

DAILY NEWS

Making the scene Screen dream comes true for teen writer

By DENISE ROMANO

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In the world of filmmaking, Tiara Bennett's feat is like hitting a home run in your first at-bat.

The Brooklyn teen's screenplay began its transformation from the page to the small screen last weekend, when an established Hollywood director began shooting the movie on location in Coney Island.

Bennett's screenplay, "The Choices We Make," was one of only three chosen from thousands of entries in a nationwide competition.

"I was surprised that I ended up winning," said Bennett, 18, of East Flatbush, who wrote the script as a class assignment last spring during her senior year at Clara Barton High School.

Her teacher submitted it to Scenarios USA, a Fort Greene-based group that runs a screenplay contest for teens in Brooklyn, Florida and Texas. One teen from each region was picked have his or her film shot on location.



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Tiara Bennett, 18, takes a nap on the set of 'The Choices We Make,' the film that is being made from a screenplay she wrote. Her script was one of only three winning entries in a nationwide contest.

"I love working with the directors," Bennett said. "It's totally new and I love it."

The theme of the contest was "The Real Deal With Relationships." Submissions included controversial topics about teen pregnancy and homosexuality.

Bennett's short is about a young couple who have been together for three years. The girl gets pregnant, but does not want the child because she wants to go to college. The boy wants her to keep it.

"It also brings in the two mothers of the kids for a broader focus," said Alison Maclean, the

director chosen to bring Bennett's screenplay to life.



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Makeup artist Loretta Alston prepares actress Tyra Colar for her closeup.

"Tiara's script is quite mature and sophisticated," said Maclean, director of the 1999 feature "Jesus' Son," starring Hollywood A-listers Billy Crudup and Holly Hunter. Maclean was also one of the filmmakers who picked the winning scripts.

"It's a very compelling film, very authentic," said Kristen Joiner, cofounder of Scenarios USA. "When you read it, you feel like you have a window into the world of a girl in Brooklyn."

Despite her auspicious Hollywood debut, Bennett - a biology major at Georgia Southern University - said she wants to become a physical therapist. "Film is something I like doing on the side. It's almost like a backup plan," she said.

"The Choices We Make" is scheduled to air on the cable channel Show-time in May.