



Reflections of a Caretaker Brother John chronicles healing



By Debbie Hall

Blusoul Productions LLC is presenting *Reflections of a Caretaker Brother John* as Performance Theater exploring many facets of society. This unscripted one-act play, within the boundary of a therapist and his new patient, brings to the surface emotions and interactions of two Black men. This innovative theater performance comes to life in an intimate setting, The Blue Room, June 3-4.

Joey Mitchell, performed by Ellis Rice, hesitantly enters the office of Dr. Michael Tate, performed by Mervin Alexander Jr. As the session progresses, the audience learns that Joey was the caretaker for his now-deceased brother John, a Vietnam Veteran and the patriarch of the family. Concerned about an outburst, the family compels Joey to speak with a grief therapist. However, he relents, with the attitude that he can go once and satisfy his family's wishes.

Together, Dr. Tate and Joey explore the dynamics of his experience as a caretaker, navigating the dysfunctional healthcare system, and his day-to-day challenges.

This is where the unscripted, improvisation scope of the play comes into play. The energy of the room, the audience interaction, and where the emotions take the actors determine the direction of the presentation. Every performance is different, with subtle intonations, expansive emotions, or diverse reactions.

Several facts about the *Reflections of a Caretaker Brother John*, should be considered.

Mental Health Awareness Month (May) has just passed, bringing awareness. One area that affects the population with mental health is the role of a caregiver for a loved one. The number of unpaid family caregivers in the U.S. increased by 9.5 million between 2015 and 2020, from 43.5 million to over 53 million. According to the Centers for Disease Control, in a survey conducted in December 2022, 24.4% of adults aged 45 to 64 years are caregivers. The majority are Blacks/African Americans (24.3%) compared to whites (23.1%), Hispanics (17.9%), and Asian/Pacific Islanders (10.2%).

After the performance, the two actors interacted with the audience, many of whom shared their own experiences and emotions.

Mervin Alexander Jr. is a stage, film, voice, and print professional, theatre actor instructor, and award-winning actor from Brooklyn, New York. He began his acting career in community and Broadway Theaters, including Lincoln Center Theatre and the Billie Holliday Theatre. Working as a resident actor for the famed UJAAMA Theatre Company, he received the "Best New Artist Award." Mervin also worked with the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), Negro Ensemble Theatre Company, Broadway in the Hood, The Ira Aldridge Theatre, and the Lablv Theatre. Mervin continues to pursue his love for acting by performing in numerous films, print, and stage productions.



Ellis "Blusoul" Rice (bluesoulproductions.com) Ellis "Blusoul" Rice is from Kinloch, Missouri, and a graduate of Webster College Conservatory of Theatre Arts. Since *Bold Willie Brown*, his first solo Las



Vegas performance presented at West Las Vegas Library, Ellis has acted with the Rainbow Company and the Ira Aldridge Players, worked in various arts, administrative, technical, and creative positions with the City of Las Vegas, Clark County, the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District, The Smith Center, and The Natural History Museum. He has performed with his

band, Blusoul, and in a duo with the late Dr. Bob Elliot at venues throughout the Las Vegas Valley. Ellis is currently the Director of Blusoul Productions, a multi-media production company that creates a safe, welcoming, and nurturing environment for audio and video training. It provides technical and creative artistic support services for marginalized and emerging community-based performing artists and organizations.

Reflections of a Caretaker Brother John will be performed in The Blue Room, 3630 Rawhide Court, at 7 p.m. on June 3 and 3 p.m. on June 4. Click [here](#) to purchase tickets to attend the performance in person or watch the performance online stream.