

A woman with dark curly hair, wearing a pinstriped suit and teal sandals, holds a sign. In the background, a chair is on fire and a rotary phone sits on the floor. A flag is visible in the top left corner.

NOTES on **KILLING**
SEVEN OVERSIGHT,
MANAGEMENT and
ECONOMIC STABILITY
BOARD MEMBERS

yale
repertory
theatre
2024-25 SEASON

Yale acknowledges that indigenous peoples and nations, including Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot, Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Niantic, and the Quinnipiac and other Algonquian speaking peoples, have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now the state of Connecticut. We honor and respect the enduring relationship that exists between these peoples and nations and this land.

We also acknowledge the legacy of slavery in our region and the enslaved African people whose labor was exploited for generations to help establish the business of Yale University as well as the economy of Connecticut and the United States.

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APRIL 25–MAY 17, 2025

YALE REPERTORY THEATRE

James Bundy, Artistic Director | Florie Seery, Managing Director

PRESENTS

NOTES on **KILLING SEVEN** OVERSIGHT, MANAGEMENT
and ECONOMIC STABILITY BOARD MEMBERS

By **Mara Vélez Meléndez**

Directed by **Javier Antonio González**

Scenic Designer

Patti Panyakaew

Costume Designer

Arthur Wilson

Lighting Designer

Yung-Hung Sung 宋永鴻

Sound Designer

Joyce Ciesil

Projection Designer

Doaa Ouf

Hair Designer

Matthew Armentrout

Makeup Designer

Sarah Cimino

Choreographer

Javier Antonio González

Production Dramaturgs

Daria Kerschenbaum

Abraham E.S. Rebollo-Trujillo

Fight and Intimacy Directors

Kelsey Rainwater

Michael Rossmly

Vocal and Dialect Coach

Cynthia Santos DeCure

Original Casting

Stephanie Yankwitt, CSA, tbd Casting

Casting Director

Calleri Jensen Davis

Stage Manager

Aura Michelle

Drag numbers conceived by **Javier Antonio González** and **Samora la Perdida**

Notes on Killing Seven Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Board Members received its New York premiere at Soho Rep (Sarah Benson, Cynthia Flowers, Meropi Peponides, Directors) in partnership with The Sol Project (Jacob Padrón, Artistic Director; David Mendizábal, Associate Artistic Director) in May 2022.

Production support for *Notes on Killing Seven Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Board Members* is provided by Yale's Binger Center for New Theatre.

Yale Repertory Theatre gratefully acknowledges **Carol L. Sirot** for generously funding the 2024–25 season.

Yale Repertory Theatre thanks our 2024–25 season funders:



The Promise of a New Colon

The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act, commonly referred to as PROMESA, the Spanish word for “promise,” initiated the latest phase of the long history of the colonization of Puerto Rico. An overwhelmingly bipartisan effort successfully signed into law by President Barack Obama on June 30, 2016, the act placed Puerto Rico under an unelected board of financial overseers, giving them power over the island to handle the debt crisis which had surpassed \$71 billion. The Board moved quickly to apply austerity measures, privatizing essential services and introducing cuts to health, education, and pensions, to pay these debts. Everyday Puertorriqueños had little say in these matters, and the question of the legitimacy of the debt—as well as the fact that it’s a product of the American colonial administration—was and continues to be largely absent from the political arena in the heart of the empire.

Disaster struck the following year when Hurricane Maria destroyed houses, power and water lines, and transportation infrastructure. There were fewer than 100 direct casualties from the storm; however, the resultant lack of access to potable water, electricity, and health services killed approximately 3,000 more, mostly among the elderly and impoverished. Due to the Oversight Board’s poor management, FEMA funds still have not been adequately dispensed, and Puertorriqueños continue to be unable to recover fully from Maria’s devastation. Conveniently, even though clear lines can be connected between the actions of this board and the ongoing suffering of Puertorriqueños, legal clauses absolve the board—and the United States government—from liability for any damages resulting from their actions.

“The United States is also a one-party state but, with typical American extravagance, they have two of them.”
—Julius Nyerere

PUBLIC LAW 114–187
JUNE 30, 2016

SEC. 105 EXEMPTION FROM LIABILITY FOR CLAIMS

The Oversight Board, its members, and its employees shall not be liable for any obligation of or claim against the Oversight Board or its members or employees or the territorial government resulting from actions taken to carry out this act.

Pre-Columbus

The Taíno people live on the island of Borikén in a matrilineal farming society.

1492

Christopher Columbus and the Spanish first make contact with the Taínos.

1508

The Spanish conquer the island, naming it San Juan Bautista. Among other repressive measures, the Spanish outlaw homosexuality and trans gender expressions.

Colonial Era for Puerto Ricqueños

So where can accountability be found? The United States, through its colonial administration of Puerto Rico, has left the island vulnerable to the worst effects of climate disaster. Deaths that result from these conditions are a form of social murder, murder which is invisible, indirect, and not recognized by law as murder. Up to now, no one has faced consequences for these acts of social murder in Puerto Rico. That is, until our Lolita steps in.

Through *Notes on Killing*, playwright Mara Vélez Meléndez exacts fantastical revenge on these colonizing collaborators for the devastation, joining a rich history of other artists who use their mediums to fulfill their desires

for retribution. These spectacular murders join iconic revenges such as the Bride performing the titular act of *Kill(ing) Bill* or Lady Gaga and Beyoncé poisoning their abusive boyfriends in the “Paparazzi” and “Telephone” music videos, satisfying an impulse rendered taboo by a western Christian ethic of forgiveness over accountability. After all, why forgive *seventy times seven* times when a clean seven bullets will do the trick? Call it a terroristic urge, or a criminal tendency, but don’t lie to yourself: imagining real consequences for those who wronged you *feels good*, right?

— Abraham E.S. Rebollo-Trujillo,
Production Dramaturg

WHO IS SHE?

DAVID A. SKEEL JR.
CARLOS GARCÍA
ANA MATOSANTOS
ANDREW G. BIGGS

JOSÉ CARRIÓN III
JOSÉ GONZÁLEZ
ARTHUR J. GONZALEZ

WHO ARE THEY???

CAMERON MCKENZIE

JOHN E. NIXON

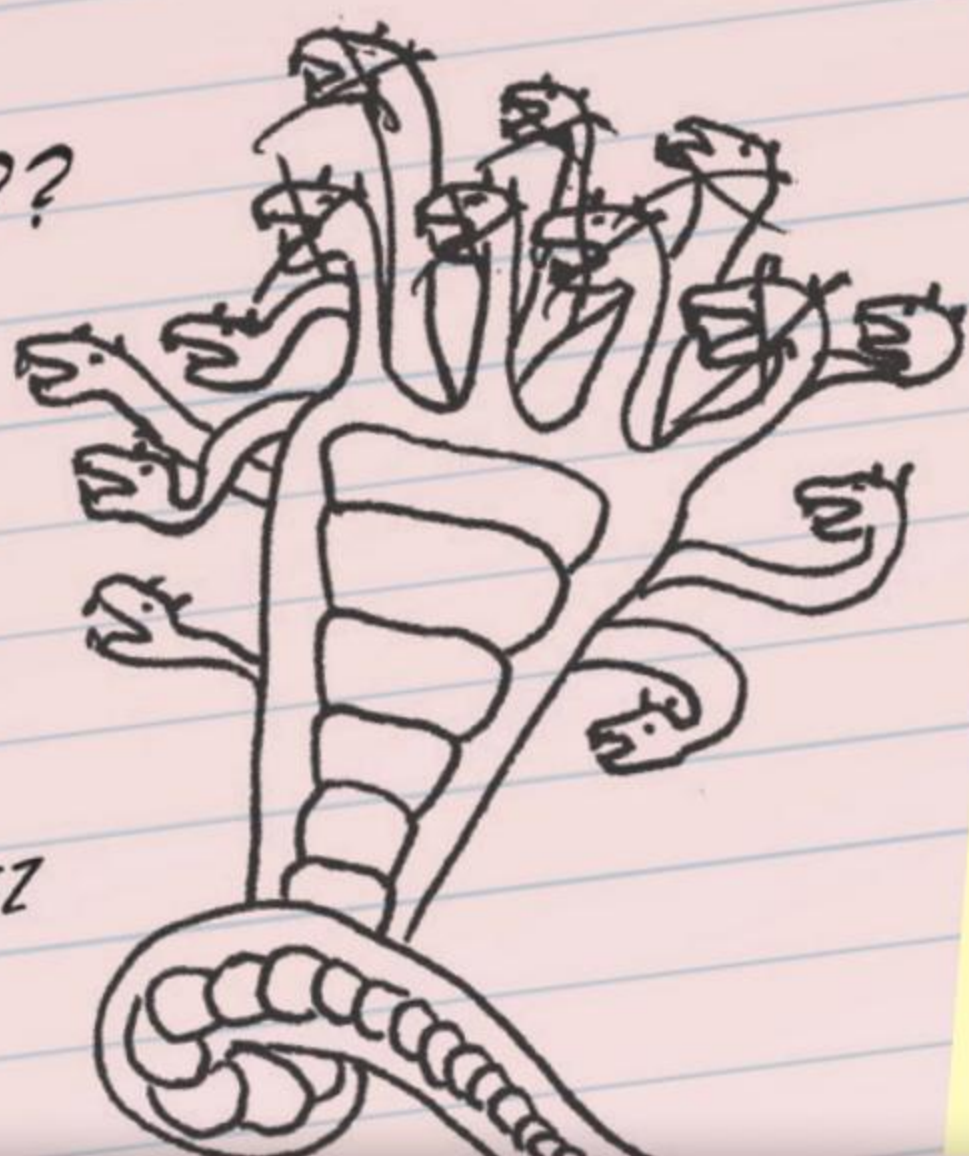
BETTY A. ROSA

JUAN A. SABATER

LUIS A. UBIÑAS

ARTHUR J. GONZALEZ

ANDREW G. BIGGS



“..we’re going to kill you!
Kill, kill, kill.
Shoot, shoot, shoot.”
—Divine, *Pink Flamingos* (1972)

1510

The Taínos drown the conquistador Diego Salcedo and rebel against their colonizers.

ca. 1600–1800
European powers battle over the island. Spain manages to retain control.

1868

The Revolutionary Committee of Puerto Rico staged two short-lived revolts which, the Grito de Lares and Intentona de Yauco leading to several liberal reforms in the colony.

Lolita Lebrón

Dolores “Lolita” Lebrón was born on November 19, 1919, the daughter of a hacienda laborer in Pezuela, Puerto Rico. She was inspired to enter politics after the 1937 Ponce massacre, in which Puerto Rican Nationalist Party members were murdered at a peaceful protest. From that point onwards, Lebrón was a passionate advocate for Puerto Rican independence. She moved to New York City, where she witnessed widespread discrimination against Boricuas in the US. Soon after, she officially joined the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party in 1943 and rose to party leadership, advocating for socialist and feminist reforms.

Puerto Rico became an official US commonwealth in 1952, a devastating blow for Lebrón and her many comrades. A “Gag Law” in effect since 1948, making it a felony for Puerto Ricans to protest the Insular Government or even display the Puerto Rican flag, made even protesting the island’s new status illegal. In 1954, working alongside Nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos, Lebrón opened fire on the US House of Representatives alongside Andrés Figueroa Cordero, Irving Flores, and Rafael Cancel Miranda. She brandished the flag from the gallery, crying, “¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre!” The group was arrested after injuring five members of congress. Lebrón was sentenced to fifty years in prison, though her sentence was later commuted by President Jimmy Carter in 1979. She spent the rest of her life tirelessly advocating for the liberation of Puerto Rico until her death in 2010.

—Daria Kerschenbaum, Production Dramaturg

Terrorism

Among several issues raised by this play, one stands out: the dreaded t-word, *terrorism*. The term, first used against Jacobins in the French Revolution, has been lobbed at figures from across the political spectrum. So, what does the word even mean?

There is no conclusive definition of terrorism. Rather, it is a politicized term, used to designate certain forms of violence as unacceptable, while implicitly condoning other forms of violence. For example, New York prosecutors recently charged Luigi Mangione with terrorism after he allegedly shot the CEO of UnitedHealthcare. This health insurance company, like many others, systematically rejects claims for life-saving medical procedures and medicine in the name of raising profits. However, no healthcare CEO has ever been charged with terrorism for creating such mass suffering. Puerto Rican Nationalist Lolita Lebrón was also labeled a terrorist in 1954 after opening fire on the US House of Representatives in protest of Puerto Rico’s continued colonial status. Yet the many politicians—Republican *and* Democrat,

1898

The Spanish-American War results in American control of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.

1900

The Foraker Act establishes the newly named *Porto Rico* as an ‘unincorporated territory’ with a US-appointed government and no constitutional rights.

1917

The Jones Act extends citizenship rights to Puerto Ricans, allowing migration between the mainland and the island.

n & You

American *and* Puerto Rican—who have participated in occupying and oppressing the island of Puerto Rico for more than a century have never been held accountable.

In *Notes on Killing Seven Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Board Members*, the character of Lolita seeks to correct this injustice—and is labeled a terrorist for doing so. She is fueled by the many injustices that plague Boricuas to this day. In the over seven years since Hurricane Maria, Puertorriqueños in impoverished regions continue to face a lower quality of life while PROMESA delays vital FEMA funding. Puerto Rican Governor Luis Fortuño's ruthless cuts to vital public services, aided by the US Republican Party, have left the island reliant on greedy private companies, often American. Is this not also a form of violence?

Those of us living on the mainland are beginning to experience these same forms of violence, a phenomenon called the imperial boomerang. The Department of

Government Efficiency cutting education funding mirrors the defunding of the University of Puerto Rico. Simultaneously, the technologies created to surveil Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank are now being used against student protestors in America. And the ICE detention facilities currently being used to imprison green card and visa holders were first developed to imprison immigrants.

Notes on Killing... is an urgent reminder to question who gets labeled a terrorist. Because if you stand against empire, the terrorist might be you.

—D.K. and A.E.S.R.T.

WOMAN TERRORIST FREED OF 'INTENT'

Mrs. Lebron, Guilty of Assault,
Acquitted of Aiming to Kill
in Congress Shooting

Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, June 17—Mrs. Lolita Lebron was acquitted by a jury in Federal court today of assault with intent to kill in the House of Representatives on March 1. The same jury had convicted her yesterday of assault with a dangerous weapon. For that crime she faces a possible maximum sentence of fifty years in prison. Mrs. Lebron was one of four Puerto Rican nationalists fired



1952

Puerto Rico drafts a constitution and, with Puerto Rican and Congressional approval, becomes Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

1954

1967

Musician Johnny Rodríguez opens El Cotorrito, a burlesque nightclub, in San Juan. The first of its kind in Puerto Rico, the club featured regular drag performances.

DRAG:



When you hear the word *drag*, likely the first thing that comes to mind will be RuPaul: the most famous American drag queen to date, with a global empire of *Drag Race* competition shows. RuPaul's vision of drag is far from the practice's roots as a subversive celebration of queerness and survival strategy. Drag is a community and an artform that has given many gay, trans, and gender nonconforming people (particularly those who are also Black and/or Latine) a place to not just be accepted but celebrated. No matter the oppression they suffer during the day, a performer can briefly experience and embody liberation on stage. As ballroom emcee Junior LaBeija famously declares in the iconic documentary *Paris Is Burning* (1990), "OPULENCE. You own everything. Everything is yours."

Collapsing hegemonic notions of femininity and masculinity, drag has always been political. But drag takes on a particular political slant in Puerto Rico. Scholar Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes has documented the many ways in which *transloca* (referring to insane women, effeminate gays, drag performers, and transgender subjects) performances

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2009

2009–13

Puerto Rican Governor Luis G. Fortuño's government borrows an additional \$16 billion, more than any previous governor.

2015–
2017

2018

A Puerto Rican law forbidding trans people from changing their legal gender is ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge.

Rehearsing the Revolution

can challenge racism and American imperialism. Performance artist Freddie Mercado's work, for example, highlights his own androgynous and racially ambiguous appearance to question gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. Drag performer Nina Flowers's use of Spanish exclamations while on *RuPaul's Drag Race* in 2009 demonstrated a provocative disruption of American monolingualistic culture. These were just two of the artists who inspired the playwright and director of *Notes on Killing Seven Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Board Members*.

Last year, the Supreme Court's decision in *Spectrum WT. v. Wendler* upheld a Texas university's ban on drag shows. This ruling is part of a much larger wave of homophobic and transphobic legislation across the US, which strives to strip trans people not just of their access to healthcare but their ability to participate in public life at all. In our current political context, drag takes on new meaning. All of its campy over-the-top-ness, playful cultural remixes, and fantastical fashions are statements of glittery defiance.

In *Notes on Killing*, drag is a rehearsal for the revolution. Or, in other words, playing out a Puerto Rican revolution in drag makes that possibility real, even if only in drag. As José Esteban Muñoz writes in *Cruising Utopia* (2009), "Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world." Through their performance, Lolita and the Receptionist insist that a world of Puerto Rican independence and trans liberation is possible.

Notes on Killing is quick to remind us that it's all just a show: lip-syncing, fake blood, fabulous quick changes. Even the characters wonder aloud if they're trapped in a drag show. As we come to recognize the play as a play, we start to see performance everywhere around us. If gender is a costume, who's to say you can't try out a new look? If you find yourself or your community cast in the role of the oppressed, who's to say you can't fight for another role? And if you find yourself in the heart of a colonial empire, who's to say you have to follow the script?

—D.K.

2019

Puerto Ricans protest for 11 days and oust Governor Ricardo Rosselló of the Partido Nuevo Progresista, the pro-statehood party.

2020

Medicaid in Puerto Rico expands to explicitly cover medical transition procedures, including hormones and sex reassignment surgery.

2021

The Puerto Rican government issues a state of emergency due to the ongoing violence against trans people on the island.