Welcome to the resource pack for *Pass Over*, written by Antoinette Nwandu and directed by Indhu Rubasingham. Our aim with this guide is to allow insight into the production for students, educators, artists and anyone else interested in how work gets from the script to the stage.

We would like to thank the *Pass Over* team for giving their time and thoughts on their creative processes in bringing the production to Kiln Theatre.

### Hyperlinks
For further information, there are a number of hyperlinks which take you to external resources and are indicated by blue and underlined text or youtube.

### Please note:
You will need an internet connection to use this facility

### Navigation
You can navigate around the document in a number of ways

1. By clicking on the chapter menu bar at the foot of each page
2. By clicking any entry on the contents and chapter opening pages
3. By clicking the arrows at the bottom of each page
4. By turning on Page Thumbnails in Acrobat

### How to read this pack
This resource pack has been designed to be interactive using Adobe Acrobat Reader and has a number of features built in to enhance your reading experience.

### When to read this pack
This pack is designed to be read AFTER you have seen the show. It contains some SPOILERS that you may not want to know before seeing the production.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTOR’S NOTE</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PLAYWRIGHT</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMELINE</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REHEARSAL PROCESS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET DESIGN, INSPIRATION AND CHALLENGES</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREATIVE TEAM</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Gershywn Eustache Jnr
It’s been a privilege and honour for us to produce the British premiere of Pass Over at Kiln Theatre.

It is a play that some members of the Kiln team read and pressed me to read, adamant it had a place on our stage. I remember very clearly getting the email allowing the Kiln to produce it. It was on the opening night of the first show in the new building. It felt auspicious.

I love this play. The economy of language is visceral and poetic and at the same time represents the many dualities of today. The constant threat of violence alongside the sense of fun and play. The incredible heartfelt love versus the cruelty of hate. The power and futility of hope.

We have a wonderful company – the actors, creatives and stage management team – and it’s been a fabulous opportunity to work with them.

It’s a play that is today, yesterday and centuries ago. We can only hope it’s not tomorrow.

I hope you enjoy your visit to Kiln Theatre.
THE PLAYWRIGHT | PASS OVER

Paapa Essiedu and Gershwyn Eustache Jnr
When I began writing Pass Over at the end of 2013, I was possessed of an emotion so unsettling in its demands for acknowledgement – for action – that I had no choice but to embark. As is often the case, the process of birthing this play has been uncertain and serpentine. But it has also been filled with discovery, healing and lasting collaborative relationships.

At the outset, I believed my play would concern a river crossing of some kind, and began researching the routes that enslaved black people – my ancestors – took north during the antebellum era. I also began scouring the manifests of slave ships in hopes of naming my characters after men who may very well have attempted these daring escapes. To my good fortune, a pair of names, Moses and Kitch, caught my attention. What must it have been like for an enslaved man to bear the name of a biblical patriarch empowered to lead his people to freedom? And what to make of the name Kitch, a seemingly incomplete word whose sound arrested the breath when spoken aloud? I knew instantly that these were the men about whom I would write.

What I discovered, however, was that the voices pouring forth from these characters, full-throated and beautiful, were not from an antebellum past, but grounded in my present-day reality. These men were my contemporaries, and yet they were fully imbued with both biblical and antebellum experiences. The thrill of this discovery did much to motivate that first draft. It became daring and urgent, grounded in the research I had done, but speaking about the pain we feel so acutely today.
Once the process was underway, beautifully, gracefully, the means to continue opened to me in the form of institutional support. I was accepted to the Dramatists Guild Fellowship and for the next nine months nurtured professional relationships among writers who held me accountable to the idea I couldn’t shake.

In June 2014, Pass Over was programmed at the National Black Theatre of Harlem’s Keep Soul Alive reading series. I don’t think I’ve ever fully processed until now how much anxiety I held in my body during that reading. Honestly calling out the state-sanctioned violence of black people during a reading when the day, the week, the month has been spent grief-stricken and afraid at account after bloody account of that same violence is a necessary yet dangerous act. Violence that seems to foretell a political system re-aligning itself to the centrality of white oppression after the optical misstep that was the presidency of Barack Hussein Obama.

After that reading and the rewrites it motivated, and despite the apprehension I felt, I sent the play into the world. In November 2015 Pass Over was selected for the Cherry Lane Mentorship program in New York, a whirlwind process that led to another major rewrite of the play, and the creation of the character Ossifer.
At this point, the plot involved Moses and Kitch interacting with Mister; the threat of violence entered the space as anonymous gunshots that kept our heroes afraid, but not much else. I wanted to make that threat more immediate, but feared that introducing a police officer character would place the audience ahead of the action of the play. Once an armed white man in uniform stepped onstage, we’d instinctively know where the play would end up. My logical mind told me to abandon the idea, but my gut knew there was a way forward.

During my time in Ars Nova’s PlayGroup, my professional identity got a leg up in the world. I signed with agents and was offered my first professional production at Steppenwolf Theater in Chicago. I decided on a director and lived everyday anticipating the fact that my primary professional goal for the last four years – to enjoy a World Premiere of one of my plays – was about to occur.

That my rehearsal process included completing the rewrite I’d envisioned all those months before is a testament to the flexibility, imagination and sheer talent of my collaborators. They allowed me the space to overhaul the script (no small task during a World Premiere rehearsal process), and believed in the changes I was making. In the end, Ryan Hallahan was double cast as both Mister and Ossifer, a cop whose life is forever changed after his encounter with Moses and Kitch on the block.
The production made a much bigger impact than anyone could have anticipated. I left Chicago exhausted but proud. The play was out in the world, and audiences were responding.

I would go on to do one more rewrite during the rehearsal process a year later as the play received its New York premiere at Lincoln Center Theatre. The rewrites this time around focused on Mister’s final monologue, making it much less overt. I also added a section to the first encounter between Moses and Kitch, and Ossifer that allows them to seemingly get away with their plan to speak ‘correctly’ for a few destabilizing minutes.

Once again audiences energetically received the play, and thankfully the critical response – the production garnered a New York Times critic’s pick – happened without controversy.

Now, as *Pass Over* enjoys its UK Premiere, I feel a rush of pride as black & brown communities here in London share in the rich experience of this play. Many thanks to Indhu, Paapa, Gershwyn Alexander, and everyone at the Kiln for this triumphant production.
TIMELINE | PASS OVER

Paapa Essiedu and Gershywn Eustache Jnr
The Declaration of Independence was issued on July 4th, stating “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights”. However, this did not extend to slaves of which there was already a significant population.

The Trans-Atlantic slave trade operated by the British was one of the biggest businesses of the 18th century. About 600,000 of 10 million African slaves were taken to the American colonies before the slave trade – but not slavery – was abolished by Congress in 1808. By 1860, records show nearly 13% of America’s population was enslaved.

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1. The proclamation declared “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.” However, the proclamation did not bring slavery to an end.

Passed by Congress on January 31, the 13th amendment abolished slavery in the United States. Two months before his assassination the same year, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed passing the 13th amendment “is, in fact, the central act of my administration, and the great event of the 19th century.”

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 was the first United States federal law to affirm all citizens as equally protected by the law. African American men were granted the right to vote and African Americans were extended birthright citizenship.
1926
As a reaction to Jim Crow laws and extreme segregation, and as more jobs became available in the north and midwest, more than 2 million southern African Americans migrated to those areas after WWI. But even outside of the South, these migrating Americans were met by “sundown towns”, which did not allow the presence of black people after sunset. African Americans were also restricted in where they could live in cities.

1955
On December 1, civil rights activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a public bus to a white passenger. Her arrest resulted in a sustained bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama led by Martin Luther King, Jr. The boycott continued for more than a year. Eventually, the Supreme Court upheld a ruling that segregated seating was unconstitutional.

1961
On May 4, with a group of seven African Americans and six whites, the Freedom Riders, boarded two buses bound for New Orleans in order to test the Supreme Court's ruling. The activists used facilities for the opposite race as their buses made stops along the way.

1964
On July 2, Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson, signed the Civil Rights Act into law, which empowered the federal government to prevent racial discrimination in employment, voting, and the use of public facilities.

1965
On February 21, Malcolm X is assassinated during a lecture at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, New York.
Responding to the assassination of Malcolm X and protests across the country the Black Panther Party is founded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in Oakland, California, to resist police brutality. The Black Panthers offered community services like tuberculosis testing, legal aid, transportation assistance, and free shoes to poor people. The Black Panthers’ socialist politics made them a target of the FBI’s counterintelligence program who accused them of being a communist organization and an enemy of the U.S. government. They embarked on a campaign to annihilate the Panthers which came to a head in December 1969 with a police shootout at Black Panther headquarters.

On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated while staying in a hotel in Memphis, Tennessee by a sniper after leading a nonviolent demonstration of striking sanitation workers. His murder sparked riots in hundreds of cities across the country, and led to Congress passing the Fair Housing Act in his honour on April 11. This legislation made it illegal to refuse to rent, sell, or provide financing for housing based on factors other than an individual’s financial resources.

On February 26, 2012 Trayvon Martin was fatally shot at the age of 17 by George Zimmerman, after going to a convenience store. Zimmerman was not charged by the Sanford Police until a public outcry, after which Zimmerman was charged with second-degree murder and manslaughter. When Zimmerman was acquitted, The Black Lives Matter movement officially began. Zimmerman went on to sell the gun he used to shoot Trayvon Martin for $250,000.

Renisha McBride was shot dead in Detroit on November 2 at the age of 19 after a car accident forced her to knock on the door of Theodore Wafer’s home for help. Wafer shot her through his door. Activists rallied in Detroit after her death and launched an online campaign for justice. Wafer was sentenced to 17 years for a raft of charges including second-degree murder and manslaughter.
2014

On July 17 Eric Garner, 43, was choked to death on Staten Island, New York by NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo after being put in a chokehold on the side of the road. Footage taken by a bystander shows Garner gasping for air and saying “I can’t breathe” several times before turning limp. The phrase subsequently became a key part of the Black Lives Matter movement.

On August 9 18 year old Michael Brown was killed by police officer Darren in Ferguson, Missouri.

Two days later on August 11, Ezell Ford, who according to his family had a mental disability, was killed by Los Angeles police officers while walking in the street. After an autopsy confirmed Ford had been shot in the back at close range protests erupted in Missouri and a state of emergency was declared.

Then on October 20 Laquan McDonald, was shot 16 times in 13 seconds by police officer Jason Van Dyke after he refused to drop a three-inch knife in Chicago, Illinois. He was 17. Rahm Emanuel, the Mayor of Chicago fired the city’s police superintendent Garry McCarthy over his handling of the shooting and Officer Van Dyke was charged with murder.

On November 23 Tamir Rice was shot dead at the age of 12 while playing in a park with a toy gun. Within seconds of arriving on the scene, police officer Timothy Loehmann fired two shots, fatally injuring Rice who succumbed to his injuries the day after he was shot. A Cleveland grand jury decided not to bring charges against Loehmann and his partner Frank Garmback.

2015

After being arrested in Baltimore Freddie Gray died from injuries sustained in police custody on April 12. The 25-year-old’s requests for his inhaler were ignored and against police policy he was put into the back of a police van without a restraint or seatbelt to keep him safe. During transportation he went into a coma. Then, 7 days later he died from injuries to his spinal cord. Demonstrations erupted against his treatment and the National Guard was engaged to control the situation.

Two months later, on July 13, Sandra Bland was found hung in her cell at 28, while in police custody in Texas, after being pulled over for a minor traffic violation.
Paapa Essiedu and Alexander Eliot

REHEARSAL PROCESS | PASS OVER
Working on Pass Over in the rehearsal room has been an exciting, rigorous and demanding process and the artistry involved in making the show has been hugely inspiring. It was clear from the first read through that we were working with an exceptionally talented cast. Paapa Essiedu, Gershwyn Eustache Jnr and Alex Eliot have built a strong creative relationship, necessary for a text of this nature.

In the first week, we were lucky enough to have Antoinette Nwandu with us, the playwright. We capitalised on this by going through the script with a fine-tooth comb with her, stopping at any point to ask questions and to clarify moments. Antoinette was an incredible resource for us all.

Once we had finished close reading the text, we began to get up on our feet to explore what the world of the play might look like. Indhu works in layers. The first time we got up on our feet was about exploring, not setting anything but being playful in the space with each other. This felt like an empowering process for the actors to build and deepen their character work. With each pass, we would find more detail, further layers.
One of the most important explorations was around finding the physicality of the characters. What was their physical world? We worked with movement director Lanre Malaolu in order to do this. Amongst other things we explored the weight of the characters, how lightly or heavily do they hold themselves? Where might they lead from and how does breath impact the body? For Alex, who plays two very different characters, Mister and Ossifer, his challenge was to inhabit two characters with enough detail to make us believe they are unique. Lanre spent time with Alex on the vibrating tension Ossifer carries in him as opposed to the lighter movements of Mister. He also spent a long time exploring the moments when the characters flinch. He spoke about the body being frozen caught in the state between flight or flight. Breath was key to this.

Movement is central to the production because it also tells us a lot about the relationship between Kitch and Moses. Lanre started with devising a bank of material with Paapa and Gershwyn unique to their characters. From daps to dance, the characters are very physically expressive. And with each physical detail, they build a language which only they speak. We’re able to tell a lot about how long the characters have known each other by how specific their daps are for example. We can also glean how much time they’ve had to makes games with each other being stuck on the block.
Probably the biggest movement set piece was the transition between act 1 and 2. Lanre approached making this by looking back at the bank of physical material he devised with Paapa and Gershwyn. What were the games that they would play on the block together? How did they pass their time? We linked these movement sequences together to make an abstract transition to show the passing of time.

Our fight director, Kevin McCurdy, also worked on the physical world of the play including directing the extended wrestling scene which was particularly fun. But he also worked with Alex on exploring the violence of Ossifer. I also sent some research through to Alex of video footage of police brutality in America to give some context. We focussed on how your physicality can feel intimidating and maintain power. We discovered that this is a very complex thing depending on how sustained or frantic someone’s movement is among other factors. We discovered that most of the officer’s power lies in his weapons- his gun and baton- which he uses to humiliate the men. This meant that merely referencing his weapons would be enough to force Kitch and Moses to do whatever he wants. Kevin worked with Alex on how the police officers are trained to shoot including their stance and how they hold their guns, how they would use their batons and what typical threat response training involves.
We spent a lot of time working on the plagues at the end of the play. This was the most technically complex moment of the production, lighting, sound and movement wise so a lot of our work on it had to be completed during our technical rehearsals. As Moses is imbued with the power of God, he makes a transformation so Lanre focussed on the use of breath in filling the body and making it more imposing. In addition, he worked with Paapa on maintaining a slower and sustained movement to indicate his growing power. Oliver Fenwick, our lighting designer, and Ben Ringham, our sound designer and composer, worked together to achieve the more magical elements of the plagues, the sound of locusts swarming, lights flickering and the floor becoming hot like molten lava.

All in all, this rehearsal process has been an exciting opportunity to work with a talented team to tell a powerful story that sadly remains as relevant today as ever. The relationship between Moses and Kitch and the joy they have in becoming each other’s brothers is beautiful, moving and hopeful. It’s been a pleasure to work on.
PASS OVER

SET DESIGN, INSPIRATION AND CHALLENGES

Alexander Eliot, Paapa Essiedu and Gershywn Eustache Jnr
Whilst designing *Pass Over* I looked at lots of reference photos of US street corners at night, I was particularly interested in street lamps and signs.

As the play has a ‘nod’ to *Waiting for Godot* I wanted to create a form of tree with signs and light fittings in an urban and empty landscape/street corner.

The main challenge in the design was one of audience inclusion. As the show is being performed in the round, everyone has a different view and perspective of the set from wherever that are sitting.

It’s not like a conventional proscenium design where we could control the picture from one point of view.
Photographs: Robert Jones
PASS OVER

CAST

ALEXANDRA ELIOT
MISTER / OSSIFER

PAAPA ESSIEDU
MOSES

GERSHWIN EUSTACHE JNR
KITCH

CREATIVE TEAM

ANTOINETTE NWANDU
PLAYWRIGHT

INDHU RUBASINGHAM
DIRECTOR

ROBERT JONES
DESIGNER

OLIVER FENWICK
LIGHTING DESIGNER

BEN & MAX RINGHAM
COMPOSERS & SOUND DESIGNERS

BRIONY BARNETT
CASTING DIRECTOR

LANRE MALAOLU
MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

JULIA HORAN CDG
CASTING DIRECTOR

HAZEL HOLDER
VOICE & DIALECT COACH

KEVIN MCCURDY
FIGHT DIRECTOR

ANTHONY SIMPSON-PIKE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

STAGE MANAGEMENT TEAM

CYNTHIA DUBERRY & JULIA SLIENGER
COMPANY STAGE MANAGER

HELEN FLETCHER
DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER

KATE KENAH
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER
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