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## CHICAGO AUTHOR JOINS DISCUSSION PANEL FOR TONY-WINNING MUSICAL

*Author Octavia Reese discusses feminism, family and LGBTQ issues in Grand Rapids production of Fun Home*

**GRAND RAPIDS, July 24, 2018** – Chicago author Octavia Reese, will be among a panel of West Michigan social justice activists to analyze and discuss the underlying themes of cartoonist Alison Bechdel’s Tony Award-winning musical, *Fun Home*. The musical, adapted from Bechdel’s graphic novel-memoir of the same name, chronicles the cartoonist’s youth and showcases powerful themes of family, self-awareness, mental health, death and sexual identity. Bechdel also developed *The Bechdel Test*, which helps scale how women are portrayed in film. Reese, like Bechdel, creates deliberately woman-centered literature.

“The times I see characters that look and think like me in my favorite genres are still too few and far between,” Reese said. “There will always be a need to consciously write women, especially women of color and queer women, into the narrative as meaningful and memorable significant characters.”

She said she wrote her series, *The Hibouleans*, to fill a representation void of women of color in sci-fi fantasy epic adventures.

Bechdel, who was first published in 1983, began her career to fill a void, too, developing pieces that raise queer and women’s voices into the spotlight. Her first cartoon publication features gay women in the forefront, something that hadn’t been seen often – if at all – in the early eighties.

“Bechdel’s artistic contributions have reached so many spaces that are too often ignored,” Reese said. “Women cartoonists, LGBTQ youth, the importance of mental health – the list goes on.”

Reese added that representation this isn’t just for female, queer or brown-skinned communities. “The whole world needs to get used to seeing us,” Reese said.

“We have names, stories, talents, and the capacity to run the show, too. We’re not just voiceless, nameless bodies.”

The panel discussion will be held at **Circle Theatre in Grand Rapids July 27, 2018** after the show. For more information on the event and for tickets to see *Fun Home*, please visit [www.circletheatre.org](http://www.circletheatre.org).

For more details about Octavia Reese, visit [www.octaviareese.com](http://www.octaviareese.com).

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