

THE MARSH BERKELEY PRESENTS
FORMERLY INCARCERATED PEOPLE'S PERFORMANCE
PROJECT PRODUCTION
**THE BUMPY ROAD LESS
TRAVELED**

Written and Performed by Anthony "AJ" Michael Jefferson
Directed by Dylan Russell
July 10 – August 7, 2026

BERKELEY, CA (8 July 2026) — A story of reinvention after falling to hard times will shine through at **The Marsh Berkeley** as burgeoning playwright and performer **Anthony "AJ" Michael Jefferson** makes his Marsh debut run in ***The Bumpy Road Less Traveled***. Set from Hermosa Beach to the Bay Area, the story intimately follows AJ as his family's California dreams are unexpectedly wrenched by a horrific tragedy. In the aftermath, he rises to reinvent himself providing riveting insights into socioeconomic and humanitarian issues that plague the United States, including the prison industrial complex. Through the help of guardian angels, cherished family members, unexpected heroines, and lessons gleaned from slaying personal demons, ***The Bumpy Road Less Traveled***, developed with Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project (FIPPP), is a phoenix style revelation from one man who mastered his destiny. ***The Bumpy Road Less Traveled*** will be presented **7:30pm Fridays, July 10 – August 7, 2026** at **The Marsh Berkeley** (2120 Allston Way). For tickets (\$25-\$35 general admission sliding scale, \$50 and \$100 reserved, plus a \$3 convenience fee per ticket) or more information the public may visit themarsh.org.

"By producing this work in Berkeley, our hope is to alchemize the Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project's mission of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusivity through our community," said The Marsh Artistic/Executive Director **Stephanie Weisman**. "We commend Anthony 'AJ' Michael Jefferson for bravely sharing his true story as a beacon of hope and empowerment for anyone who has risen from tough times and reinvented themselves."

The Bumpy Road Less Traveled was developed with the Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project, a nonprofit organization created to support formerly incarcerated individuals through the creation and performance of original theatrical work. The organization's mission is to raise the voices of formerly incarcerated people to promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusivity in the arts and beyond.

ABOUT THE CAST AND CREATIVES

Anthony "AJ" Michael Jefferson (*playwright, performer*) is an actor, writer, chef, activist, and surfer. He has been seen in productions with Marin Shakespeare Company including playing the title role in *Othello* and the Boatswain in *The Tempest*. Jefferson is a fellow with the Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project.

Dylan Russell (*director*) is a professional director, actor, playwright and teaching artist who currently serves as artistic director of STORY613 and artistic director and co-founder of Dog² Productions. Most recently, she was the director of education, youth theatre and outreach at Laguna Playhouse, and for 16 years she chaired the Visual and Performing Arts Department at Jewish Community High School of the Bay, where she created the school's award-winning drama department, twice invited to perform at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. She has taught at California Shakespeare Theater, Marin Theatre and New Conservatory Theatre Center, and has directed productions for American Conservatory Theater's (A.C.T.) Conservatory program, TheatreFIRST, California Conservatory Theatre, Alchemy Works, New Conservatory Theatre's educational programs, Cassandra's Call and Actors Lab Arizona, in addition to serving as assistant director on productions with A.C.T., Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Eureka Theatre Company, including A.C.T.'s acclaimed production of Edward Albee's *The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?*. She has also adapted two of Roald Dahl's works, *A Lashing of Malice...* with Alchemy Works and the North American premiere of Dahl's *Matilda* at New Conservatory Theatre Center. Russell has written original scripts including *Evanesence* and *Prodigal Son*. She previously served as managing artistic director of California Conservatory Theatre.

ABOUT THE MARSH

The Marsh is known as "a breeding ground for new performance." Launched in 1989 by Founder and Artistic Director Stephanie Weisman, it annually hosts more than 500 performances 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 the 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." In April 2020, The Marsh launched its digital platform MarshStream and hosted more than 700 live streams which provided 300 performers and its youth class participants a platform to continue discovering, developing, and producing art during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. Today, The Marsh presents both in-person live performances and content on its MarshStream, continuing to expand its reach to audiences onsite and around the world. The Marsh believes in

the power of people's storytelling and has several classes for the public to create their own works as well as through its developing work performance series: Monday Night Marsh, Tell It on Tuesday, and Marsh Risings. The theater company also collaborates with over 25 San Francisco public schools providing a year-round youth program serving students at its theater and in the classrooms.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: A story of reinvention after falling to hard times will shine through at **The Marsh Berkeley** as burgeoning playwright and performer **Anthony "AJ" Michael Jefferson** makes his Marsh debut run in ***The Bumpy Road Less Traveled***. Set from Hermosa Beach to the Bay Area, the story intimately follows AJ as his family's California dreams are unexpectedly wrenched by a horrific tragedy. In the aftermath, he rises to reinvent himself providing riveting insights into socioeconomic and humanitarian issues that plague the United States, including the prison industrial complex. Through the help of guardian angels, cherished family members, unexpected heroines, and lessons gleaned from slaying personal demons, ***The Bumpy Road Less Traveled***, developed with Formerly Incarcerated People's Performance Project (FIPPP), is a phoenix style revelation from one man who mastered his destiny.

The Bumpy Road Less Traveled is:

Written and performed by Anthony "AJ" Michael Jefferson
Directed by Dylan Russell

WHEN: **July 10 – August 7, 2026**

SHOWS: **7:30pm Fridays**

WHERE: **The Marsh Berkeley, 2120 Allston Way, Berkeley, CA 94704**
Parking: Allston Way Garage, 2061 Allston Way between Milvia & Shattuck.
BART station (closest): Downtown Berkeley BART

TICKETS: \$25-\$35 general admission sliding scale, \$50 and \$100 reserved, plus a \$3 convenience fee per ticket

INFO: For information, the public may visit themarsh.org.

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PRESS: Contact Raymond Harris, CBCO Public Relations & Marketing.
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<https://cbpr.co/press/thebumpyroadlesstraveled>