

# SECTION 2

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Smith, 19, as he enters from stage right. playing a college student who's into black nationalism — it's another scene about race relations. He's talking to Emilio Cruz, 14, who is playing a black student who has a white girlfriend.

## **BULLY HIM FOR READING POST**

Todd Taylor, 15, playing Emilio's roommate, joins Rodney in trying to get Emilio to go with them to the black nationalist rally on behalf of Leonard Jeffries, the black CUNY professor recently attacked for his antisemitic remarks. They bully Emilio for having a white girlfriend, and for reading the New York Post. "Don't you know that's a racist paper, man?" says Todd in disgust. Emilio is overpowered in the first run-through. The other kids try to help him out with other arguments. It is clear that they know these particular struggles from personal experience.

"What hurts us the most is racism," says Richard Medina, 16, as all nod in agreement. While stressing the enormous daily impact of racism on his life, he says that the workshop has given him hope that he can begin to fight it. "We are every size, shape, and shade here, and we all like each other."

The kids agree that the scenes that come closest to home are emotionally difficult but valuable. "You come in with a problem," says Deshon Springer, 17, "and you can put it on the stage and learn from it. Maybe you can see how to change it on stage, and then you can begin to change it in life."

Sheila Collins, 16, adds that it helps her to understand other people's points of view. "You get to feel how it is to be a different person," she says.

## **EXPRESSION CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE**

The workshops are open to anyone, regardless of their acting talent. "I believe creative expression can save your life. I know it saved mine." Rucker says.

Rucker was like many young women who come to New York with visions of stardom, and find themselves forever pounding the pavement. "I grew out of Pittsburg, but grew up in Brooklyn. I think I was depressed all through my twenties. I didn't have any money or a fancy education, and I had self-esteem problems coming out of my ears. But it was my art that saved me."

Rucker's essentially unpaid work at the Loft is finally winning her a place in the



*YWCA President Pat Wylie (L) making Women of Influence Award presentation to Bronwyn Rucker last month.*

spotlight. In October she was the subject of New York Newsday's "Brooklyn Profile" page, and on November 16 she joined nine other Brooklyn women honored as Women of Influence in the fight against racism and sexism at the Brooklyn YWCA's annual colloquium on these linked problems.

A Park Slope resident, Rucker, at 40, continues to work as a professional actress, frequently appearing with her husband, musician Rick Russo, in cabarets and experimental theater pieces. But she says she has found something better at The Loft, and is now getting a Masters in social work at Hunter College.

Says Rucker, "I didn't think I'd be doing this. I came to New York to be in a play. But it's absolutely 100 percent right for my evolution as an artist right now. I always knew I wanted to work with kids at some point, and I reached a point where I felt I had something to give. Yes, this is what I'm supposed to be doing."

For information on The Loft drama program, call Rucker at Meltdown Performing Arts, Inc., 768-1399.