

INCOGNEGRO: AN UNSUNG HERO
Written and Directed by Eric Schmiedl

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

World Premier Theatrical adaptation of Best Selling Graphic Novel, “Incognegro”
By acclaimed Novelist, Mat Johnson

WHEN: Friday, November 25 and Saturday, November 26, 2016

WHERE: Breen Performing Arts Center, 2008 West 30th Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44113
(located on the campus of Saint Ignatius High School)

CONTACT: Sue Templar or Pierre C. Betts, Production Coordinators at (216) 861-4246
or pbetts@clevelandtreatmentcenter.org

Cleveland, OH (October 12, 2016) - **Cleveland Treatment Center** has been honored with an opportunity to proudly present the world premiere of a theatrical adaptation of highly acclaimed Novelist and Professor Matt Johnson’s Best Selling graphic novel “*Incognegro*”. Award winning Playwright and Director Eric Schmiedl brings years of experience and proven success to this project. Tony Minor, Ph.D., President of United Pastors in Mission notes that “ a rich history of theatrical projects based on the lives of local, state and national figures that have inspired, challenged and empowered so many audiences was a major consideration of author Matt Johnson” to grant this privilege. Works reviewed included stories about the late Cleveland City Councilperson Fannie M. Lewis, Football Coach and Founder of the Ginn Academy Ted Ginn, Sr., former gang leader and National Recording artist Sal Perez, Senior Pastor of the Victory Outreach Church in Tucson, Arizona.

“*Incognegro*” is a fictionalized story of a light-skinned African American reporter - Zane Pinchback, who “passes” as white to investigate lynching in the early years of the 20th century. Zane is very similar to other detectives or secret agents like: Jason Bourne, James Bond and Ezekiel “Easy” Rawlins. From New York, he travels to Mississippi where he encounters the bigotry and accepted social norms of lawlessness that has landed his dark-skinned brother in jail, wrongfully accused of a murder.

It is a mystery and crime and detective story; and the ideal production to encourage adolescents to read about this vital part of American History. The staging of this work is a timely response to the cross-cultural and sub-cultural differences, stressors and tensions of today and the way we relate to family and community. As a multi-cultural experience, “*Incognegro*” examines the realities of oppression in a society that historically has discriminated against many ethnic groups from Irish to Iranians, Asian, Indigenous people, the children of slaves and LGBTQ communities.

What matters most in this production, is not bits of information but how we demonstrate respect for each other and our differences. The graphic novel handles cultural awareness as a basic, yet comprehensive look at the role of culture in communication. It is often that such a

simple thing leads to misunderstandings and prejudice. Communication is key in cross/sub-cultural understanding.

“*Incognegro*” is a “fearless” tale inspired by the real life story of Walter F. White, Executive Secretary of the NAACP (1931 – 1955), who made similar trips to investigate lynchings. Gripping and gritty, this production is suggested for mature audiences ages, 12 years and up.

Playwright/Director, Eric Schmiedl’s life experience provides added value to this adaptation. He notes that “*Incognegro* is certainly a dramatic story and helps to explore important ideas and identity in America. I am part of a culturally diverse family. I come from a German/Irish-American background and my wife’s father is Nigerian and her mom Polish-American. Our two boys can easily pass for Caucasian; so, color, culture, race and identity are a part of our daily lives.”

Please contact the persons above to schedule interviews with Mr. Schmiedl, actor Peter Lawson Jones (former Cuyahoga County Commissioner) or other cast members. This event is made possible by a grant received from **Cuyahoga Arts and Culture**.

INCOGNEGRO
A GRAPHIC MYSTERY

WRITTEN BY MAT JOHNSON ART BY WARREN PLEECE

“Mat Johnson has done it again, namely written a deep story of pain and laughter that probes the complex dynamics of white supremacy in America. Don’t miss it!”
Cornel West,
Princeton University

Tupelo, Mississippi — Once again in the cinema I bring you news that a colored man stands accused of the seduction of a white woman, and once again, though there be no proof our realistic nation, the mere accusation could be enough to result in this innocent fellow’s persecution. “Escape from,” wrote the poet, and strange fruit indeed (strawberries to those here in Mississippi) if men do not stand up to injustice, stand up to intolerance and hatred give us to fear and hysteria. This strange and watched fruit, hidden and professed, is not merely a reference to the colored bodies left to rot on the trees they are hung from, but also refers to the harmful fruit of injustice that we are planting in this great nation. In my way what you see, the Bible tells us. So if we as a country reap hatred, violence, and evil, what do we expect to see?

“A talented writer of both fiction and creative nonfiction, Johnson’s publications have established him as an important new voice in the African American tradition.”
Walter Mosley

“Ingenious, enlightening and powerful.” Paul Theroux

“Mat Johnson’s thoughtful writing and the moody realism of Warren Pleece’s art make this nasty bit of tarnished Americana come alive like a prodded snake. An exciting, disturbing piece of work.” George Pelecanos

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