

ROUND HOUSE THEATRE

RYAN RILETTE, Artistic Director, and
ED ZAKRESKI, Managing Director

PRESENT

MARCH 30 - MAY 7, 2023

**JENNIFER
WHO IS LEAVING**

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY
MORGAN GOULD



CREATIVE TEAM

- Scenic Designer **PAIGE HATHAWAY**
- Costume Designer **IVANIA STACK**
- Lighting Designer **EMMA DEANE**
- Sound Designer **JUSTIN SCHMITZ**
- Properties Coordinator **ANDREA "DRE" MOORE**
- Dialect Coach **ZACHARY CAMPION**
- Dramaturg **LAUREN HALVORSEN**
- Assistant Director **SHANA LASKI**
- Casting Director **SARAH COONEY**
- Production Stage Manager **RACHAEL DANIELLE ALBERT***

Jennifer Who Is Leaving is sponsored by Mitch and Heidi Dupler.
The 2022-2023 Season is sponsored by Linda Ravdin and Don Shapero.

The video and/or audio recording of this performance are prohibited.

ON MORGAN AND JENNIFER

BY LAUREN HALVORSEN | DRAMATURG

“

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”

MORGAN GOULD WRITES riotous emotional minefields. Fueled by a dark and delirious humor, she explores broad dynamics and issues—codependence, fatphobia, feminism, motherhood—within the intimate confines of relationships. Her plays champion outsiders, centering misfits usually relegated to the margins. (Gould describes her theatre as “a place for gays, fatties, freaks, dorks, weirdos.”) She also upends conventions as a director: her theater company, the performance/design collective Morgan Gould & Friends, is dedicated to pushing theatrical boundaries beyond traditional kitchen-sink realism.

Jennifer Who Is Leaving builds on this artistic history, even though the play was initially conceived as a frothy departure. During her final semester at Juilliard, Gould wrote the first draft as an emotional reprieve from her last “extremely personal and harrowing” play. Her self-prompt—to write about an uncomplicated, happy time in her life—evoked her teenage stint working at a Dunkin’ Donuts in her Massachusetts hometown. As the play’s multi-generational ensemble took shape, Gould’s desire to keep things light surrendered to a comic meditation on the cultural and social expectations foisted upon women. (“I can’t help it,” she admits.)



Set in a roadside Dunkin'—the oasis of every desolate stretch of New England highway—*Jennifer Who Is Leaving's* night shift unfolds in real time. Stranded by snow, nurse's aide Jennifer and her octogenarian patient Joey wait for a tow truck. Senior employee Nan deftly balances cleaning rituals with her retired husband's phone calls, while her teenage co-worker Lili frets about tomorrow's SATs. But as the storm rages outside, another one brews alongside the hazelnut coffee.

This farcical collision of strangers yields an exploration of caregiving, in all its vulnerability and necessity. The basic mechanics of our society hinge on functional care structures for the young, sick, elderly, and familial—yet generations of social conditioning have reclassified this essential labor as “women’s work,” i.e. invisible and undervalued. Without intervention, the ongoing drain from these intimacies and sacrifices can accelerate from a slow burn to a five-alarm fire.

As the characters in *Jennifer Who Is Leaving* reach their breaking points, the play itself starts to crack open. Can we fix these broken, demented systems? Or should we burn it all down and build new worlds of compassion and opportunity? Revolution takes time, but sometimes finding unexpected camaraderie among the waft of day-old donuts can be that first spark of rebellion.



THE COST OF INVISIBLE LABOR

BY LAUREN HALVORSEN | DRAMATURG



“Isn't it funny? We always say ‘he works hard’...But you never hear anyone say that about us! YA NEVER HEAR ANYONE SAY ‘She mothers hard’ or ‘She cleans hard’” —NAN IN JENNIFER WHO IS LEAVING



THE TERM “INVISIBLE WORK” WAS COINED BY SOCIOLOGIST Arlene Kaplan Daniels in 1987 to describe the unpaid caregiving and domestic labor historically performed by women. Over three decades after Daniels' observations, the gender inequality around these crucial responsibilities persists. In 2020, the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that on an average day, American women spent 37% more time on unpaid housework and care duties than men. In total, “women spend 95 more eight-hour work days per year on unpaid work, which is the equivalent of \$1.48 trillion.”

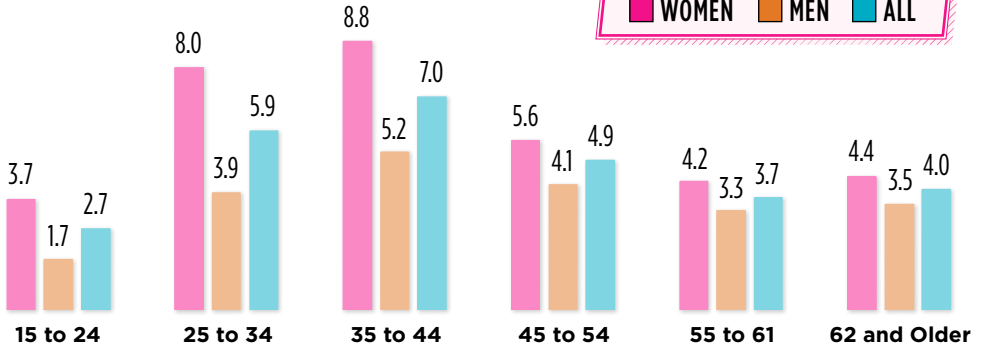
This divide is exacerbated by the existing national gender wage gap: in America, women only earn 82 cents for every dollar men earn. This discrepancy dramatically compounds over a woman's lifetime, damaging their ability to accumulate personal wealth. According to the National Women's Law Center, the earning losses for white women over the course of a 40-year career are \$406,280. That disparity is far worse for women of color, with Black women, for instance, losing \$964,400 in lifetime earnings.

The cultural and economic devaluation of invisible labor is also prevalent in the workplace. Women are often expected to perform time-consuming, non-promotable tasks such as organizing office parties and social events, taking meeting notes, tidying common areas, providing emotional support to colleagues, and spearheading diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. These activities bolster employee relations and a healthy company culture, but they are not financially rewarded nor acknowledged as mission-critical work.

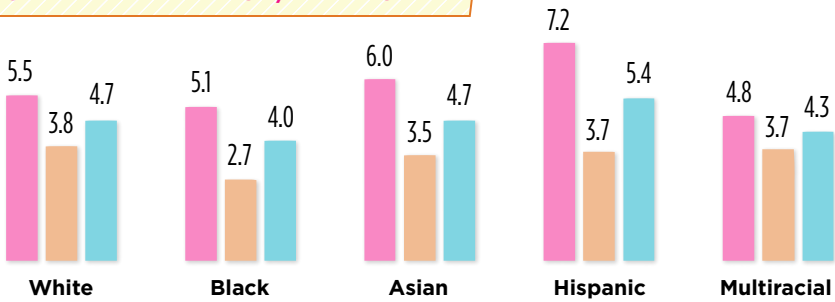
The emotional tax of dual unsustainable workloads—the anticipation and management of the competing needs, resources, and schedules of one's family *and* colleagues—is a recipe for fatigue, stress, and catastrophic burnout. Without a seismic shift in policy and societal expectations, addressing these disparities can only be addressed piecemeal by individual companies and families.

AVERAGE HOURS PER DAY SPENT ON UNPAID HOUSEHOLD AND CARE WORK (2018)

BY GENDER AND AGE



BY GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY*



*White, Black, and Asian are non-Hispanic. Sample size is too small to report for Native Americans.

BY GENDER AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS



NOTES FOR ALL GRAPHS: Aged 15 and older. Care work includes secondary child care as well as primary child and elder care. Secondary child care is considered as a separate activity and is counted independently even though it may be performed while doing housework or primary care work.

Credit: IWPR analysis of American Time Use Survey microdata.