

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY

### A New Role for a Familiar Maldonian - Terlonzo Amos makes his acting debut...



*Terlonzo back in the studio*

In theater and film, there's front of the house talent, and there's back of the house talent. Some folks have both, and our own Terlonzo Amos, Manager of Technical Operations at MATV, is one of them. Drafted at the last minute for a role in a staged reading of "The Big Game" by Jay Harris at the 4th Annual "New Works Festival" in Newburyport, MA, Terlonzo grabbed on to his part and ran with it, with all the stage-stealing gusto of a natural.

Terlonzo has a large stage presence and innate comedic sense, plus an ease onstage that may just be his personality – this is one actor who never needs to be coaxed, or miked. Or maybe it's from his job as Technical Director at MATV. He is onstage there constantly, after all, albeit in another capacity.

The well-crafted one act play, set in St. Petersburg, Florida in 1960, takes place during the most important football game of the season for California's Humboldt University. It's also the year of the first Civil Rights lunch counter sit-in, five years after the struggle for racial equality began. When black students are required to stay in segregated housing, a faculty committee summons the courage to issue a press statement against the segregated quarters. The fallout from their statement, set against pre-game college football fervor, is the heart of the play's dramatic tension.

Back in the players' locker room, Tyrone, one of the black players, just doesn't get it. He doesn't realize what it means to be in the South, just a couple of doors down from Mississippi and Alabama, where, as Jamal, played by Terlonzo, reminds him, "the Civil War is still being fought, and we lose." Jamal tells Tyrone the rules of the game in segregated St. Petersburg. If he intends to show up at the game in one piece, if at all, he'd better stay where he's told to go.

Later, a Humboldt administration official, in Florida for the game, calls his colleague back in California, and they have their own discussion about principles, something they apparently don't have themselves. Their major concern, more than negative PR, is the assault to hierarchy: the fact that the faculty went directly to the press, and not through channels, is a direct threat to who they are, and how they operate. .

The discussion stops, and in creative dramatic counterpoint, a blackout brings us to a sports announcer who gives his own indictment of "professors who wouldn't know a touchdown from a first down."

During the final scene, faculty and administration meet about what to do next. The administration's position is clear: do nothing, and a lot of it. Let the whole uproar die down by itself. Action switches again to the announcer,

who brings us into the last minutes of the game. Humboldt loses...symbolic, perhaps, of the many setbacks the Civil Rights movement would experience.

When the two black players pack up to leave, Jamal reconsiders his silence about the segregated housing, something that blacks would begin to do in ever larger numbers. "Maybe we should have said something, done something...I don't know, had a sit-in or something." But the play ends on a note of hope – Humboldt State will be back again next year, to win it.

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As for Terlonzo, he says he enjoyed acting. "I would do it again. They spelled my name right – and in the right order – I would definitely do it again."

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