

British Theatre Guide

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Daughters of the Revolution (part of Continental Divide)

David Edgar
Barbican
(2004)

The companion piece to [Mothers Against](#) looks at the obverse side of the coin. Where the first play followed the campaign of a liberal Republican, *Daughters of the Revolution* looks at two different views of the politics of the American left.

The play spreads its net widely and is particularly strong in its analysis of the Black Panthers and the Civil Rights movement of the late 1960s.

The candidate for governor, Rebecca McKeene (Melissa Smith,) may have been an extremist in her youth but in order to get the job, she will compromise in any way necessary. She is contrasted with an unreconstructed college professor who now wishes to get a job in a Senate office. The problem for Michael Bern (played with just the right balance of angst and anger by Terry Layman) is a secret in his past.

He is not the only person with secrets and soon it becomes apparent that not only is Rebecca McKeene vulnerable as a result of radical indiscretions in the Sixties but so is her agent Blair Lowe (Lorri Holt).

Daughters of the Revolution develops with Bern following a symbolic quest for his radical roots which leads him firstly to a bunch of street politicians led by Kwesi Ntuli (Derrick Lee Weeden) and then to a group of tree huggers with whom he plays out some almost farcical games.

Ultimately, he finds himself and the other major players have to decide whether morals are more important than political goals.

This play is better constructed with more realistic characters than *Mothers Against* but its political views tend to be shallower, making fun of obvious targets. Except for the forest scene, it is generally entertaining and in Michael Bern creates a sympathetic character.

The conclusion from the six-hour span of *Continental Divide* is that many of America's political problems are very similar to those in England. Politicians are not people that one would like to meet and there is a tendency for all of them to move towards the middle ground.

These plays are far more interesting for their political content than their drama. One cannot help but feel that there is a one very good two and a half or three-hour play in this material. Further, the playwright's decision to prevent the politicians from meeting until the very end may not have been a correct one.

It is good though to see a serious drama that takes politics as its central issue and for that, audiences in both Britain and the United States should be grateful.

