

In 1956, Alice Childress passed up the chance to be the first African-American woman to have a play produced on Broadway because she refused to soften the ending of *Trouble in Mind*. Three years later, Lorraine Hansberry earned that honor with *A Raisin in the Sun*, and *Trouble in Mind* remains a largely unremembered gem. The world Childress gives us in *Trouble in Mind* is one we like to think we've left behind: the theatrical roles open to African American actors have expanded well beyond the Mammy and servant roles, our front pages no longer include stories about people throwing rocks at children as they go to school. But in 1957, as in 2011, it is the complacent progressivism that assumes the battle is won that proves itself most insidious and most dangerous. And Childress uses her semi-autobiographical backstage banter and woefully inadequate play-within-a-play to remind us that tolerance and understanding are not achievements, but rather decisions each of us have to make every day.