

## Toks Olagundoye on 'The Neighbors'

Born in Lagos, Toks Olagundoye was raised not only in Nigeria but also in Switzerland and England. The exotic Nigerian-Norwegian beauty moved to the United States to attend Smith College where she received a Bachelor of Fine Arts.

After jumpstarting her career in New York, the stunningly-attractive actress relocated to Los Angeles where within a short time she landed roles on such TV series as "NCIS," "Prime Suspect," "Switched at Birth," "CSI: NY," "Law & Order" and "Ugly Betty," to name a few. She currently stars in ABC's new hit comedy "The Neighbors" (which airs on Wednesdays at 8:30pm ET/PT), playing "Jackie Joyner-Kersee," an alien from the planet Zabvron who has taken on human form to live in a gated community in New Jersey.

Toks' character is married to the community's Supreme Leader and serves as the Zabvsonian equivalent of the First Lady. "Jackie" is baffled by Earth's strange customs but is more open than her stubborn husband who refuses to adapt.

In addition to acting, Toks enjoys writing and producing films for the web and is the founder of Unlimited Ceiling (<http://www.youtube.com/user/UnlimitedCeiling>) for which she's created web series like "Callbacks" and "AlphaSeries." In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, horseback riding, Pilates, archery and going to the gun range. Toks' secret talent is doing all sorts of accents from around the world.

Here, she talks about her life, career and work on The Neighbors.

**Kam Williams:** Hi, Toks, thanks for the interview.

**Toks Olagundoye:** Absolutely my pleasure! Thank YOU for the interview!

**KW:** What interested you in The Neighbors?

**TO:** Well, honestly, I love being an actor and a job is a job, and I'm



### CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

by Kam Williams

always happy to have a job. So, initially, I would say: employment. But I am also a sci-fi lover and have been itching to be on a sitcom forever. So, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to audition and I really went for it!

**KW:** Tell me a little about the show's wacky premise?

**TO:** Sure, a community of aliens set up a colony of sorts on Earth in a New Jersey golfing community, taking on the guise of human form, and they do their best to fit in and not attract attention. Of course, they fail spectacularly. One of the alien couples in the community gets tired of waiting around to hear from their home planet and they vacate their house leaving it open for a nice, human Jersey family of five to purchase and move into. Let the hysterical comedy of errors ensue!

**KW:** How would you describe

... above all, tolerance and understanding are essential for growth and happiness.

your character, Jackie?

**TO:** Quirky, cute, loving, kind, curious, proper, diligent, patient, inquisitive, genuine, lovely, tall, green blooded... Okay, now I'm just throwing words at you. I shall cease and desist.

**KW:** So, you play an alien queen who's impersonating U.S. Olympian Jackie Joyner-Kersee. Which is more challenging, playing an alien or impersonating

Jackie?

**TO:** Well, neither, because neither is the case. Jackie is the wife of the Zabvsonian supreme commander, so she is more of a matriarch than a queen. And the aliens are not impersonating the athletes they have named themselves after. They have taken on these names in the hope of becoming a part of the elite. In their minds, choosing the names of accomplished sports figures will help them fit in and excel. They don't realize it actually makes them all stick out like a box of sore thumbs. Yes, I realize that is not an official adage. Hey, it is now!

**KW:** Does the show have a message?

**TO:** In my humble opinion, as a foreigner, it does. And the message is this: the only way to come to a full acceptance and understanding of yourself is to embrace your own culture, quirks and differences while learning about those around you and exploring, incorporating and embracing their cultures, differences, quirks, etcetera. Okay, that's a lot of words. Basically, we are all different and we all have something to learn and it doesn't mean people need to change who you are but one should be open to new things and, above all, tolerance and understanding are essential for growth and happiness. That's still a lot of words. Let's try this: we are all different and that's okay. That's not incredibly poetic, but it's the message at its essence.

**KW:** You're half-Nigerian and half-Norwegian? Which do you identify with more?

**TO:** Oh, I identify with them both very strongly. I identify myself as a Nigerian because that is where I was born and raised and where my family still lives. And, in my mind, that is the definition of where someone is from. But I was raised by a very Norwegian mother and spent a ton of time there every year until I was about 14 and am closest to my Norwe-



Toks Olagundoye

gian relatives. So, it is very difficult to choose. Call me, Sophie. [ala Sophie's Choice] Well, don't, it's not my name and not really that traumatic of a choice, but you get my gist.

**KW:** So, do you still have lots of friends and relatives in both places?

**TO:** I do.

**KW:** Do you speak Norwegian?

**TO:** I do. Not as well as I did in my childhood but I can get by in a conversation.

**KW:** You studied theater at Smith prior to embarking on your professional career. Do you recommend that route to other aspiring actresses?

**TO:** Not necessarily. It was right for me, but other people do better going on to grad school and others yet are naturally inclined and do just fine without any formal training at all. Everyone is different. The only things I think are imperative are focus, determination and hard work.

**KW:** What would be your ideal movie role?

**TO:** Oh, my. That's a hard one. Anything Meryl Streep, Angelina Jolie, Jennifer Aniston or Charlize Theron would say "yes" to. I think I have covered all my bases there. I mean, I just have fun doing what I do. If it looks like a good time, I'm up for it! Seriously, have your people call my people.

**KW:** What film director would you like to work with?

**TO:** Oh, so many... The Coen Brothers, Martin Scorsese, Sam Mendes, Mike Leigh, Kathryn Bigelow, David Fincher, Cameron Crowe, Chris Nolan, Ridley Scott, Sam Raimi, Quentin Tarantino, Luc Besson, Penny Marshall, Ron Howard, Mike Nichols, Kenneth Branagh... Bring it!

**KW:** Is there any question no one ever asks you, that you wish someone would?

**TO:** Yes: "Would you like a few million dollars? Because I happen to have a few extra I can give you tax free." Ha! No, not really, I'm just glad that anyone wants to ask

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## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

### SEATTLE 2012

**THE SKANNER.com**

If you have an event you want to share with the community, email it two weeks in advance to *The Skanner* at [info@theskanner.com](mailto:info@theskanner.com)

#### Saturday December 1

**HEALTHY FOR THE HOLIDAY'S.** This is an educational event for cancer survivors and patients and for those who support them. 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, 1100 Fairview Ave. N. Seattle. Healthy for the Holiday's is free but advance registration is

required please call 206-667-5262.

**PORT ORCHARD JINGLE BELL RUN/WALK.** The Jingle Bell Run/Walk is a fun and festive way to kick off the holiday season by helping others. Noon - 5 p.m. City Hall, Port Orchard, WA

#### Sunday December 2

**2ND ANNUAL KADIMA HANUKKAH ART SALE.** Holiday art sale featuring Judaic, and Secular art including Mezuzah cases, jewelry, ceramics, glass and much more. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Kadima House, 12353 8th Ave. Seattle.

#### Thursday December 6

**LEARN ABOUT RECENT CHANGES TO METRO TRANSIT BUS SERVICE.** Learn about the recent changes to King County Metro Transit's bus service that began September 29. 12:30 - 1:30

p.m. The Seattle Public Library, Beacon Hill Branch, 2821 Beacon Ave. S.

#### Friday December 7

**26TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY CELEBRATION.** Great Figgy Pudding Street Corner Caroling Competition: 40 - teams compete in a caroling competition to raise funds for the Pike Market Senior Center & Food Bank. \$10.00 suggested donation. 5 - 8:30 p.m. Westlake Center & Pine Street Between 4th Ave. & 7th Ave.

#### Saturday December 8

**HOLIDAY BOOK SALE:** Come find the perfect holiday gift and support The Seattle Public Library. 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Seattle Center, Lopez Room.