



They Call Me Q

Written and performed by Qurrat Ann Kadwani; Directed by Obaid Kadwani and Claudia Gaspar

Off Broadway, Solo Show

Open-Ended Run

St. Luke's Theatre, 308 West 46th Street

by [Angel Lam](#) on 11.20.14



Qurrat Ann Kadwani in *They Call Me Q*. Photo by Bolti Studios.

BOTTOM LINE: A sweet coming-of-age story infused with cultural shock and racial dilemmas.

I, too, wanted to be Hispanic while growing up in the sunny, sprawling suburbs of Los Angeles. I vividly remember the Hispanic girls' curly brown hair with puffed bangs, gigantic hooped earrings, and their tendency to chew gum and talk at the same time. They seemed to be the coolest kids on the block; whenever they talked, their ponytails moved with attitude. In *They Call Me Q*, a one-woman coming-of-age story written and performed by Qurrat Ann Kadwani, Kadwani recalls her childhood growing up Indian-American in a predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhood in the Bronx.

At the spacious St. Luke's Theatre, upbeat Indian music accompanies the audience finding their seats. The show begins like a journey, beginning from the day of Kadwani's birth, through memories of her childhood, the dilemmas of her adolescence and college years, and into the present day. Her Muslim parents moved from India to New York in search of a new life for the next generation. They settled not for the Indian-populated Queens, but for the racially-mixed Bronx where blacks and Hispanics were taking over from the whites. Kadwani remembers her strict Indian mother, reminding her to get perfect grades and learn how to cook Indian meals. Everything Kadwani does should be directed towards the goal of finding a good husband. Then we see her go to school, where she gets into fights with other girls. How horrifying this would be for an Asian family, where girls should be like lambs and would never get in fist-fights with other girls.

In the course of the play, Kadwani turns into a multitude of characters, vividly portrayed and funny at times. I liked her well-paced delivery: it is not rushed but gives space for the audience to reflect. I would have enjoyed more music, sound, or even stage design,

given the large stage setup for such an intimate piece. The technical support team on lights and sound are on time and well executed.

There are many intriguing characters in the story, but one never fully gets to know them, and we quickly move on to another time in her life. I especially enjoyed the segment when she travels to India; through her description I can imagine the rich sights and lush sounds of that distant land. The story of the servant girl receiving Mehndi is especially meaningful, leaving me wanting more. Kadwani is like the girl next door: you seem to know her, and the characters she recalls resonate familiarity. This show is a personal, intimate piece worth checking out if you are in for a low-key, heartwarming evening.

(*They Call Me Q* plays at St. Luke's Theatre, 308 West 46th Street, in an open-ended run. Performances are Sundays at 2PM. Tickets are \$39.50 - \$59.50 and are available at telecharge.com or by calling 212.239.6200.)

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