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## Review: IN THIS WORLD

by [Lynn](#) on March 20, 2013

in [The Passionate Playgoer](#)

At the Tarragon Extra Space, Toronto. Written by Hannah Moscovitch. Directed by Andrew Lamb. Designed by Lindsay Anne Black. Sound by Verne Good. Starring: Meilie Ng and Oyin Oladejo.

This is a terrific play. We are in a high school in tony Rosedale. Neyssa, tall, willowy, angry roughs up Bijou and slugs her in the eye. Bijou is petite but tries to fight back. Most of the play happens later in the detention room where both are sent before seeing the principal.

At first it appears that Neyssa is a young woman with a chip on her shoulder that's developed into an inoperable lump. She comes from a rough family. Her brother ran over the family cat on purpose. Their father beat him up and broke a bottle over his head for good measure. She chides Bijou for living in a rich house; for getting everything she wants; for being spoiled. The suggestion is that Bijou is a typical spoiled Asian kid with rich parents. And Neyssa thinks Bijou is a slut because she says she sleeps around.

Bijou stands up to her giving back as good as she gets. Her parents don't listen to her because they are never home. Her father travels for business and her mother is a successful lawyer. Her best friend is the housekeeper. Bijou is so bold as to play her own race card, commenting on Neyssa being from Jamaica complete with accent and body language. I wonder why this bully kid Neyssa doesn't slug Bijou right then and there since the initial fight was so unprovoked.

It's slowly revealed. These kids are friends. Bijou considers Neyssa her only true friend because she is honest with her. Neyssa thought they were friends as well until Bijou started dating Neyssa's cousin. They met when Neyssa brought her cousin to a party at Bijou's house. Her parents obviously weren't home. Something happened at the party involving Neyssa and Bijou's ex-boyfriend and Neyssa needed her help and Bijou wasn't there. She was off with the cousin.

When Bijou finds out what happened she insists that Neyssa call the police and report it. She won't. She wants to forget it. She wants to be expelled, get out of the school, and go back to her old neighbourhood where she belongs. What do you do? Dilemmas abound.

Playwright Hannah Moscovitch was originally commissioned to write this play by Youtheatre in Montreal and this production is produced by Roseneath Theatre, a Toronto-based company devoted to producing work for young people, their families, teachers and the community. *IN THIS WORLD* addresses the issues of teenage sexuality, rape, sexual assault, friendship, race, kids ignored by their parents; kids cherished by their parents, and what do you do when you are in a situation where you should tell someone.

Her dialogue is note perfect. She has captured the patois of Neyssa and her world and that of Bijou. And while each character is loaded with issues: absent parents; abusive father; rough family life dealing with emotional feelings etc. they are not clichés the way Moscovitch deals with them.

Director Andrew Lamb establishes the tension between both young women by having them circle each other; try to avoid each other and even getting in each other's face. Both actresses are formidable. As Neyssa, Oyin Oladejo is confident, forceful, dangerous and shaken by the experience. As Bijou, Meilie Ng is feisty, reasoned, as combative in a different way as Neyssa, and shattered by her friend's experience.

As I heard director Andrew Lamb say to a friend after the show, "I can hardly wait to take this into schools." And he's right. This is a play for discussion by its teenaged audience, families and teachers. What would you do if you were either of these characters? Did Bijou and Neyssa do the right things? What should they have done?

*IN THIS WORLD* plays a short run in a double bill with *OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN*, until March 24. *IN THIS WORLD* is an important play. Take your teenaged kids to see it and talk about it.

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