

## Thank you, Charlie, for that lovely introduction.

First and foremost I'd like to thank TCG for even supporting such an award. Setting out as a freelance director isn't a career path where award earning is something you expect. The fact that this award even exists is so meaningful to all of us. And TCG has been such a big part of my path from searching for jobs in my paper copy of ArtSearch to looking forward to my American Theatre magazine to arrive—what's the play going to be this month?!—to the myriad of support and programs available connecting theater artists everywhere. Look around. This is amazing that we've made it here.

I want to thank the Alan Schneider Award panel—Curt Columbus, Robert O'Hara, and Laura Penn—a panel of my “peers” who are each dynamic luminaries and tremendous sources of inspiration. And my recommenders, Michael Halberstam and Ayad Akhtar, who have been the best art partners a woman could dream of.

I also would like to thank the artistic leaders who have encouraged me to risk often and dream big. In particular: Robert Falls, who nominated me for this award, inspires me with his effortless leadership and big hearted passions and Martha Lavey—who was the first to challenge me to be more, do more, say more and remains my tireless champion.

And I want to congratulate my fellow finalists. I hope to stand here as a representative of a huge group of artists who are ready to explore. Who are trying to ask the right questions, who are trying to become better listeners.

In the NY Times obituary of Alan Schneider it said: Mr. Schneider defined his area of theatrical concern as “unexplored territory.” I, too, have theatrical concern for “unexplored territory.” That territory involves how are we, American theater makers, going to address the deeply fractured world we live in? Not only in our work, but in the conversation surrounding our work.

In working on “Disgraced” all over the country, this “unexplored territory” has become even more clear. It has become a responsibility. The Paris attacks happened on the day our opening night in Berkeley. At the preshow dinner, donors and trustees and staff approached me, wondering how I would address the attacks. They were looking to me to shed light, to expose, to provoke, to comfort. This tremendous privilege and responsibility suddenly clarified. I addressed the attacks in my remarks, about the continued terrifying relevance of the play, about the moral imperative to remain vigilant, to talk to each other. After the final bow, we brought up the house lights, the actors silently joined hands and bowed their heads for a moment of silence and the audience followed suit. In that moment, I vowed to pursue this work.

In the five years I have been making this play the following have happened: Orlando. Syria. Madrid. Charlie Hebdo. Boston Marathon. Nigerian schoolgirls. San Bernardino. Sandy Hook Elementary. Michael Brown. Trayvon Martin. Eric Garner. And this is by no means a complete list.

Signs begin to emerge from the map of unexplored territory. We need to make work that demands conversation, that expresses opposing points-of-view. Work that challenges the artist and audience. Work that exposes the dichotomies within us. For within that fissure is where the story lies, all of our stories. Discovering that space and beginning the conversation there- from a place of not knowing rather than expertise. It is time for us to embrace our similarities and then dive into the vast abyss that divides us and see what seeds we can plant there. I now know mentorship and advocacy are as important as our work—it *is* our work. We can and we must

build a better world. I would like to thank my children, Noah and Delaney. They inspire me to be better, to do more. Let's seize this moment now so our children can be asking different questions.

Being here in DC is, of course, reverberating throughout this conference. The time is now, this is our moment. We must *do our job*. All voices must be heard, even if we have to sit in or stand up. We're hungry, we have open ears and open hearts.

And we are concerned about this unexplored territory.