

The Best of the Boogie Down: Qurrat Ann Kadwani's They Call Me Q!

BY Jenni Ruiza (@RuizaJenni)



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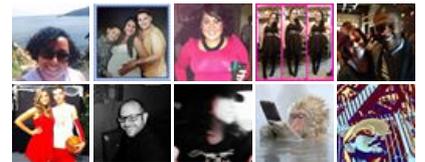
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What is a creator? In the very essence of the word, it is more than just creating one single thing – it's the

embodiment of a being, a place, a time, or a situation. Fringe winner, Qurrat Ann Kadwani, creates 13 distinct characters in one hour in her engaging one-woman show, **They Call Me Q!**. Qurrat delves into her personal story of growth from moving from India to the Bronx and how the borough helped shaped her into the person she is today. **They Call Me Q!** is an eloquent piece of theatrical entertainment that draws you into Kadwani's experiences. Breaking traditional stereotypes of being a "good Indian girl" was part of the plan for Kadwani. **They Call Me Q!** is her heart-felt attempt to "change the way people think".

Her opening monologue focuses on the difficulty non-Indians have pronouncing her name and how that has affected her life. From there, Kadwani goes into an authentically entertaining interpretation of her mother – a defining character throughout the entire play, where she openly expresses her displeasure on some of choices made by her daughter. Often stating the very familiar, "a man wants to marry a woman who can cook". Kadwani's ability to play her was uncanny. From the posture, to the difference in tone and attitude, she was able to transport the audience to an intimate conversation between mother and daughter.



Kadwani explains, "my mother saw the show last November and she was laughing when I was commending her cooking skills. I took some theatrical liberties when playing her. Not everything her character says is actually my mother but I've tried to capture her essence and the values she has instilled in me. She still can't believe I have so much to say! My father saw the show in March. He is softer spoken in some ways and he couldn't believe I was able to memorize so much. He's been inviting all his friends to see the show. Both of them are so supportive and proud. I'm glad they don't mind that I play them on stage. I was very concerned that they might get upset but they know I show the utmost respect to them and my culture."

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Another favorite moment of the play was Kadwani's soliloquy on what it was like growing up in the Bronx. With reggaeton, salsa and merengue blasting through the walls, as her mother would pray in their living room. Kadwani went to school and identified more with the Latinas in her school than anyone else. Surrounding herself with a clique who had slicked-back ponytails, several gold character rings, oversized nameplates, and ridiculously large bamboo earrings straight out of the 90's, Kadwani embodied their slang, hard tone and attitude, and even some of their verbiage. She proudly states, "I will always be a girl from the Bronx! Growing up in the BX completely shaped who I am today. I remember I used to tell my brother when another kid picked on me and he would tell me to be a strong person – that nobody could break me. Being around so many different cultures and attitudes made me more aware of how people see the world – that people have very different upbringings and we can't assume we know who they are by the way they talk, dress or by their name."



So what kind of preparation goes into creating thirteen characters? "I spent years just on the text and making the characters multi-dimensional with their own personal stories. I wanted to write strong characters that have a very specific perspective on the life they lead, the life they think they should have or the life they feel they can have. When I started working on the performance aspect, some characters came easier than others... Every performance gets me closer to the truth. That's why I love performing this play so much – all the characters are so real to me," explains Kadwani.

They Call Me Qi! is already having an amazing run. With Kadwani touring her one-woman show all over the country, she primarily performs in colleges where students are generally more open-minded. She explains, "Theatre is all about planting seeds so that students can get an increased sensitivity towards others and



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think deeply about current issues of culture, race and identity that affect us all. I have many college shows lined up this fall and I can't wait for students to realize that they can make a difference, too."

For more information on Qurrat Ann Kadwani and a schedule of where you can catch her performances, check out www.qkadwani.com and like her page at <https://www.facebook.com/qkadwani>.



Find out more about Bronx contributor, Jenni Ruiza, at <http://www.jenniruiza.com/>. Follow her on Twitter [@RuizaJenni](https://twitter.com/RuizaJenni).

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