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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fringe Show Presents Stories of Those Suffering Under Remaining Jim Crow Laws.

Minneapolis, MN – June 1, 2005 – Jim Crow laws still on the books are currently keeping 1.4 million black men (that's 13 percent of the national black male population) from entering the voting booth. "I Voted for Gummi Bears," a one-person show written and performed by Minneapolis artist Ochen K., dissects these laws, their history, and their effects through stories of those struggling to love this country while being told their voice doesn't matter. Part of the 2005 Minnesota Fringe Festival, "I Voted for Gummi Bears" will debut at the Loring Playhouse on August 6, 2005.

Laws restricting the voting rights of convicted felons were enacted alongside poll taxes and literacy tests in the late 19th century. One Southern senator even described the felon voting restrictions as an insurance policy, should courts strike down the more blatant laws. Companion laws that allow lesser, non-violent crimes to carry felony convictions (a felony is any crime that could result in a prison sentence over one year) such as minor drug possession, and a "drug war" targeting inner-city, minority populations, combine to create a whole new form of institutional racism. "I Voted for Gummi Bears" follows the history, enforcement, and consequences of felon voting rights laws by presenting narratives of those directly impacted.

Ochen K.'s last Fringe show, "Cirque d'ete," co-produced with Jay Gilligan, was called a "must see" by the Pioneer Press and "sophisticated" and "impossible not to give in to" by the Star Tribune.

"I Voted for Gummi Bears" plays at the Loring Playhouse August 6th at 5:30pm, 7th at 1pm, 8th and 9th at 8:30pm, and 12th at 2:30pm, as part of the Minnesota Fringe Festival. Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased at the show. Advance tickets can be purchased after July 1 through Uptown Tix 651-209-6799 or www.uptowntix.com.

For photos and more information, visit <http://www.ochenk.com/gummibears>.

***Ochen K.** is an artist, composer, and performer living and working in Minneapolis, Minnesota.*

His art has been exhibited in museums and galleries around the country including the San Francisco Art Institute, the Alyce de Roulet Williamson Gallery, and the Austin Museum of Art. In 2000, he received a grant from the Jerome Foundation, and the resulting work, "Community," is part of the permanent collection at the Walker Art Center.

His musical credits include scores for Bondi Dance (Los Angeles, California) and The Gandini Juggling Project (London, England), soundtracks for Peapot Productions (Helsinki, Finland), and new musical theater works for Nautilus Music Theater and Steppingstone Theatre (St. Paul, Minnesota).

He has performed on stages all over the United States and throughout England and France. Ochen also produces work for public radio. He is part of the documentary team American RadioWorks from American Public Media, and has produced work for the national program Marketplace. His independent radio work has been heard on regional services around the country.

***The Minnesota Fringe Festival**, the largest non-juried performing arts festival in the nation and the third largest Fringe in North America, celebrates its 12th year August 4 to 14. With more than 800 performances of 160 different shows and a projected attendance of 50,000, the Fringe continues as one of the top summer events in the Twin Cities.*

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