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## **Proviso East doubles as real-life movie set**

### **Maywood students bring teen's anti-AIDS movie script to life**

By Joseph Ruzich  
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When the director shouted "Rolling!" amid the bright lights and the cameras focused on student actors at Proviso East High in Maywood, the school showed the glamour of a Hollywood studio.

Although the anti-AIDS message of the movie being filmed was serious, the atmosphere in the gymnasium last week evoked feelings of giddiness and pride because the film was written by one of them, for them.

The 20-minute movie is based on a short story by Proviso East senior Keyana Ray. Ray, 17, said she wrote the coming-of-age piece in August about three young women after a family member and a friend contracted the HIV virus. Her story was selected from among 500 entries in a national story and a scriptwriting contest.

The film will be shown on the Black Entertainment Television network in February.

Amanda McCord, a senior and an extra in the film, said she believes the two-day filming will change what she and some other students describe as an "image problem" at Proviso.

"I think the movie will give our school a positive image," said McCord, 17. "People often associate our school with violence. But this film will show us in a new light."

More than 100 students had roles ranging from memorizing a couple lines to walking or chitchatting with a friend.

Jeanea Dean, 17, another extra, said she is pleased that so many students helped make the film.

"We are all very excited to see the movie," said Dean. "I am really proud of our school right now."

Ray said she has received lots of praise from her classmates and the community. The village of Maywood declared Nov. 10, the first day of filming, Keyana Ray Day.

She is even more proud of a congratulatory letter from Illinois Sen. Barack Obama. "I framed the letter," she said.

After high school, Ray said, she plans to enroll in a college writing program.

She submitted her entry to Scenarios USA Rap-It-Up "What's the Real Deal on Growing Up in the Age of AIDS?" National Story and Scriptwriting Contest after she saw it advertised on BET. Scenarios USA is a non-profit organization that uses writing and filmmaking to foster youth leadership and self-expression

"I never expected to win," Ray said. "It started out as just something to do for fun. I always liked writing so I gave it a try."

Her story focuses on three young women navigating a path to adulthood in a world where HIV infection and drug abuse are the norm.

In late August, Scenarios USA sent Ray to Los Angeles to work with Gina Prince-Bythewood, director of "Love and Basketball," and her husband Reggie Rock Bythewood, who directed "Get on the Bus," to help develop her story into a script.

"I was very excited to meet them," Ray said. "I'm glad they helped because I learned that writing a script for the movies is extremely hard." Prince-Bythewood also spent some time in Maywood to direct the film.

Scenarios USA co-founder Maura Minsky said teenagers can relate to Ray's story.

"She wrote the story in an authentic voice," said Minsky. "Her story is very realistic, showing how young women and men struggle against all odds in a world of HIV, drugs and violence."

But the script is only one aspect of the Scenarios USA contest, Minsky explained. The contest winners also work closely with the directors, helping with casting calls and wardrobe.

"The best way to make a film for teenagers is to work closely and seek advice from teenagers," Minsky said. "They'll let us know if something doesn't relate or seem realistic to them."

Ray said she hopes the film's message will give teenagers a better understanding of the HIV virus.

"The disease doesn't discriminate," Ray said. "I also hope the movie will teach teenagers to stand up for themselves and not let someone manipulate them into doing something they don't want to do."

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