

From the Director and Artistic Team

Lives are changing in Project Dawn Court. In a Philadelphia courtroom, 14 women prepare for their monthly session. Seven of these women are court staff. Fierce, determined, and underfinanced, they are the founders, supporters, leaders, employees, advocates, and sponsors of Project Dawn Court. Seven are defendants with multiple prostitution convictions, but Project Dawn has offered each an alternative to prison if they want it. The program requires months of rehab, therapy, and regular reports to the court. Graduate the program, and the charges are dropped; don't comply and face maximum sentencing for each. Challenging as it may be, Project Dawn and those who run it present a hopeful pathway for these women to restructure their lives.

Based on a real life problem-solving court in Philadelphia, *Project Dawn* by Karen Hartman is making its National New Play Network (NNPN) Rolling World Premiere at Horizon. The play will receive premieres at professional theatres in three cities nationwide over one year - People's Light and Theatre in suburban Philadelphia this past June, Horizon now, and Unicorn Theatre in Kansas City, MO in January.

The play was commissioned by People's Light and Theatre's New Play Frontiers program which develops new plays that tell stories with deep meaning to their region about essential issues. **Ms. Hartman began research for *Project Dawn* in 2012, observing the court and interviewing the women who founded it and women who participated in the program.** She wrote a play based on her direct research, taking artistic license to create a compelling story with humor and heart. The play was workshopped in 2015 and now is receiving its Rolling World Premiere in 2017-18.

New Play Frontiers is the equivalent of Horizon's New South Play Festival program, which commissions and creates new plays that tell stories from our own urban Southern community – whether it's a comedy about real-life happenings in Waffle House restaurants or the powerful story of refugees resettled in Clarkston, GA. **When we discovered *Project Dawn* through NNPN, we knew that this play was a terrific match because of our theatres' shared goals of bringing stories of local and national importance to our communities.** We are also both actors' theatres at heart, creating plays with great roles for actors, stretching the talents of ensembles. And we are both theatres with female artistic leaders, seeking to create more gender parity in American theatre by producing plays by and about women in every season.

***Though Project Dawn* was written about a court program in Philadelphia, the play resonates deeply in Atlanta which has an all-too-thriving sex trade industry and is one of the top cities in the country for sex trafficking.** Why is this? Who are these women? Do they participate by choice or by force? If they want a new life, how do they get it? The stories you will see tonight mirror what is happening right here, right now, in our own backyard.

Karen Hartman's use of 7 actors to play the 14 roles in the script—half clients and half court staff—is an intentional pairing and powerful look at how privilege and circumstances shape our path. Are the court staff and clients really very different at their core? "There for the Grace of God, go I." When is a choice not a choice? How does privilege—racial, gender and economic—dictate our power in the world? How does personal responsibility to "make good choices" align with the reality that sometimes there are no good choices at all?

We hope as you watch tonight you will get wrapped up in the stories of these brave, funny, and powerful women on both sides of the law. We hope it will open your eyes and heart to the human face of this issue. We hope you will see your own life reflected in these women. We hope you will think about your own privilege and power and how it has shaped your path. And we hope you will also think about how you can help.

We are partnering with the many local non-profits and government agencies who offer help to victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking to provide you with information about their mission and services. There is information on our partners in your program and in the lobby. We will be having **special guest respondents** after most performances so you can talk directly with women who have been exploited and women and men who are active in the fight against sexual exploitation in Atlanta. **You can donate money, time, talent or goods to help the women directly and to shape our legal system.**

But ultimately, this is theatre and art. Here is the story, let us take you there. Thank you for taking the journey with us.

The Artistic Team

Lisa Adler	Lauren Morris	Christina Jundt	Colette Blackmon
Director	Asst Director and Community Engagement	Education and Producing Manager	Literary intern

Maggie Markham
Production Dramaturgy Intern

About the Real Project Dawn Court

The action of the play takes place over the course of five monthly sessions of Project Dawn Court (PDC), an alternative “problem-solving” court in Philadelphia for women with at least three prior arrests for prostitution. Project Dawn court was the first court of its kind in the country. It is a collaborative program among the traditional criminal justice system and community agencies that involves intensive supervision, treatment for sexual trauma, substance abuse, and mental health, and support dealing with issues such as housing, job training, education, child services, and medical care.

Participants who choose and are accepted into the program must plead “no contest” (nolo contendere) to their current open case. The judge holds their verdict in advisement and places the defendant on probation for one year. During this time, each participant must comply with PDC’s four-phase program which includes an individually tailored treatment schedule, weekly meetings with the probation officer, drug testing, individual and group therapy sessions, and other assigned requirements.

If a woman fails the program for any reason, her plea is entered and she could receive up to the maximum sentence of five years in prison. PDC holds mandatory monthly court meetings where the court staff work as a team to guide the women towards success. **All participants must stay for the entire all-day court session to observe, support, and learn from the experiences of their peers. When a participant completes or “graduates” from the program, her charges are dismissed.**

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“I met with the founders of Dawn’s Place, a home for survivors of the commercial sex trade. This led me to the Project Dawn Court, which serves women with prostitution convictions. Project Dawn differs from a conventional court by offering mandated therapy and trauma counseling, consistency of parole officers and other supervisory staff, and the assistance with survival needs, but operates within the court system. If a woman completes the year long program, her charges are dropped. If she fails, she does time. I sat in on that monthly court all year. I spoke with participants and with staff members. It was a humbling, deeply moving, sometimes excruciating line of inquiry, with surprisingly frequent comic moments. In this play seven actresses play double roles, each as a participant and a staff member of the court. **Seven faces, fourteen women, navigating safety, connection, confinement, and freedom.**” —Karen Hartman

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Here and Now - The Sex Trade in Atlanta and the Fight Against Exploitation

Atlanta is considered a major center of sex trade activity and trafficking. Its role as a hub of transportation—namely, the busiest airport in the world, a confluence of major interstates and our close proximity to ports and borders—means that there are ample opportunities to move victims from place to place; and Atlanta’s standing as an epicenter of business and recreation with a large affluent population mean that there is no lack of demand. In fact, according to a 2014 study funded by the US Department of Justice, **Atlanta has the largest cash-based underground sex economy at \$290 million a year.** There is a significant amount of pimp-controlled prostitution on the street and online through websites such as Craigslist and Backpage, often involving trafficked minors. Pimps operating out of Atlanta often travel to other cities for large events, and that since 2005, **Atlanta’s pimps have been make an average of \$33,000 every week,** compared to about \$12,000 a week in Dallas and about \$11,000 in San Diego. The Atlanta area also has a high degree of Latino brothel activity, with brothels generally operating out of rented apartments or cantina dance clubs and advertised through word of mouth. Similar to massage parlors, which also thrive in our city, a lot of brothels network with one another and are highly organized and structured.

To address these significant challenges, **Atlanta is home to several problem-solving courts that operate similarly to Project Dawn Court,** though only DeKalb County’s Phoenix program is organized specifically to offer defendants in misdemeanor prostitution cases the opportunity to participate in a program offering counseling, as well as educational and employment opportunities. **Service organizations** throughout the region provide strategies to identify victims who may come through the medical or court system, and supply a path out of the life with addiction recovery, housing, counseling, reintegration therapy. They are also working on **legislative solutions** to the problem and creating methods of **reducing the demand** by identifying, tracking, publicly calling out, and educating the johns who are at the root of the problem.

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National Human Trafficking Hotline

1-888-373-7888

A national, toll-free hotline, available 24 hours a day. Report a tip. Request service.

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“I sort of slipped in to that court the first time, introduced very briefly by Mary (DeFusco, a founder of the court program), and I took notes but didn’t record. I kept coming back. I was really just a fly on the wall for these court sessions, which are long, and both formulaic and intense. Each of 50 or so women stands up to give her monthly report, some are brief and some highly emotional, and some get sentenced to jail from the courtroom. Also there are celebrations in the courtroom of each milestone of

success or recovery. I interviewed women in the program whom the staff considered stable enough to talk to me. Each woman would start with some version of, 'My life could be a movie, I swear.'

- Karen Hartman

Partner Organization page – change top to this:

OUR PROJECT DAWN COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Horizon would like to sincerely thank the following organizations for their partnership on *Project Dawn*. These are metropolitan Atlanta organizations and change-makers devoted to fighting commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), trafficking and their effects on our communities.

Representatives of these organizations will be speaking after performances throughout the run to help educate us about what is happening in our city and how we can help. Please visit our resource table in the lobby and Blue Room to learn more about the important work these nonprofits are doing.

Special thanks to Commissioner Tim Echols, Faith Henning, Kasey McClure, Jennifer Swain, Lisa Parsons, Diane Dougherty, Vanessa Jackson, and Bryncia Milam for their invaluable help connecting with our community.

LIST OF PARTNERS:

4Sarah

4sarah.net

A faith based nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower change in the life direction of women and girls who are adult entertainers, prostitutes, escorts, porn stars, or victims of sex trafficking by providing a system of care that offers educational, emotional, physical, and spiritual support.

Atlanta Redemption Ink

678-926.9946

atlantaredemptionink.com

Provides minors and women who have had gang symbols forced on them, sex trafficking brandings forced on them, self-harm scars, domestic violence scars or tattoos and have them removed by a reputable certified removal specialist OR give them an opportunity to have it replaced by a cover-up that symbolizes freedom, beauty and redemption in a safe environment.

Beloved Atlanta
770-630-7765
belovedatlanta.org

The only two-year residential home & program for adult women surviving prostitution, trafficking and addiction in Atlanta, GA

Billion Rising
onebillionrisingatl@gmail.com
onebillionrisingatlanta.net

Works to end the sexual and gender based violence and inequities that disproportionately affect women and girls. Focuses on building community through collaborative Art. Builds, supports, and amplifies the work of Atlanta-based collaborative relationships that produce local to global actions that make a positive difference.

Devereux
(770) 427-0147
devereux.org

Devereux Georgia's Residential CSEC Program provides sophisticated treatment for girls from around the country who have experienced emotional, physical and sexual trauma.

Dress for Success
404-589-1177
atlanta.dressforsuccess.org

Empowers women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire and the development tools to help women thrive in work and in life.

Haven ATL
404-638-7262
www.havenatl.org

Dedicated to serving women who have fallen victim to commercial sexual exploitation in the Metro Atlanta area through prevention, education, case management, and outreach.

House of Cherith
404-874-2241
cityofrefugeatl.org/house-of-cherith

Serves as a safe house and refreshing home for victims of sex exploitation and trafficking. The goal of House of Cherith is to provide women with the opportunity for rescue, restoration, and a chance to start a new life.

Southern Crescent Sexual Assault Center
scsac.org
770-603-4045

Providing a collaborative, coordinated community response in an effort to reduce the incidence of child maltreatment and sexual violence through prevention, intervention, and education.

Vanessa Jackson, LCSW
healingcircles.org
404-755-4988

Vanessa Jackson is a licensed clinical social worker who wrote *A User's Guide to Power* which is featured in Project Dawn.

Wellspring Living Women's Residential Program

wellspringliving.org/women

404-427-3100

A long-term residential program (12-18 months) for providing care to adult female survivors of Domestic Sex Trafficking with the end goal of independent living, a living wage job and appropriate housing.

youthSpark

info@youth-spark.org.

youth-spark.org

Innovator in transforming the lives of youth at risk for exploitation and abuse, and a thought-leader in reducing child exploitation and sex trafficking rates in Georgia and across the country.

Rescuing Hope

info@rescuinghope.com

rescuinghope.com

Enlightens the public about sex trafficking in America, educates potential victims and first responders, and empowers advocates and survivors.

About the Playwright

Karen Hartman is an award-winning playwright and librettist who writes about human beings in the crosshairs of history. In the past and upcoming year, she will have had four acclaimed new plays premiered and produced across the country: *Roz and Ray* (2016 Edgerton New Play Prize) at Seattle Repertory Theatre, Victory Gardens San Diego Repertory Theater and Theater J in Washington DC, *Project Dawn* (NEA Art Works Grant, National New Play Network Rolling World Premiere) at People's Light and Theatre, Horizon Theatre and Unicorn Theater in Kansas City, *The Book of Joseph* at Chicago Shakespeare and Everyman Theater in Baltimore, and *SuperTrue* (Kilroy's List of top plays by women) at Know Theater in Cincinnati.

Her plays have been commissioned and staged by dozens of theaters in the US and worldwide. *Goldie, Max, and Milk* premiered at Florida Stage and was nominated for the Steinberg/American Critics Award (Best New American Regional Play) and the Carbonell Award (Best New Play in Florida). *Gum*, which premiered at Baltimore's Center Stage, has seen dozens of productions at theaters and universities across the country and in Europe.

A New Dramatists alumna and past Core Member of the Playwright's Center, Ms. Hartman's work has been supported by the Rockefeller Foundation at Bellagio, the National Endowment for the Arts, Princeton's Hodder Fellowship, the Helen Merrill Foundation, the O'Neill Playwrights Conference, a Daryl Roth Creative Spirit Award, a Joseph A. Callaway Award from New Dramatists, a Jerome Fellowship, and a Fulbright Scholarship to Jerusalem. She has been a guest artist at the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain.

Ms. Hartman grew up in San Diego and has a B.A. from Yale University and an M.F.A. from the Yale School of Drama. She has taught playwriting in a wide range of settings, including four years at the Yale School of Drama. She lived in Brooklyn until 2014, when she became Senior Artist in Residence at the University of Washington in Seattle. www.karenhartman.org

PUT ABOUT HORIZON THEATRE COMPANY BELOW THIS.