

Interview: Isaac Gómez of *RADICAL or, are you gonna miss me?* at IAMA Theatre Company

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I chatted with writer Isaac Gómez about the world premiere of their new play *Radical or, are you gonna miss me?* at IAMA Theatre Company. The play, which tells the story of two sisters struggling to navigate a relationship despite major political differences, was inspired in part by a shocking discovery Gómez recently had in their own life. They wanted to figure out how their older brother who was raised in the same household as them, by the same parents, and attending the same schools, could have voted in a presidential election for Donald Trump. How can two people from the same family have such disparate beliefs and priorities? In writing this piece, Gómez explains, they had to wrangle with their own “militant belief system” and reliance on a “for/against dichotomy.”

“I don’t think the play villainizes anyone, but it makes us sit with hard questions. In the wrong place and the wrong time, I realized I could be radicalized and I’m not alone in that.” They continue, “My research into cults taught me that loneliness and lack of purpose can be strong motivators. I know what it feels like to want comfort from anything. I’ve spent lots of money on mysticism and tarot— some people might consider that a cult.” As they reflect on the huge masses of marginalized people who still rallied behind Trump’s presidential bid, they urge us all to be introspective. “Maybe we’re not so different from the Candace Owens of the world.” This piece asks us to explore the motivations behind our beliefs and confront the assumptions we make about others in our lives.

Overall, *Radical* explores themes of us versus them thinking and how nuance and holding space for each other can offer a chance for relationships to survive otherwise extinction-level blows. In writing this play, Gómez sought to “understand a disconnect, not defend particular political beliefs. It’s a play about how trying to understand other people can help us better understand ourselves.” They hope the specificity they brought to the narrative will resonate broadly and universally with a wide range of audiences.