

## RE:VISION | A STATE OF EMERGENCE Review of the Truthworker Play

by [Brent Buell](#)

As people who read my page know, I'm a huge fan of the Brooklyn-based Truthworker Theatre Company—a company of high school and college aged young people who write and produce their own monumental, socially challenging hip hop shows.

Yesterday, I had the joy of seeing their latest work, RE:VISION | A STATE OF EMERGENCE, that focuses on the emotional, familial and economic challenges facing people who are released from incarceration. I expected that the show would be excellent because I have seen the level of work that these young people create. But nothing prepared me for the power and beauty of this new still-in-development work.

Under the direction of founder and artistic director [Samara Gaev](#), RE:VISION | A STATE OF EMERGENCE presents three acts, each depicting a different aspect of what it means to be a returning citizen. Whether it is a father returning from prison and being met with the anger and pain of the son who has felt abandoned, the mother who struggles with addiction upon her return, or a youthful offender trying to find his way in society after incarceration—this play, often told in powerful hip hop verse, is revelatory. The reason? These are the true stories of members of the theatre company. They wrote every word, composed melodies, choreographed dances, and developed the compelling narratives directly from the lives they lead.

This is truly an ensemble—with each company member shouldering major roles with naturalness and frequent brilliance. As is the case with the mega hip hop hit HAMILTON, these young people make sure that every word is understood—including astonishingly when the raps are done in chorus!

There is a stunning dance solo at the beginning of the show choreographed and performed by Carnell Kieth Steward Jr., that foretells the stories to come as he struggles to free himself from chains that seem to come from everywhere. Donnay Edmund performs a heart-wrenching dance solo and later joins Steward and other company members in dances that are alternately jarring and then joyous.

The effective musical settings throughout were engineered by company member James Forza who also appears throughout the show singing, playing the guitar, acting the role of a child and more.

Ricky Matos' turn as a Puerto Rican bodega owner with a heart of gold, brings much-needed humor to parts of the play that would otherwise be unbearably sad.

It is the true oneness of this company that makes everything work. Company members Cory Fletcher, Enlil McRae, Leah Mohammed, Zafar Mohammed, Rebecca Oliver, Deseree "Desi" Ramos, Nethanel "Ethan Black" Romero and the aforementioned members all seamlessly morph from one role to the other, sometimes becoming a

named character, other times becoming part of a Greek chorus that illuminates and punctuates a scene.

With subtle video projections and animations by technical director, Alixa Garcia, the spare staging becomes immediately relatable spaces on a street, in a room, in a store.

I want to see this company soar, because its message is one that cuts through the noise and blather of today's political climate, replacing hate and derision with comprehension and love.

I am honored to know the members of this company, and hope that everyone who reads this will take the opportunity to support their work. Truthworker Theatre Company is entirely funded by private donations. You may make a contribution through their website at [www.Truthworker.com](http://www.Truthworker.com).