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In January of 2004, the anxieties of the post-9/11 world were manifested here in Portland. When the Border Patrol conducted its now infamous sweep of bus stations, homeless shelters, and the more obviously ethnic local businesses, some Portlanders were rattled, some were outraged, and many didn't come out of their homes for eight weeks. The sweep was ordered in the name of the handy euphemism "homeland security." Rolling as trippingly as it does off so many tongues, it bears thinking about exactly what it means, and to whom. Last weekend's *home land security* at the Center for Cultural Exchange explored just these questions.

"This is not a play, or a concert," the show began with sentences spoken in turn, phrase by phrase. "It's more like a snap-shot or a scavenger hunt to discover Portland, Maine, 2005." Commissioned by the CCE in 2004, *home land security* was created by Obie-winning playwright Marty Pottenger to explore how Portlanders feel about home, land, and security.

Over the last year, Pottenger conducted extensive interviews, civic dialogues, and story circles with over 80 Maine residents. Using the sweep as launching point, she listened to stories and concerns from a broad cross-section of Maine residents from widely different educational backgrounds and ethnic communities, with a strata that spanned from street people to the governor. From this wealth of sources, Pottenger winnowed a cast down to five core members, four community cameos, and three musicians. She then worked their raw stories down to the series of monologues that made up the script of *home land security*.

The assembled cast are brilliantly diverse, studded with our neighbors both highly visible and under the radar, all intimately invested in the Maine community. The Latina Reverend Virginia Marie Rincon is an Episcopal minister in the city, and Oliver Albino is known as "Uncle" throughout the Portland Sudanese community. Poet and performer Billy Woolverton has been living on Portland's streets and in its woods for seven years, while the affable old codger Lucien Matthieu comes from French-Canadian stock. Young Micmac native Heather Augustine is involved in a number of Native American associations, and Jill Duson is - well, in addition to singing with the Maine Mass Gospel Choir - the Mayor.

These five core members rooted into their psyches, and, with astonishing candor, talked about home, land, and security, in three corresponding acts. In "home," many focused on the feeling of being welcome. However, Lucien recalled that in 1920, Maine had both the largest KKK and the smallest population of African-Americans. For Heather, any talk of home comes down to history, which haunts her daily: "All of you, I don't care who you are, are living off my people's genocide." Land came to mean not just nation to the group, but also, variously, environment,

heritage, and property. Before Jill moved to Maine, for example, she defined land as belonging to someone else. Now she seeks out public land. And the ironies of "security," of course, were rich. The Reverend told a chilling anecdote of being chastised by a young boy: "Where's your flag? You need to put a flag on your car so you can be safe!"

Though this show wasn't just about anxiety (many monologues stressed the comfort of Portland's community and the beauty of Maine land. Lucien, among others, provided big-hearted comic relief), it certainly didn't shrink from its participants' fears and outrage, or from providing a truly balanced survey of community. Among the community cameos (which included State Senate President Beth Edmonds, Portland NAACP chair Rachel Talbot Ross, and local actor/director Tavia Gilbert) was Fire Chief Fred LaMontagne, one of Maine's First Responders (a newly formed DHS Terrorism Preparedness Task Force) who gave his own take on state security. Between thoughts on the War on Terror, Iraq, and war in general, the views expressed in *home land security* often conflicted – but always with respect and the desire to engage.

Throughout the Pottenger's piece, Franco-American fiddling improbably met the rhythms of Latino guitar and African drumming performed by Franco-Yankee Greg Boardman, Bolivian-born Juan Condori, and Somalian-born drummer Harun Sheehkey. Like its accompaniment, *home land security* was fierce, distinctive, and sometimes dissonant. Its fraught honesty was as striking as the tensions in the music's phrasing, which sought to align even as they fought.