pre-production. We were also able to secure original music from local artists, provide lunch and gas assistance, in addition to rent stage space.

The ability to perform this powerful piece has afforded other opportunities for future engagements such as SCSU, Yale University, and a federal transition facility in Bloomfield, CT.

Our planned performances have now extended into 2023, as well. Because of this production, the cast has benefited by being able to showcase their other talents beyond this production at other venues as well.”

The next performance of “Death by a Thousand Cuts” will be in November in Bloomfield, CT at a program called Drapelick Center, a transitional program for men and women who have been in the federal system.