



UNIVERSITY OF SAINT JOSEPH

CONNECTICUT

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DAHLAK BRATHWAITE OF HBO'S DEF POETRY JAM TO BRING ORIGINAL PERFORMANCE, *SPIRITRIALS*, TO THE UNIVERSITY OF SAINT JOSEPH

WEST HARTFORD, CONN. (Sept. 23, 2016) – Dahlak Brathwaite will be performing *Spiritrials*, in which he layers characters, poetic verse, and dialogue over the content of songs to create a theatrical piece that blurs the lines between hip-hop and dramatic performance. Addiction, religion, and the law intersect in a timely exploration of the criminal justice system at the University of Saint Joseph's Autorino Center for the Arts and Humanities, located at 1678 Asylum Ave, West Hartford, Conn.

Performances will take place on Friday, Sept. 30, and Saturday, Oct. 1, at 8 p.m. General Admission tickets are \$25; seniors, USJ Alumni, and *Let's Go Arts* Members: \$20; students: \$15. For more information, visit www.usj/arts or call 860-231-5555.

"Spiritrials is a performance that works in perfect harmony with USJ's new Criminal Justice/Restorative Justice program," said Wayne Steely, Ph.D., Dean of USJ's School of Humanities and Social Sciences. "Both view the criminal justice system through a different lens: not just as a vehicle to punish, but as an exploration of how individuals and our society become broken and can be made whole."

Written and performed by Brathwaite, *Spiritrials* chronicles the journey of Dahlak's own criminalization along with his struggle to be vindicated and decriminalized in the eyes of the law and society. The piece works through the personal shame of criminal stigmatization to examine the factors – both internal and external – that have misplaced him in what appears to be a cultural rite of passage.

"This wasn't the path that I had imagined for myself," Brathwaite says. "I wasn't an at-risk youth, I'd never even gotten suspended in high school, and I found myself walking the line of freedom and jail. I had just graduated from college and had to go back and receive a totally different type of education."

The two-man show features musical accompaniment by DJ Dion Decibels, a prominent force in the Bay area music scene, who seamlessly mixes soul, funk, hip-hop, Latin, and house music.

Dahlak Brathwaite is a multi-faceted hip hop artist blending his skills as musician, actor, poet and educator within the transformational space of the theater. He has appeared with Lauryn Hill, Mos Def, Talib Kweli, Common, Last Poets, KRS-One, Afrika Bambataa, and Saul Williams

Since launching into the national spoken-word scene by winning the Brave New Voices international poetry slam (as now seen on HBO), Dahlak has performed on the “Tavis Smiley Radio Show” and the past two seasons of Russell Simmons’ present Def Poetry Jam. Dahlak has worked with Broadway veteran and Rockefeller fellow Marc Bamuthi Joseph by writing and performing in Bamuthi’s critically-acclaimed plays *Scourge* and *Word Becomes Flesh*. As a member of the organization iLL-Literacy, Dahlak has showcased his seamless, blend of hip hop, theatre, and spoken word throughout the U.S. and overseas. From 2007 to 2010, Dahlak released three musical projects including his full-length album, *Dual Consciousness*.

Directed by Marc Bamuthi Joseph and Sean San José.

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