

ROBEY THEATRE COMPANY · PLAYWRIGHT LAB

A NEW WORK BY RUSSELL H. JOHNSON III

Initiation of the World: Wright, Robeson & LSD

A naive Black patriot-private, falsely accused of espionage and tortured in a documented CIA mind control experiment, awakens in a bardo kitchen with Richard Wright, Paul Robeson, and Candy Jones — four victims of the same hidden machinery racing to free their souls before the room closes forever.

Full-Length Drama 4 Acts

9+ Characters

104 Pages





THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

The bardo kitchen. A recognizable 1950s American kitchen — but something is wrong. The clock has stopped. The door in the back leads nowhere. The light has no source. The props are waiting: cards, Bible, radio, the red ball. The dead will arrive soon.



RICHARD WRIGHT · 1908–1960

*Author of **Native Son**. Surveilled. Exiled. Dead at 52 in Paris.*



gettyimages

Credit: Hulton Archive



ONE OF THE FOUR

Native Son. Black Boy. The most dangerous writer in America.

Wright was the first Black author selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club. The FBI opened a file on him in 1935. Surveilled for decades, he self-exiled to Paris in 1947.

His daughter Julia, who granted permission to this production, has publicly stated her belief that the CIA poisoned him. He died November 28, 1960 — at 52.

VOICE

Analytical, corrosive precision. Has already worked out what was done to him — cannot decide if understanding makes it worse.

SOURCE

Julia Wright — daughter, permission granted. FBI surveillance files declassified.





CANDY JONES · 1925-1990

Model. Radio host. CIA asset. Her husband made the recordings. She didn't know.



YANK Magazine — WWII Pin-Up

ALSO IN THE KITCHEN

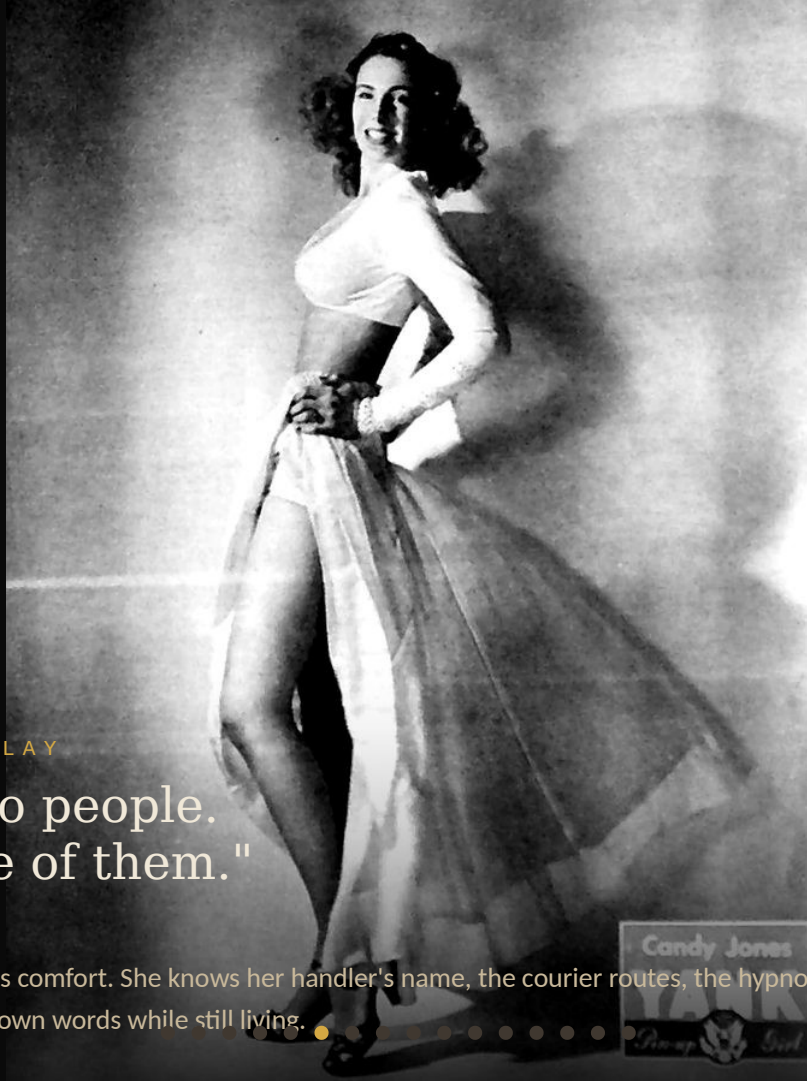
America's most photographed model. The CIA's covert courier.

Candy Jones enters the bardo kitchen carrying the ball and working the radio dial — she does not stop moving until her mask drops on page 75. Her stillness at that moment is the single most important physical cue in her arc.

Long John Nebel, her husband, conducted and recorded hypnosis sessions. The tapes revealed a second persona — "Arlene Grant" — a CIA operative she had no waking memory of being.

VOICE

Direct, commanding, stripped of pretense. The most unsparing witness — she named what was done to her while still alive.



THE CHARACTER IN THE PLAY

"They made me two people.
I only got to be one of them."

In the bardo kitchen, Candy Jones refuses comfort. She knows her handler's name, the courier routes, the hypnotic triggers. She named her alter ego in her own words while still living.

Candy Jones





JAMES ROBERT THORNWELL • 1938-1984

60 Minutes — "The Thornwell File"

1938 - 1984

THE PROTAGONIST

U.S. Army Private.
Falsely accused of espionage.
Tortured on LSD.
Shocked through the chair.
\$625,000 settlement.

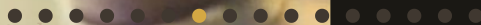
Stationed in Orléans, France, Thornwell was dosed with LSD in a water glass, strapped to a metal chair bolted to the floor, then shocked through the chair on command. Accused of stealing classified documents he had not stolen.

For sixteen years he didn't know what had been done to him. Congress awarded \$625,000 in 1981 — the only direct payment to an MKULTRA victim on record. He died three years later.

VOICE

Vernacular, direct, the moral anchor. The naive entry point who becomes the play's moral center.

The only MKULTRA victim Congress directly compensated.





ORLÉANS, FRANCE · 1961 · PROJECT THIRD CHANCE

Private James Thornwell. U.S. Army. Strapped to a metal chair, bolted to the floor. LSD in a water glass. Electric shock through the chair on command. He did not know what they had given him. He would not know for sixteen years.

RECONSTRUCTION · CIA MKULTRA — DOCUMENTED · CONGRESSIONAL RECORD 1977 · \$625,000 SETTLEMENT 1981



PAUL ROBESON · 1898-1976



ONE OF THE FOUR — PRIMARY SOURCE ON RECORD

Singer. Athlete. Lawyer. Actor. Activist. Targeted.

Paul Robeson was one of the most famous Americans in the world — until the U.S. government revoked his passport. CIA director Richard Helms discussed 'solving the Robeson problem' as early as the late 1950s.

SOURCE: THE UNDISCOVERED PAUL ROBESON, CH. 13 — PAUL ROBESON JR.

"A raucous party lasting well past midnight was held in his suite... Irina arrived early the next morning and found him on the bathroom floor. He was semiconscious and incoherent."

Moscow, March 27, 1961 · Paul Robeson Jr. spoke directly with playwright

Robeson Jr. concluded his father had been drugged at a party staged without his knowledge in his hotel suite. He never returned to the stage.

VOICE

Oratorical authority, spiritual depth. Cannot stop mourning what he was not allowed to become.



THE PREMISE

A naive Black patriot-private, falsely accused of espionage and tortured in a documented CIA mind control experiment, awakens in a bardo kitchen with Richard Wright, Paul Robeson, and Candy Jones.

Four victims of the same hidden machinery racing to free their souls before the room closes forever.

Guided by the voice of Fannie Lou Hamer and visited by Albert Einstein, all four occupants navigate grief, rage, and revelation. Also present: Candy Jones — the CIA's most documented programmed asset — who carries the ball and holds the radio.

The four-part architecture of classical initiation — Separation, Threshold, Ordeal, Return — traces what it means to reclaim a self that was methodically destroyed.

Historical Drama

MKULTRA

Bardo / Liminal Space

Initiation Ritual

Afrofuturism

"This must be produced."

— HARVARDWOOD

Endorsement on record

— BEN GUILLORY, ROBEY THEATRE COMPANY

104

Pages

4

Acts

9+

Cast



Classical initiation architecture. Four acts.

ACT I

Separation — Orléans, France, 1961

Thornwell alone. The chair. The water glass. LSD administered. Electric shock. The play's first image: a man in full dress uniform, strapped down, broken by his own government.

ACT II

Threshold — The Program Named

MKULTRA surfaces. Each character confronts what was done. Einstein enters as witness and interlocutor.

ACT III

Ordeal — The Breaking

The full horror staged. Rage, grief, collapse. Fannie Lou Hamer's voice holds the space from outside.

ACT IV

Return — What Survives

Reconstitution. Naming. The tikkun olam question: what can be repaired? What cannot? They must free their souls by four.



The drugs used to destroy them are now being used to heal veterans.

The same psychotropic compounds weaponized by MKULTRA are at the center of a national healing reckoning.

APRIL
2026

Trump Executive Order — directed federal investigation into ibogaine and psychotropics for veterans' PTSD, TBI, and opioid addiction.

FACEBOOK

2014: Meta ran a 700,000-user emotional manipulation study without consent. Published in PNAS. The program never ended — it scaled.

VETERANS

DOD and VA studying ketamine, MDMA, psilocybin, and ibogaine for special operators — SEALs, Rangers — suffering PTSD and traumatic brain injury.

BINYAM

Flight N379P. MI5 complicity. UK High Court settlement. Torture techniques directly descended from MKULTRA protocols.

IBOGAINE

Central to Bwiti initiation ceremonies in West Africa. Dramatic clinical results. The same tradition MKULTRA distorted — now reclaimed as medicine.

THE ARC

The state used these compounds to shatter Black minds — and now those same compounds may be the only thing that can restore what war has broken.



Rooted in primary research. In active development.

DEVELOPMENT HOME

Robey Theatre Company — Playwright Lab
Ben Guillory, Artistic Director & Dramaturg

ENDORSEMENTS

"This must be produced." — Harvardwood

Endorsement on record — Ben Guillory

PLATFORMS

New Play Exchange — submission complete
mkkkultura.com — companion memoir
MKKKULTRA LLC — registered entity

PRIMARY SOURCES

Julia Wright — permission granted

Paul Robeson Jr. — spoken with directly;
The Undiscovered Paul Robeson, Ch. 13

Prof. Paul Von Blum, UCLA

Thornwell family attorney

Church Committee, 1977 · CIA declassified files
Thornwell v. Army — court records

Russell H. Johnson III

Johnson brings a convergence rare in American theater: the analytical rigor of a Princeton-trained engineer, the moral witness of a veteran, and the dramaturgical discipline of a playwright who spent years verifying every documented fact against primary sources — including direct conversations with Paul Robeson Jr. and the Thornwell family attorney.

Developing a companion memoir and a filmed-theater production — directing and producing himself.

ACADEMIC

Princeton University — MSE, Computer Engineering
University of Southern California — MA, Communications Management

INDUSTRY

Bell Laboratories — research engineer

MILITARY

U.S. Air Force National Guard — Officer Candidate School, 1987

CURRENT

Robey Theatre Company Playwright Lab · MKKKULTRA LLC · mkkkultra.com

The bardo kitchen can hold any MKULTRA victim.

MKULTRA ran 150+ documented subprojects across the United States, Canada, and Europe. The kitchen is a container that resets — new occupants, new stories, same structure of state violence and the struggle for soul.

THE STAGE PLAY

Initiation of the World: Wright, Robeson & LSD

In active development — Robey Theatre Company Playwright Lab

THE MEMOIR

Companion book — mkkkultra.com

The playwright as a fifth voice: the engineer who found these four

FILMED THEATER

Filmed-theater production in development

Separate format, separate WGA registration

THE FRANCHISE

150+ documented subprojects. The kitchen resets.

Each production: new occupants. One structural argument.

What was done to them is now on record. This play is the trial.

*And the drugs that broke them
may be the same ones asked to save us.*

AN ADAPTATION BY JONAS MEYER
www.mkkultra.com

Robey Theatre Company

New Play Exchange

MKKKULTRA LLC

