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A SEAT ON THE AISLE...

..IN THE THEATER OR ON A PLANE. POSTINGS ON WHAT I'VE RECENTLY SEEN, WHERE I'VE RECENTLY BEEN, AND WHATEVER ELSE MIGHT STRIKE MY MIND.

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SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2018

SEPARATE AND EQUAL Premieres at 59E59 Theaters



L-R: Adrian Baidoo and Ross Birdsong in SEPARATE AND EQUAL. Photo by Jeff Hanson.

Currently premiering at 59E59 Theaters in midtown Manhattan, **Separate and Equal** is a powerful, provocative, and timely play that addresses the issue of America's racist history with considerable



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insight and unusual creativity. Written and directed by Seth Panitch, the play was produced by the University of Alabama in partnership with the Birmingham Metro NAACP and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and was inspired by personal recollections from the Oral History Project at the Birmingham Civil Rights Museum.

The play is set in Birmingham, Alabama in 1951, three years before the Warren Supreme Court handed down the Brown decision mandating school integration - and thereby overturning the holding of Plessey v. Ferguson which had established the concept of "separate but equal" as the law of the land. The play perfectly captures the essence of Jim Crow Alabama at that time through the medium of a series of basketball games played by six teenagers – three white and three black – struggling to deal with its constraints.

The set for **Separate and Equal** is designed to simulate a basketball court, one that is reserved for whites during most of the week and is only supposed to be used by blacks on Sundays. Today, however, when three black teenagers – Calvin (Adrian Baidoo), Emmett (James Holloway) and Nathan (Edwin Brown III) – show up, it is only Wednesday. Presumably, though, any white teenagers who might have wanted to use the court are all in school, so what can be the harm if....

Except for the fact that three white teenagers – Edgar (Ross Birdsong), Jeff (Steven Bond Jr.), and Wesley (Dylan Guy Davis) - have chosen this day to cut school and they show up too. The situation is fraught with risk but the teenagers manage to overcome it (at least superficially and for a while) in a manner superior to what their elders might have achieved. The older generation, after all, was so set in its ways that even the idea of a black teenager’s addressing a white teenager by his first name without attaching the honorific “Mister” was difficult to accept. Certainly Edgar’s mother, Annabelle (Barbra Wengerd) and Calvin’s mother, Viola (Pamela Afesi) – who worked for Annabelle – were uncomfortable with it.

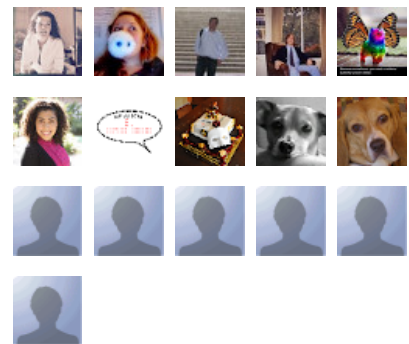
Separate and Equal can be enjoyed and appreciated on many levels. It is a first-rate depiction of the relationships between whites and blacks in Jim Crow Alabama in the 1950s – not only relationships of teenagers with one another but also relationships with black elders such as Two Snakes (Will Badgett) and with police officers such as Lt. Connor (Ted Barton) and Lt. Dixx (Jeremy Cox). It is also a brilliantly

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ABOUT ME



ALAN MILLER

I'm a husband (happily married to

choreographed rendition of a basketball game that I found enthralling. And the playing out of the basketball games, which are at the very center of the play, turn out to be a wonderful metaphor for the evolution of race relations in this country over the last century.

POSTED BY ALAN MILLER AT 7:27 PM 

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the same woman for 50 years), the proud father of two terrific kids, and the super-proud grandfather of four even more terrific grandchildren. I'm a retired Wall Street senior executive (and, no, we're not all greedy monsters) and the author of two books on finance. I've also taught courses in finance around the world (in the US, Indonesia, Russia and Malaysia). My political inclinations are decidedly libertarian and my philosophical leanings are well within the analytic tradition. I love books, theatre, fine food and wine, travel, politics, philosophy and economics – not necessarily in that order – and I enjoy talking about those subjects and writing about them. And now that I'm comfortably retired, I find myself in the fortunate position of being able to indulge at least two of those passions - theatre and travel - in this blog by commenting on the shows I've seen and the trips I've taken (with occasional forays into other areas).

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