

THE WEEK

Nigger Wetback Chink

Ivar Theater, Los Angeles
(323) 461-7300



This play about contemporary race relations doesn't pull punches, said Sharon Waxman in *The New York Times*. "Lest anyone think that a play with three ethnic slurs in its title is going to dance around the subject of race and the limit of tolerable discourse," NWC's three writer/performers open the show by chanting the forbidden words as if they were an incantation. Soon Filipino Allan Axibal steps forward to tell how "his mother sympathetically suggested he have 'the surgery' to make his eyes look more Caucasian." Rafael Agustin, a Latino, describes how his father, a doctor, ended up working at Kmart after emigrating from Ecuador. Then African-American Miles Gregley recounts being ridiculed as a child "when he told a friend he admired the singer George Michael of Wham!" Though all recount occasional instances of discrimination, the performers don't exactly have searing memories of oppression. What they do have is a remarkable degree of insight and humor into "the limits the outside world places on them as talented young men with ambition and imagination who didn't define themselves by race."

"The show is a hit parade of stereotypes, exposed and plundered," said Steven Leigh Morris in the *LA Weekly*. While Axibal says he wrote the play on a laptop, for instance, Gregley winkingly claims to have "learned it phonet-i-cally." The script has more gags than a sketch-comedy show, and benefits from spot-on timing honed in hundreds of performances at small venues around the country over the past few years. You can't help but like these three young men. "For all the rudeness of its title, NWC is an almost sweet attempt to bridge ancient divides." Though their sprightly show alone won't heal our society's racial divisions, it momentarily lightens the burden by letting us laugh at them. From beginning to end, "I couldn't wipe the grin off my face."