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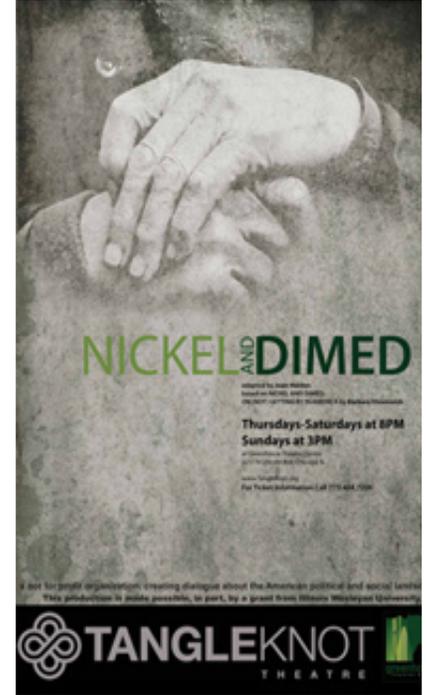
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Titans Staging Chicagoland Production of *Nickel and Dimed*

July 11, 2013

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – **TangleKnot Theatre** in Chicago will present Joan Holden's *Nickel and Dimed* as its inaugural production July 19 through Aug. 11 thanks to its cast and crew's many connections to Illinois Wesleyan University.

TangleKnot's Artistic Director Dani Snyder-Young is assistant professor of theatre arts and head of the Bachelor of Arts in Theatre Arts program at Illinois Wesleyan. She is also directing *Nickel and Dimed*, with alumna Britnee Ruscitti '10 serving as assistant director. Curtis Trout, director of the School of Theatre Arts, is the production's scenic designer. Alumnus Tristan Meredith '12 is lighting designer, and Celeste V. Kelly '13 is designing Nickel's costumes. Antonio Gracias '12 is the production's sound designer. Current student Sarah Menke '15 received an Eckley Summer Scholar fellowship to serve as assistant stage manager and audience development and outreach associate. And the project is funded in part by an Illinois Wesleyan Artistic and Scholarly Development grant to Snyder-Young and Trout.



The play is based on Barbara Ehrenreich's best-selling book *Nickel and Dimed:*

On (Not) Getting By in America (Metropolitan Books, 2001). Ehrenreich took a series of low-paying jobs around the country to investigate the impact of the 1996 welfare reform act on the working poor.

"While this play is based on Ehrenreich's 1998 research, the landscape for low-wage workers has only worsened in the interim 15 years," said Snyder-Young. "The production draws attention to this problem."

In the play, Barbara has difficulty making ends meet in three separate cities as she works as a waitress, a maid and a retail worker. Snyder-Young said the play takes the audience through an emotional journey as Barbara views the landscape of social class in America through her eyes as an educated, upper-middle class journalist. While Barbara cannot make it, the play introduces a series of smart, creative women who make ends meet through a combination of grit, massive amounts of work, and personal sacrifice, including living or working in dangerous situations.

"Most Americans do not openly discuss social class," said Snyder-Young. "People, instead, often conflate discussions of class with discussions of race or else avoid discussions of class entirely for fear of violating social taboos. Silences around these issues reinforce the status quo, making structural inequities invisible."

Snyder-Young said *Nickel* will be staged with an aesthetic defined as "epic theatre". In this artistic tradition, six actors play multiple roles with minimal shifts in costume. A flexible performance space is transformed by actor interaction, sound and lighting, and changing a few, simple pieces of moveable furniture to signify many locations. This minimalist aesthetic draws attention to the constructed nature of the theatrical event, said Snyder-Young.

TangleKnot was formed in January to develop and produce new works and contemporary and classical plays that raise questions about the present-day American political and social landscape. A special learning opportunity will take place July 28 when Illinois Wesleyan Professor of Sociology Jim Sikora will lead a discussion for Wesleyan alumni, guests and theater patrons following the 3 p.m. matinee.

TangleKnot's production of *Nickel and Dimed* will run at the Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave., in the Lincoln Park area of Chicago. Performances are Thursdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. General admission **tickets** are \$20 and are also available by calling the Greenhouse Theatre Center Box Office at 773-404-7336.

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