

Ma Binu! The Reading on Youtube



About this event

What is true and what is perceived?

Human beings perceive the world through biased eyes and often what we perceive to be true are not the facts. Our perception of the world can shape the decisions we make and the way we choose to interact with other people. As a young black girl, the world was a scary place for me and I felt a need to put up a wall for my protection. This wall I built around myself trapped me in a cycle of internalized fear and anxiety that I was no longer able to see myself for the young, gifted, kind, beautiful, and intelligent black woman that I was.

I chose to internalize the negative voices which led me down a negative path making potentially harmful decisions. Thank God

everything worked out in the end, but I wish I had someone to guide me during that time. I want this play to be a means of encouragement for young women of color and all people to think about the decisions that have shaped our lives and our perception of ourselves so as to blossom into our full self acceptance. Lara goes through self-blaming and self-hatred, but finally she finds a hard truth that brings her back home to her true self.

I started writing Ma Binu! in Fall of 2017. For years beforehand I had been struggling with recurring nightmares and it was helpful for me to write them down. In one of my dreams I was trapped in a temple of Zeus worshipers. Another time I made friends with aliens and had to help them find the special solution that would keep them alive. The nightmares were vivid and could have been stories within themselves, but I decided to pursue the larger picture of dream worlds in and of themselves. I've always been fascinated with the larger concept of dreams and dreaming, so I set Ma Binu! in a dreamscape.

Ma Binu! means “don't be angry” in Yoruba. At that time I was struggling with my parents separation and my dad moving back to Nigeria, which caused me a lot of pain. I was unable to focus on school, I forgot to eat, and I couldn't get a good night's sleep for almost a year. My depression kept on for several years afterwards until I decided to sit down and reflect on my feelings with the first few lines that became this play.

1: Why don't you just kill yourself?

T: I'm not listening to you.

1: You're sad and lonely, no one likes you. You'd be better off if you weren't around anymore.

T: HELP! Someone help me, I'm in here.

1: No one can hear you.

2: Why don't you leave her alone?

1: Why don't you push off?

(1 strikes 2 with fire and she disappears)

T: I know what you're doing. You're not slick.

1: Oh yeah?

T: Yeah. You have no power over me.

1: ... Is that right?

T: You're afraid of me.

(1 laughs)

T: You're afraid that if... when I get out of here you'll have no more power over me. When I get out of here... I win.

(1 and T face off for a moment. Neither bends or gives way.

Eventually, 1 takes a step forward. T flinches.)

1: You'll lose.

Ma Binu! was a light at the end of the one of many tunnel in my depression journey. I found that one way that I could conquer my sorrow was to articulate it. Through the journey of writing this play I realized how important family is and that even when things seem hopeless there is still hope to be found... Usually in the relationships that you chose to build around you and how you nurture yourself. Ireti's (our protagonist) bond with her sisters and curiosity about herself is what keeps her going just as it was my bond with my "sisters" (loving and supportive friends and family) and curiosity of self that helped me through my dark time. I pray this story will help you through yours.

Love,
Tolu