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Frosene On The Scene: Cope-La-La-Land

By Frosene Phillips

Much has transpired for **Brian Copeland** since he debuted his solo show, ***Not A Genuine Black Man***, at **The Marsh** in San Francisco in May 2004. The comedian, actor, writer, and radio/television personality has seen his show sell out month after month. He's watched teachers and students alike, flock to performances. His show is in development as an HBO series to be produced by **Rob Reiner**. A book version of the show will be released later this year, and now there's talk of an Off Broadway run.

But wait, there's more.

Tonight, Copeland's debut of *Genuine* takes place in Los Angeles where he will perform Friday and Saturday nights through April 1 (no fooling!) at the new **Hayworth Theatre** at 2511 Wilshire Blvd.

His stint at The Marsh will continue on Thursdays only through the end of March. Of course, that's the current plan. But since the show has been extended time after time, I wouldn't be surprised if another schedule follows. To date, Copeland proudly boasts that his solo show is the longest running solo show in S.F. history and now, with the L.A. addition, he's is positioned to set yet another theatrical landmark as it becomes the first solo show to run in both markets simultaneously.

As I stated in this space in July of 2004, "Here's a chance to truly see something special in the making with Copeland's poignant tale." With the Bay Area clock ticking, I can't emphasize enough that if you've been thinking about going, now is the time.

Genuine, is Copeland's first solo show and it reveals a little-known chapter of Bay Area history. In 1971, San Leandro was named one of the most racist suburbs in America and Congressional hearings were held. The following year, Copeland (then 8-years-old) and his family moved to San Leandro. Copeland will make you laugh and cry as he shares his poignant story while exploring how surroundings make us who we are.

Last month, he shared yet another discovery. In his show he references a documentary on San Leandro and its racist policies that aired nationally in 1971. "While I was researching the play," he shared, "I looked high and low for a copy. As far as anyone knew, one didn't exist."

Recently, Copeland's friend **Mimi Wilson** had passed away. Wilson was "one of the handful of brave souls who fought with Fair Housing to end discrimination in San Leandro." As fate would have it, many years ago Wilson had lent a copy of the films, ***The Suburban Wall*** and a 1981 follow up ***The Invisible Wall***, to a friend and forgot about them. With Mimi's passing, the friend returned the documentaries to her family and in turn, Wilson's family passed them on to Copeland.

Both of these films can be viewed at Copeland's web site, briancopeland.com. Here is a unique glimpse back in time as well as an offering of the climate of Copeland's childhood and thus the foundation of what would ultimately become *Genuine*. Ironically, the last shot in *The Invisible Wall* is in front of the house that Copeland would eventually purchase just

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nine years later.

For tickets and information

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to performances in San Francisco and Los Angeles, call 800/838-3006 or visit briancopeland.com. **Faculty Nights** are still available at The Marsh. Teachers, educators and those working in the mental health field can receive a special offer for groups. Contact The Marsh at 415/641-0235 for details.

As Copeland embarks on yet another *Genuine* journey, the Bay Area can take pride in knowing that its local support has helped his message reach a wider audience.

Oprah, are you listening?

WEEKEND SCENE: Poncho Sanchez Latin Jazz Band through Sunday, Jeremy Pelt Group Monday, Marcus Shelby Jazz Orchestra Tuesday, Wednesday, Jessica Williams Thursday at Yoshi's Oakland...Junius Courtney Big Band Friday, Bill Tapia Saturday, Jez Lowe & the Bad Pennies Sunday, Tom Russell with Andrew Hardin Monday, Hamilton de Holanda, Mike Marshall Tuesday at Freight & Salvage Berkeley...Goodword, Raw Lit, Each Friday, Benefit featuring Kaizone, Lalo Saturday, Blue Monday Jam with Fox's Blues Band Monday at the Uptown Nightclub Oakland...Orquesta La Moderna Tradicion Friday, Manuel Suarez's Mas Con Menos Saturday, Manuel Suarez's Rumba & Bata Tap Sunday at La Pena Berkeley.

Matt Small's Chamber Ensemble Saturday, Allison Miller Trio Sunday at the Jazzschool Berkeley...Silicon Gulch Jazz Band Tuesday at Prince of Wales Pub San Mateo... Ellen Robinson & Her Trio Friday, Robin Gregory & Her Trio Saturday, Island Literary Series 3 p.m., John Kiskaddon Quintet 8 p.m. Sunday at Anna's Jazz Island Berkeley...Lydia Pense & Cold Blood, Good Medicine Friday, Safari Saturday, Redwood City Blues Jam Wednesday at the Little Fox Redwood City...Vince Charming Band Friday, Powers That Be Saturday at The Bistro Hayward...Kenny Washington, John R. Burr, Peter Barshay, Michael O'Neill Friday, Tony Lindsay, John R. Burr, Seward McCain, Michael O'Neill Saturday at Cetrella Half Moon Bay...Hiromi Trio Sunday at the Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society Miramar Beach Half Moon Bay.

COMEDY SCENE: Patrice O'Neal through Saturday, SF Comedy Showcase Sunday at the Punch Line San Francisco...Bay Area Comedy Showcase at Bourbon Street Comedy Club Concord...Kevin Nealon at Cobb's Comedy Club San Francisco...Norm MacDonald at the Improv San Jose.

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