

## Slave - The Lowry, Salford



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The story of Mende Nazer has already been well documented in newspapers, on TV and in her own book.

Now adapted into this powerful and moving stage play it loses none of its power to shock and incense.

Indeed, given its world premiere here it was entirely understandable that Mende herself, seated in the audience, should need to absent herself at one of the story's most harrowing moments.

As a 12-year-old she had been kidnapped, raped and sold into slavery in her native Sudan, where she endured a further seven years of extreme physical abuse.

At which point this might have seemed a story set too well away from our own civilised society to warrant anything more than our rightful, but powerless, moral indignation.

Except that Mende was then 'forwarded' – like so much diplomatic baggage – to London, to endure the same inhumanity at the hands of a senior Sudanese diplomat's family.

It is from there that she made her escape, only to suffer further bureaucratic and thoroughly British humiliation when her initial plea for refugee status was refused, on the basis that "slavery was not deemed persecution".

Lashana Lynch, in the central role, gives a performance of radiant honesty.

It is an astonishing account, well told and simply staged, in an adaptation by Kevin Fegan and Caroline Clegg. The latter is to be particularly commended for her dogged determination to translate the story to stage, and especially for the way it uses a Sudanese style of storytelling, music and dance.

But when it is performed in the House of Lords next week – as part of the education and awareness campaign coupled to the production – you would hope that it all starts to cause more than just diplomatic discomfort, at home and abroad.