

Detroit '67

Casebook

Playwright: Dominique Morisseu

Dramaturg: Danielle Schoellkopf

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Author:
Dominique Morisseu



Dominique Morisseu was born in Detroit, Michigan at the date of March 13, 1978. She has created the *Detroit Project* (which consists of three plays. *Paradise Blue*, *Detroit '67*, and *Skeleton Crew*), *Pipeline*, *Sunset Baby*, *Blood at the Root*, and *Follow me to Nellie's*. She is also the Tony nominated writer of the Broadway musical *Ain't Too Proud – The Life and Times of the Temptations*. As of most recently, she has been working as a co-producer on the TV show *Shameless*. She has also won several awards such as the Spirit of Detroit, PoNY Fellowship, Sky-Cooper Prize, TEER Trailblazer Award, Steinberg Playwright award, Audelco

Award, NBFT August Wilson playwriting award, Edward M. Kennedy Prize for Drama, OBIE award, Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellowship, Variety's Women for Impact for 2017-18, and the MacArthur Genius Grant Fellow. Ever since Morisseu was a child, she was fascinated with reading stories and creating stories. She even stated in an interview that she was called a "story pusher" as a child because she was always writing stories and asking her classmates to read them. When she saw so much positive feedback from her stories, she decided that she wanted to pursue a career as a writer. Her parents supported her decision to be a writer and her father in particular seemed to be a big inspiration to her work. Morisseu stated that her father was an activist for many causes. He would create videos to help spread ideas over politics and he would even travel to places like Haiti to help others in need. At first Morisseu didn't see herself as an activist, she only saw herself as activist minded because she felt like her work wasn't enough for her to be considered as an activist. However, her mindset started to change as she progressed through her career. Morisseu is very passionate about creating work with people of color and for people of color to take part in. She also tries to inspire artists to "get in trouble" by taking inspiration from others that are not necessarily central to the traditional theatrical curriculum.

The Play: *Detroit '67*

The play *Detroit '67* was first published on February 26, 2013. It was also first directed by Kwame Kwei-Armah and presented at the Public Theatre, in association with the Classical Theatre of Harlem and the National Black Theatre in New York City on March 11, 2013. It contains themes of the 1960's, race, civil rights, music, and night clubs. It is the second play in Morisseu's Detroit Project. The first play in the Detroit Project was *Paradise Blue*. This play was set in the 1940's and had themes of race, music, domestic abuse, and gentrification. The last play in the Detroit Project was *Skeleton Crew*. This play was centered around the Great Recession and had themes of race and unemployment.

Performances

2013, Public Theatre Production



<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/13/theater/reviews/detroit-67-at-the-public-theater.html>

Northlight Theatre

<https://northlight.org/events/detroit-67/>

The Aurora Theatre



<https://www.mercurynews.com/2018/09/18/review-1967-is-not-so-far-away-in-intense-detroit-at-berkeleys-aurora-theatre/>

New Horizon Theatre



Signature Theatre



<https://dcmetrotheaterarts.com/2021/08/02/signatures-detroit-67-is-a-fiery-history-lesson-that-grooves-and-moves/>

The 1960's

The 1960's were plagued with a lot of heightened emotions and stress because of the turmoil caused by topics such as civil rights and war. The 60's started off with President Dwight D. Eisenhower and then throughout this decade the people who resided in the United States saw the reign of John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon.

War

At the time of 1961, The U.S. government started to decide that they needed to have a stronger presence in Vietnam. During this time the U.S. is also trying to develop new technology to explore space and underwent travesties such as the "Bay of Pigs", which was a failed invasion of Cuba. By the time of 1963, the government decided to employ stiffer policies upon Vietnam and on November 22, 1963 President Kennedy is assassinated. Tension and fighting continued to rise and by the time of 1965 there was about 182,000 reported civilians killed in North Vietnam. During the time of 1965 the U.S. started to see a high rising of the people protesting against the Vietnam war. Amongst this group of people included Martin Luther King Jr.. At the time of August of 1968, Riots start in Chicago as protesters who were anti-war are beaten by police.

Civil Rights

The 60's start right away with a series of events that pushed for civil rights and equality. The first of many events started on February 1, 1960. There was an organized anti-segregation, sit-in protest in Greensboro , NC. Following this event was another that happened in September 1962. James Meredith tried to enroll in "Ole Miss" but was blocked from doing so because of his race. By the 30th of September, riots emerged because of this blockade. The riots grew so much that two students were killed and 160 marshals were wounded. Although, the next day he was able to actually register into the school. The next event took place, was at the time of August 25, 1963. About 250,000 people took part in a march on Washington for equality. Martin Luther King Jr., also delivered his "I have a dream..." speech. Even with all of these pleas for equality, the KKK was a big and harmful presence. At the time of 1964 there was a particular instance in which three men (Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney) were presumed to be murdered by the KKK. **At the time of July 23, 1967 confrontations between African Americans in Detroit and the police raised to an all time high and riots erupted for five days. 33 African Americans lost their lives as well as 10 white Americans. Many others were injured and there was about 7,000 arrests**

made. There was also more than 1,000 buildings that were burned down during this time because of the riots. This was considered a catalyst of the Black Power Movement. What was the tipping point for these riots was a police raid on an illegal after-hours drinking club that was hosting a welcome home party for two Vietnam veterans. About 82 African Americans were arrested during the raid, which sparked rioting by onlookers. Blockades were put up by police but locals were driving through them, vandalizing properties, looting businesses, and starting fires. Over the next few days, as riots were increasing, there was the deployment of state police, the national guard, and army troops to the area. It is also good to know why this was indeed the tipping point for these riots as well. Leading up to this incident, tensions were getting extremely high because of economical and societal hardships. Racial segregation and racism were very high at this time. Many people who identified as “white” would look down upon and treat African Americans badly. This was very prevalent with the enforcement of “white only” and “black only” areas and items. As well as the very reoccurring use of police brutality on African Americans. Many African Americans, especially those who lived in Detroit, were subjected to harassment, searches, public beatings, and public shootings made by police officers. A lot of African Americans were also given very little educational and economic opportunities. During the 1960’s there was

also the increased frustration of deindustrialization, that caused many African Americans to lose their jobs and make them live in poor neighborhoods.

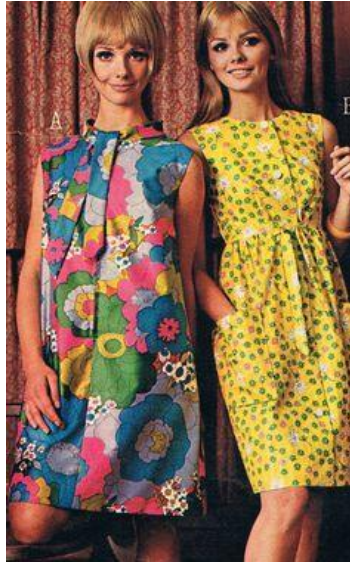
A few personally remarks of people who were living through this time:

<https://mlpp.org/reflections-on-growing-up-in-detroit-in-the-sixties-and-the-ongoing-fight-for-race-equity/>

Fashion of the late 60's

Women







Men



Dance moves of the 60's

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWUJ0eE6ugs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5Lmk1YCXFU>

Popular Music

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/summer-songs-1960s-18336/little-stevie-wonder-fingertips-part-2-38324/>

<https://www.nme.com/list/100-best-songs-of-the-1960s-1159>

Motown Artists

- The Supremes- Originated in Detroit and was initially a four-woman group but then became a trio. They played songs of the following genres: R&B, Soul, Pop, and Doo-Wop Disco. They rivaled the Beatles
- The Miracles- Also known as Smoky Robinson and the Miracles. Many referred to them as a “soul supergroup” as well. The group originated in Detroit with five members. They played many songs that were categorized as R&B, Doo-Wop, Soul, Rock and Roll, Funk, and Disco.
- The Temptations- Originated in Detroit and consisted of five male members. They played songs that fit the following genres: R&B, Soul, Funk, and Psychedelic soul

- Four Tops- An American quartet that originated in Detroit. They sang R&B, Soul, and Pop songs.
- The Jackson 5
- Martha and the Vandellas- Originated in Detroit and consisted of three women. The genres of music that they played were R&B, Soul, Pop, and Northern Soul.
- The Marvelettes
- Gladys Knight & the Pips- A group that originated in Atlanta and consisted of four family members. They played songs that were categorized as Soul, R&B, and Funk.
- The Contours
- The Isley Brothers
- The Andantes
- The Originals
- Marvin Gaye- An American songwriter and singer and was also known as the “Prince of Soul”. His music was known to fit in the following genres: R&B, Psychedelic soul, Soul, Gospel, Funk, Jazz, and Progressive Jazz.
- Stevie Wonder- An American singer, songwriter, musician, and record producer. He was born in Michigan and was a child prodigy. He helped reshape conventions of R&B, helped drive the genre into the album era, and

gave many social commentaries. He is known to play songs of R&B, Pop, Soul, Gospel, Funk, Jazz, and Progressive Soul.

- The Spinners
- David Ruffin- Was born in Mississippi and was famously known to be one of the lead singers for the “Temptations”. He sang in many Soul, R&B, Pop, and Disco songs.
- The Emotions
- Jr Walker All Stars
- The Ronettes
- Ashford & Simpson
- Mary Wells- An American singer that was born in Detroit. She sang songs that were said to be R&B, Pop, Soul, and Disco.

Music Players

Hi-Fi Record player

In 1877 Thomas Edison created the phonograph, which was the first invention to be able to play back music. A person who wanted to use one, would have to use a grooved cylinder wrapped in foil or wax. The person would also have to turn a hand crank. At the time of 1887 the gramophone came into light, which altered the

needle on the phonograph and implemented the use of flat disks instead of a cylinder. However, in the late 1920's the rise of electronic versions of these music players came out. After which in the late 1940's we see the creation of what we know as Vinyl's. Then by the time of the late 1950's, we see the creation and release of the beloved "High Fidelity" record player, also known as the "Hi-Fi" record player. The most previous record player used a rubber wheel system for the turntables. However, the Hi-Fi record player used a new belt-drive system. Many believed that this alteration made the player put out a better quality of sound.

.45's

.45's were small sized records (about 7 inches) that costed about .65 cents. Some were colored and some were double sided.

Cassette Tape

The cassette tape was first developed by the Philips company in 1962 in Belgium. They released the invention to Europe in 1963 and in November 1964, it was released to the United States. It was a huge success amongst many because it was the first invention that let people take music on the go. It was also popular because it gave people the opportunity to make mixtapes for the first time.

8-Track Player

At the time of 1963, Richard Kraus created the 8- Track player. This new music playing device made it so that the device had the ability to produce about 80 minutes of playback. This convenience aroused the interest of many. They continued to develop this device and make smaller versions over the next few years. By the time of 1965, Ford offered the option to have the 8-Track player in models. This option became so popular that Ford started to produce all of their models with the 8-track player in the vehicle at the time of 1967.

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