

Divine Riot and Healing TREE Commission New Play, The Big Bad, by Ren Dara Santiago

The Big Bad explores intergenerational trauma and marginalized identities through video games and the supernatural. A workshop production is set for 2026.

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, January 9, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When Ash, the youngest of three adult foster siblings, has a mental health crisis, their family reunites in the New York City home that shaped them all. As Ash uses their background in video game building to mire through layers of memory and myth, a battle ensues to overcome their soul-family's unresolved wounds. The Big Bad explores intergenerational trauma, marginalized identities and the supernatural - and asks the timely question, "What drives us to keep moving through despair?"

The Big Bad is a Divine Riot and Healing TREE production, with Cassidy Layton and Marissa Ghavami producing and Ren Dara Santiago writing and co-producing.

Santiago is a Fili-Rican, nonbinary, New York City native as well as a Lanford Wilson award-winning playwright and screenwriter. As a 2019-2020 TOW Playwright-in-Residence, Santiago's The



Divine Riot's Logo



Healing Tree Logo

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Siblings Play was set to premiere at the renowned Rattlestick Playwrights Theater in March 2020, co-produced by Piece by Piece Productions. They were also a staff writer on Let the Right One In on Showtime.

“A few of my loved ones, and myself, struggle with suicidality,” said Santiago. “It gets worse when we can’t pay our bills and risk eviction. It gets worse when parts of our identity get shunned, ridiculed and erased. I want to tell a story that lets people who are struggling feel boundless once again.”

“In a time when human rights are under attack, when poverty and houselessness are on the rise, alongside fascism and conspiracy theories, so many people feel incredibly alone,” said Cassidy Layton, founder of Divine Riot, a three-year old theater and film production company that has produced multiple theater productions, two films (to be released), and supported numerous writers through its Works in Process workshops. “We created Divine Riot to tell these stories in a provocative way that reaches beyond politics and speaks to human, everyday personal challenges,” added Layton.

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“I can’t wait to share this unique story with audiences. I think so many folks will relate to its core themes and see themselves in these characters who are striving to overcome their wounds,” says Ghavami, founder of Healing TREE, co-producer of Mass (Sundance '21, theatrical release, BAFTA nominee).

Healing TREE (Trauma Resources, Education & Entertainment) is a nonprofit advocating for healing from abuse and trauma rather than coping with the symptoms in order to transform lives and ultimately society. They

achieve this by providing trauma-focused resources and education and by producing and partnering with relevant film, television, and theatre, empowering the social change necessary to create a healing movement.

For more information about The Big Bad, visit www.divineriot.org/the-big-bad. For more



The workshopping process

information about Divine Riot, visit www.divineriot.org and for more information about Healing TREE, visit <https://healingtreenonprofit.org>.

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