



Myles Gregley, (left), Allan Axibal and Rafael Agustin are "N*gger Wetb*ck Ch*nk" at the Aronoff Center Friday and Saturday. Carol Peterson/Speak The Arts

Three friends seek to attack racial stereotypes with show



Liesel Reinhardt/Speak The Arts
The three friends, all from different minority groups, came up with the show while at UCLA.

By Kerry Terrana
The News Record

As the five-year anniversary of the Cincinnati Riots approaches, the Cincinnati Arts Association is bringing the nationally-acclaimed show "N*gger Wetb*ck Ch*nk" to the Aronoff Center Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

The creators behind the eclectic show are scheduled to be at the MainStreet Cinema Friday from noon-2 p.m. to preview some of the scenes from the entertaining yet provocative show.

"One of our major missions here is to present entertainment to diverse audiences that are not normally well served in this city, as it reaches a large group of minority audiences," said Van Ackerman, the director of marketing and public relations at the Cincinnati Arts Association.

The show features Myles Gregley, Rafael Agustin and Allan Axibal, three friends of black, Hispanic and Asian descent, respectively.

During the show, the three wear stereotypical garb while mixing dramatic monologues with sketch comedy to recount their dreams and challenges while struggling to succeed and feeling the pinch as minority actors.

"We feel this show does this in a great way," Ackerman said. "It deals with race relations in a very funny way, but also a very serious way, and it also involves a very young audience, which is another good thing because we don't get young audiences in our show very often."

The core of the show is not about race and stereotypes, but instead about personal identity and the struggle to find it.

Through poetry, songs and skits, the actors share their struggle to find their identity outside of stereotypes.

"The show is very biographical and based on their shared experiences, as all of them are from three very different minority groups, which created the

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bases for their unlikely friendship," Liesel Reinhart, one of the directors of the show, said in a phone interview.

Gregely, Axibal and Agustin met at a community college in Los Angeles, became good friends and then transferred together to UCLA, where they began to formulate the show.

"The guys are really great guys and they really care about the message of the show," said Reinhart. "They wanted the show to be their honest experience and not some exaggeration starring Jamie Foxx and Antonio Banderas. So they got together and said 'Let's put together something that speaks to our array of experiences.'"

After some brainstorming, the three came up with a show they thought would have a short shelf life at UCLA.

"The show is about the fact that political correctness, which is supposedly about not saying the words, but without the words, no one talks about the stereotypes," Reinhart said. "Some people come to rage about race and ethnicity, but we choose to laugh about it instead."

While attacking stereotypes head-on, the only problems the show has had have been with the challenging title, which was chosen as an attack on the racial slurs.

"Some people have ripped off all three of the offensive names of the fliers for the show, while some have ripped off only the 'N*gger' part of it and left the other two," Reinhart said. "One poster even had all three words crossed out and 'Honky Honky Honky' written over top. The guys got a good laugh out of that."

Reinhart says audiences of all kinds respond positively to the show. "The only difference in the shows between conservative and liberal audiences is how long it takes to relax and start laughing."

The show lightly pokes fun



Carol Peterson/Speak The Arts

The three actors, who were responsible for creating "NWC: The Race Show," based the show on their real-life experiences.

at important racial issues while addressing topics most people would be reluctant to discuss.

The show then follows up with a discussion session breaking down preconceived notions and misunderstandings audience members had before coming to the show.

"One audience member in a very conservative audience asked afterwards, 'I loved the show, but why don't the three of you have accents?'" Reinhart said, adding that audiences everywhere seem to take something from the show. "We are booking a lot of dates in the area."

The show seems to carry a message that varies from audience to audience and is finally getting booked in the South and other areas that have been slow to accept the ideas and themes this show carries.

"The show is coming to Miami University in Oxford soon as well, as well as other area colleges like Northern Kentucky University, and even the small 800-person school of Mount St. Joseph in Delhi, so it tells us that there is something about that part of the country feels that this show is important, and they are really looking to come here and share their story," Reinhart said.

"They didn't set out to do

this show as experts on race," Reinhart said. "They try to use their stories to answer the questions and try to help people to come to their own conclusions."

The audience at MainStreet Cinema on Friday will see roughly half of the 90-minute show, with the performers acting out roughly half the show without costumes or sets.

"The show began to receive immense positive feedback, people started to take notice, word spread and it turned into a success," Reinhart said. "A management company saw it and thought it could be a great national show, so this is where we are at now."

Sharing their story is certainly something they can do with Cincinnati audiences.

"The three lived through the L.A. riots and look forward to talking with people about the 2001 Cincinnati riots," Reinhart said. "They especially want to talk to students and audiences this weekend about how it has effected the youth of the city."

The show is scheduled to run at the Aronoff Center in the Jarson-Kaplan Theater on Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$25, but students with an ID pay half price. Tickets are available at cincinnatiarts.org or at 621-ARTS.