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Actors Use Humor, Candor to Address Racism in “N*gger Wetb*ck Ch*nk”

Racist stereotypes will be confronted directly in this three-man show on Sept. 24 at 8 p.m.

LONG BEACH, California — While race relations dominate national headlines in 2015, “N*gger Wetb*ck Ch*nk” will bring autobiographical accounts of racism to the Richard and Karen Carpenter Performing Arts Center on Sept. 24 at 8 p.m. The theater is on the campus of California State University, Long Beach.

Starring Rafael Agustín, Jackson McQueen and Dionysio Basco, “N*gger Wetb*ck Ch*nk” blends theater, standup comedy, poetry and hip-hop.

The play has been performed in 44 states and on more than 150 university campuses, Agustín said. It has won awards for its advancement of social justice in the arts.

“Particularly now, given the ongoing discussion regarding race, we as a performing arts theater have a responsibility to bring shows like ‘N*gger Wetb*ck Ch*nk’ to students and the Greater Long Beach community,” Carpenter Center Executive Director Michele Roberge said. “The arts have the ability to entertain and make us laugh, and they can also positively change perceptions and create conversation and that’s our goal in bringing this show to Long Beach.”

While attending UCLA, Agustín began to explore writing his own play after facing repeated rejection for leading roles in plays written by William Shakespeare and Tennessee Williams. At the time an undocumented immigrant, Agustín reached out to two college friends, one African-American and the other Asian-American. The three set out to confront racist stereotypes they had experienced, and to do so through humor.

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“As artists, we believe that these derogatory terms continue to resonate in the public sphere,” Agustín said, “and are therefore exactly the kind of thing that should be considered in the arts.”

For its first performance at UCLA, “N*gger Wetb*ck Ch*nk,” led to picketing. Those picketers later joined the ticket line when they learned that this is an anti-racist performance, according to Sharon Waxman in The New York Times.

Waxman said the show “examines the power of timeworn taboos, attempting to deflate them through a frontal, often funny, assault.”

Tickets for “N*gger Wetb*ck Ch*nk” start at \$25. For tickets and more information, visit CarpenterArts.org or call the Carpenter Center Ticket Office at (562) 985-7000. This event is made possible in part by Season Media Partner KPCC 89.3-FM.

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