

THE MARSH BERKELEY EXTENDS
THE ALLURE OF THUG LIFE

Written and Performed by Mélia Mills
Developmental Support by David Ford
November 25-December 16, 2023

BERKELEY, CA (9 November 2023) — Due to popular demand, **The Marsh Berkeley** has extended the 2023 Hollywood Fringe Festival favorite *The Allure of Thug Life* written and performed by actress/writer/comedian/rapper **Mélia Mills** with developmental support by **David Ford**. In this hip-hopsical comedy, Oakland native Mills is an upper-middle class teen who wants to be a gangster rapper. Audiences find Mills as a 15-year-old who just wants to fit in at her new high school but is bullied regularly. Struggling to find her own voice, Mills discovers her talent as a rapper and begins straddling the fence between the good life and thug life. In a journey from riches to rags, she encounters bullets, bullying, boyfriends, in a riveting tale of discovering one's authentic self and the lengths one will go to own it. *The Allure of Thug Life* will play through its original run **now through November 11, 2023**, and will return **November 25-December 16, 2023**, with performances at 5:00pm Saturdays at **The Marsh Berkeley**, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley. For information or to order tickets (\$25-\$35 sliding scale, \$50 and \$100 reserved), the public may visit themarsh.org.

The Allure of Thug Life made its world premiere at the 2023 Hollywood Fringe Festival where it won several awards including Best Musical, the Ella Turenne Award, the Pick of The Fringe, and the Encore Producer Award. This hip-hopsical was hailed a “joyous one-woman show full of original and funny hip-hop compositions and a unique portrayal of being a special kind of high-school outcast” by *Los Angeles Magazine* and was named one of the “10 promising shows to check out” by *Los Angeles Times*. Through Mélia’s point of view woven with perspectives from her Black family that has “made it,” the show explores themes of bullying, violence, economic inequality, class, colorism, pride, perseverance, self-love, and respect. It then made its way to The Marsh Berkeley in October 2023 where *The Allure of Thug Life* received critical acclaim. The *SF Theater Blog* noted, “Mélia Mills' *The Allure of Thug Life* is the most refreshing new show we've seen in a long while. She's a classy performer coming into theater through a brand-

new door. And a filled-up audience tells you it's working.” *Theatrius* hailed this solo show as filled with “delightful pride and charm,” calling Mills “a force of nature, exposing her fragility as a young Black girl and demonstrating her considerable talents,” adding, “she spins comic gold from teen-age traumas.”

ABOUT MÉLIA MILLS

Mélia Mills (Writer/Performer) is an Oakland native. She graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor of Arts in Theater Arts and is and is a writer, comedian, actress, and rapper. Mélia co-hosted the podcast “TALK LIKE A GIRL” on *Feral Audio* and was selected by Anna Deavere Smith to take part in her Performing Personal Narratives, Global Identities workshop. She has opened for Dave Chappelle, the “Jerry Seinfeld of France,” Gad Elmaleh, and collaborated with Sacha Baron Cohen on script and character development. Mills created, wrote, produced, directed, and acted in her ensemble piece, *JUNETEENTH - An Emancipation Celebration!* to a sold-out crowd at UCB. She was a writer and performer on UCB’s House Team, CHARACTERS WELCOME.

ABOUT DAVID FORD

David Ford (Developmental Support) has been collaborating on new and unusual theatre for three decades and has been associated with The Marsh for most of that time. The San Francisco press has variously called him “the solo performer maven,” “the monologue maestro,” “the dean of solo performance,” and “the solo performer’s best friend.” A week rarely goes by when residents of the Bay Area cannot enjoy one of his productions. Collaborators include Geoff Hoyle, Brian Copeland, Charlie Varon, Echo Brown, Marilyn Pittman, Rebecca Fisher, Wayne Harris, Jill Vice, and Marga Gomez. Ford’s work has been seen regionally at The Public Theater, Second Stage Theater, Theatre at St. Clement’s, Dixon Place, Theatre for the New City (New York), Highways Performance Space (Los Angeles), and Woolly Mammoth Theatre Co. (Washington, D.C.). His work has also been featured in most of the fringe festivals in North America, as well as at theaters around the Bay Area including Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the Magic Theatre, and Marin Theatre Company. Ford’s directing has garnered several “Best of Fringe” Awards and a Goldie Award.

ABOUT THE MARSH

The Marsh is known as “a breeding ground for new performance.” It was launched in 1989 by Founder and Artistic Director Stephanie Weisman, and pre-COVID hosted more than 600 performances of 175 shows across the company’s two venues in San Francisco and Berkeley. A leading outlet for solo performers, The Marsh’s specialty has been hailed by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as “solo performances that celebrate the power of storytelling at its simplest and purest.” The *East Bay Times* named The Marsh one of Bay Area’s best intimate theaters, calling it “one of the most thriving solo theaters in the nation. The live theatrical energy is simply irresistible.” Since its launch in April 2020, the theatre’s digital platform MarshStream has garnered more than 100,000 viewers. Notable MarshStream moments include the debut of

MarshStream International Solo Fest 1 and 2, The Marsh's first-ever digital festivals, and the U.S. premiere of *The Invisible Line*, a new documentary about one of the world's most famous social experiments gone wrong. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic MarshStream has hosted over 700 live streams, providing some 300 performers a platform to continue developing and producing art. The Marsh will continue to offer digital content on MarshStream, as well as in-person performances.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: Due to popular demand, the 2023 Hollywood Fringe Festival favorite *The Allure of Thug Life* written and performed by actress/writer/comedian/rapper **Mélia Mills** with developmental support by **David Ford** extends **The Marsh Berkeley**. In this hip-hopsical comedy, Oakland native Mills is an upper-middle class teen who wants to be a gangster rapper. Audiences find Mills as a 15-year-old who just wants to fit in at her new high school but is bullied regularly. Struggling to find her own voice, Mills discovers her talent as a rapper and begins straddling the fence between the good life and thug life. In a journey from riches to rags, she encounters bullets, bullying, boyfriends, in a riveting tale of discovering one's authentic self and the lengths one will go to own it.

WHEN: Now through November 11, 2023, November 25-December 16, 2023

SHOWS: 5:00pm Saturdays

WHERE: **The Marsh Berkeley, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley**
Parking: Allston Way Garage, 2061 Allston Way between Milvia & Shattuck.
BART station (closest): Downtown Berkeley BART

TICKETS: \$25-\$35 sliding scale; \$50 and \$100 reserved

INFO: For information or to order tickets visit themarsh.org or call (415) 282-3055 (Monday through Friday, 1:00pm-4:00pm).

-30-

PRESS: Contact Courtney Heimbeck, Carla Befera & Co.
courtney@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<http://cbpr.co/press/theallureofthuglife>