Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 Study Guide

Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 by Anna Deavere Smith

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Introduction

Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 is the fourteenth part of Anna Deavere Smith's work in progress, *On the Road: A Search for American Character*, begun m 1983. The play's unifying focus is the civil unrest in Los Angeles following the April, 1992, verdict in the first Rodney King trial, presented from the perspective of the wide range of persons that Smith interviewed. The actress-playwright interprets a limited number of these actual people in her solo performances, editing and rearranging her raw material as she deems appropriate.

Although she conducted about 175 interviews for the project, in her one-woman performances Smith limits her *dramatis personae* to between twenty-five and forty-five personalities, depending on her production venue. Her choices have varied as Smith has worked on her command of the diverse people that she represents.

Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 began its premier run on May 23,1993, in Los Angeles, at the Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum, which had commissioned the work. It received almost unanimous critical acclaim, and it has since gained favorable notice in subsequent productions in Princeton, New Jersey, and in New York, Washington, D. C., and London, England. It has also garnered several honors, including Obie, Drama Desk, and Outer Critics Circle awards and two Antoinette Perry nominations.

Although *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* was also nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, the Pulitzer jury disqualified it on the grounds that it was not fictional and could only be performed by the interviewer-playwright herself. More than anything else, that decision reflects a critical inability to pigeonhole the work into some familiar category. The play's kinship with the documentary is unquestioned, but it simply escapes any easy classification. Its intention is clear, however; the piece documents a critical time of racial division and civil unrest, not to place blame for what happened, but to help the process of healing through a kaleidoscopic and sympathetic rendering of different viewpoints.

Author Biography

In *On the Road: A Search for American Character*, the series of plays to which *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* belongs, Anna Deavere (Duh-veer) Smith set out, as she says, "to capture the personality of a place by attempting to embody its varied population and varied points of view in one person myself." Her series is a work-in-progress, its aim being the isolation of *the* American character through the dramatization of its many voices, the "different people" who "are shaping it." But her quest is partly a voyage of self-discovery, too, a shaping of her own role as a black woman writer, actress, and teacher.

Anna Deavere Smith was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on September 18,1950, the oldest child of Deavere Smith and Anna Young Smith. Her father owned a coffee and tea business, and her mother was an elementary school principal. During her early years, Anna's upbringing was largely restricted to a segregated community, giving her few opportunities to meet the various kinds of people that she would later depict in her plays. However, she did sharpen one skill for which she seemed to have a natural gift mimicry. That talent earned her a reputation as a bit of a mischief maker, though she never got in any serious trouble.

It was not until she attended Western High School that she began making friends with people of different ethnic backgrounds, especially the Jewish schoolmates whom she befriended. She has credited that school experience with giving her the sympathy necessary to depict persons with diverse ethnic and cultural heritages in her work. That sympathy remained latent but strong after she graduated from Western in 1967.

Smith continued her education at Beaver College in Glenside, Pennsylvania, just outside Philadelphia. She first studied linguistics, but grew increasingly restless with the academic regimen in the face of the domestic strife of the late 1960s. She did graduate from Beaver, but did not really begin to find her professional niche until she inadvertently began taking acting classes at the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco. While apprenticing as an actor and director in that city's theaters, Smith earned an M.F.A. from the Conservatory, then moved to New York, where she supported herself by working for KLM Airlines and taking bit parts in soap operas.

In 1978, Smith took a position as a drama teacher at Carnegie-Mellon University, in Pittsburgh. It was there that she began developing her fundamental technique of characterization. She sought a way to free herself from the "method school of acting" that stressed the internalization of a role through the process of identifying with the character. She turned, instead, to the more objective method of depicting real people, an idea that came to her when watching Johnny Carson interview a series of diverse guests on the Tonight Show. She began taping interviews to challenge her acting students with the task of impersonating the speech and verbal mannerisms of the interviewed subjects.

Smith's interview method and her interest in American diversity led, in 1983, to the start of her mam work, *On the Road: A Search for American Character*. Smith has also pursued an acting and teaching career that has taken her to several cities and several schools, including New York University, Yale University, the University of Southern California, and Stanford University, in Palo Alto, California, where she has served on the theater faculty since 1990. She has appeared in secondary roles in major films and taken her one-woman shows across Amenca. She has also won several prizes and awards, including Tony and Obie awards and, in 1996, a much-coveted MacArthur Foundation fellowship.

Plot Summary

1991: March 3-15

On March 3, after stopping King for speeding, members of the LAPD (Los Angeles Police Department) severely beat and arrest him. George Holiday, a nearby resident, captures the episode on video tape and distributes it to television networks, which repeatedly show it in broadcast news. Three days later, LAPD Chief Daryl F. Gates calls the King beating an "aberration" as the community clamors for his resignation. King is released from custody, and on March 15, four LA policemen Sergeant Stacey Koon and officers Laurence Powell, Timothy Wind, and Theodore Briseno are charged with a felony and arraigned for their part in the beating.

1991: March 15-26

On the night of March 15, fifteen-year-old Latasha Harlins, an African-American girl, is shot to death by Korean-American Soon Ja Du in a South LA liquor outlet. On March 26, on the same day that the four officers charged in the King beating enter an innocent plea, Soon Ja Du is arraigned for murder.

7997: April 1-July 22

On April 1, Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley empowers a special commission under Warren Christopher to investigate (he LAPD. Three days later, the LA Police Commission places Gates on leave, but he is immediately reinstated by the City Council. On April 7, Gates takes disciplinary action against the four indicted officers, firing Wind and suspending the other three. The Christopher Commission releases its report on July 9, recommending that Gates and the whole Police Commission resign. On July 16, the Police Commission orders Gates to reinstate his assistant chief, David D. Dotson, whom Gates had forced to step down after Dotson complained of the chiefs failures to discipline police officers. About a week later, Gates announces his intention of retiring in 1992.

1991: July 23-November 15

On July 23, the Second District Court of Appeal orders a change of trial venue for the four LAPD officers charged in the King case. Some two months later, the prosecution in the trial of Soon Ja Du begins presenting its case. On October 11, the court finds Soon guilty of involuntary manslaughter. A month later, on November 15, she is sentenced to five years' probation, four-hundred hours of community service and a $500 fine.

1991: November 26-29

Judge Stanley Weisberg names Simi Valley in Ventura County as the Rodney King trial venue. Three days later, on November 29, LAPD officers kill a black man, leading to a confrontation with about a hundred housing-project residents in the Watts area of LA.

1992: February 3-April 29

Pretrial motions precede the actual trial of the four LAPD officers in the Rodney King case, which begins with opening arguments on March 4, before a jury lacking a single African-American. Two weeks later the prosecution rests its arguments. On April 13, Briseno admits that King was never a threat to the arresting officers. Meanwhile, on April 16, Willie L. Williams is named as Gates's successor as police commissioner. On April 23, the King-trial jury begins its deliberations, returning a verdict on April 29. The officers are found innocent, except for one charge against Officer Powell for the excessive use of force. The verdict, which results in a mistrial, is widely publicized on television.

The feared reaction comes the same day. A peaceful protest rally of over two-thousand people at a South-Central LA church breaks into violence, spreading in a widening circle of shootings, beatings, and looting. Vandalism eventually leads to arson, engulfing a large section of central LA in fire. Reginald Denny, a white truck driver, is pulled from his cab and severely beaten in an episode caught on video tape and broadcast on television. LA Mayor Bradley declares a local emergency, and Governor Pete Wilson orders out the National Guard.

1992: April 30-May 11

On the next day, April 30, Bradley imposes a curfew for the whole of LA, but the looting and burning of stores continues in various sections of the city as the violent protest continues. Meanwhile, the Justice Department announces its intent to investigate further the possible violation of Rodney King's civil rights.

Beginning on May 1, the LA community tries to restore order. A peace rally draws over a thousand persons, mostly Korean- Americans. On May 2, city crews start the clean-up, while volunteers carry food and clothing into the devastated areas. Thirty thousand residents march in Koreatown, calling for an end to racial discord.

On May 3, the *Los Angeles Times* announces the toll paid by the community: 58 dead, almost 2,400 injured, over 12,000 arrested, 3,100 businesses damaged. By May 4, with National Guard troops patrolling the streets, LA citizens start back to work and school, but some cannot return because looted and vandalized businesses remain closed. LAPD officers begin rounding up illegal immigrants suspected of looting or other riot-related crimes. LA officials turn suspects over to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for deportation.

On May 8, the troops begin withdrawing from LA, while the Crips and Bloods, two major LA gangs, agree to truce terms. Three days later, the LA Board of Police Commissioners names William H. Webster to chair a commission created to study the LAPD's response during the riots.

1992: May 12-December 14

On May 12, three of the "L A Four" Damian Williams, Antoine Miller, and Henry Watson are arrested for the April 29 beating of Reginald Denny. Gary Williams surrenders to the LAPD later on the same day. The L A Four are arraigned on May 21, charged with thirty-three violations for their attacks on thirteen motorists, including Denny. Meanwhile, various demonstrations continue. On May 25, Korean grocers meet with leaders of the Bloods and Crips to fashion an alliance. On May 30, Gates resigns at Chief of the LAPD and Willie Williams takes his place.

Over the summer and into December, protests continue, but violence is minimal. In October, the Webster Commission concludes that the LAPD's internal problems inhibited a quick response to the civil unrest. In the same month, the Black-Korean alliance breaks off, and on December 14, trouble erupts again when the Free the L A Four Defense Committee demonstrates at the site of the Denny beating.

1993: January 22-August 4

On January 23, ten charges against the L A Four are dismissed, but not the charge of attempted murder. Shortly thereafter, on February 3, the King civil rights trial of the four LAPD officers begins; it concludes two months later, on April 17. Briseno and Wind are acquitted. However, Powell and Koon are found guilty, and on August 4 are sentenced to a thirty-month term in federal prison.

1993: August 19-December 7

On August 19, the trial of the L A Four begins. It lasts about three months, although the final arguments begin early on, in late September. Jury problems force a verdict delay, as Judge Ouderkirk has to dismiss two jurors in early October. Convictions follow on October 18. Although acquitted of the more serious charges, on December 7, Damian Williams is sentenced to a maximum prison term of ten years for his attack on Denny.

Prologue, My Enemy

Prologue, My Enemy Summary

According to Rudy Salas, Sr., a sculptor and painter, his father's hatred of gringos stemmed from fighting against them when Pershing went after Pancho Villa in Chihuahua. Salas himself realized that gringos were the enemy when he went to first grade and he was told he was inferior because he was Mexican. He understood that the white teachers were his enemies, but he did not know why.

He refers to his feelings of racism as an "insanity" he developed after being beaten by police in 1942 when he was a zoot-suiter. In retaliation for a punch he had thrown, four officers took him into a room, locked the door and kicked him in the head. His eardrum was fractured, and he went deaf. He says that he does not like feeling the hatred for white police officers he has had since that day. He liked reading in the newspaper that a police officer had been killed. He would wonder if the dead officer was one of those who beat him. It bothers him that he could be glad about the death of another human being.

Salas watches the television news and reads the papers every morning, and every morning he sees injustice. He pities his wife who has to put up with his rants and raves and says that she will not eat breakfast with him anymore because of how upset he becomes at the news.

Salas grew up thinking that whites were physically inferior, and he believes they are physically afraid of minorities. He loves to see that fear in whites. He confesses to having a prejudice against whites, but says he is not a racist. He has white friends but he does not see them as "white."

He is worried for his sons. He told them to cooperate with the police if they ever came in contact with them. On one occasion, his son Stephen came home from Stanford to sing with his band and a cop put a gun to his head. Stephen did not tell his father about it right away because he knew it would make him sick. Salas mentions incidents in which police insulted his older son Rudy and how they pulled his wife Margaret over in her car for no reason. He says what happened to him fifty years ago is still happening. His enemy is still active.

The Territory, These Curious People

The Territory, These Curious People Summary

Stanley K. Sheinbaum, former president of the Los Angeles Police Commission, talks about the time that Maxine Waters, congresswoman from Los Angeles, asked him to go with her to Nickerson Gardens to view the police response to gang meetings organized for the purpose of making a truce. When he arrived at the meeting place, he found hundreds of police lined up and several police cars with their sirens and lights on. The police told him they were responding to a call for help because there was a gang meeting going on.

Sheinbaum went through the police line into the meeting where he talked with gang members and listened to their views. He was trying to get some insight into their experiences, but the police became very angry with him. They did not like the fact that he was talking with the gangs and not with them. Two days after the meeting he received a letter from the officers questioning why he had gone in to talk with the enemy.

The letter surprised him so he met with the letter writers. He told them that he could talk to them any time but this had been a rare chance to talk with the gangs, "these curious people," and he wanted to learn about the neighborhood and the gangs. The officers asked him which side he is on. He responded by asking why he has to choose one side or the other. He believes the city has been abused on both sides and that the city has abused the police too. He acknowledges that there is a big problem.

The Territory, When I Finally Got My Vision/Nightclothes

The Territory, When I Finally Got My Vision/Nightclothes Summary

Michael Zinzun, a representative from the Coalition Against Police Abuse, discusses his personal experiences with police abuse. He tells of being awakened one night by a man calling for help. Zinzun and his neighbors went into the streets in their nightclothes and found the police beating a handcuffed man.

They demanded that the police stop the beating. The police dragged the man away, but the people followed and told them to stop. The police singled out Zinzun and handcuffed him while they sprayed Mace into what they called a "hostile" crowd. The police Maced Zinzun in the face, and he felt several officers stomping on his back. One of the officers lifted his head and hit him with a billy club, causing an injury that required forty stitches. Zinzun says they could not knock him out, though, and they continued Macing the crowd, which was growing all the time. More police came, and one of them hit Zinzun in the eye with his flashlight. When they took him to the hospital, the doctors told him they could not save his eye.

Because of their actions, several police officers were fired, and others went to trial. The city had to pay $1.2 million in damages, which is why Zinzun can devote himself full-time to fighting police abuse. He says that the money is used to further the struggle. It gives the people a chance to research the issue and to organize.

The Territory, They

The Territory, They Summary

Jason Sanford, a white actor in his late 20s who was interviewed in 1993, is asked to define who "they" are. He replies that "they" represent a combination of many things for him. He grew up in Santa Monica, which he says is different from Los Angeles in that there are few black people there. His neighborhood included Mexicans and Chinese people, but few blacks. He mentions that he works with one, however.

He speculates that he probably would not have been beaten if he had been in the streets after the Rodney King verdict because of how he looks. He thinks he might have been arrested or pushed to the ground, but not beaten. When he had been arrested in the past, the police always commented on the fact that he looked like a responsible all-American white boy. Once, when he was arrested in Santa Barbara, the police put him in their car where they had a conversation about tennis. Sanford feels sure that he is perceived and treated differently by police than a black man would be.

The Territory, Broad Daylight

The Territory, Broad Daylight Summary

In this interview, an anonymous man discusses his experience as a gang member. He begins by noting that older gang members tended to respect their elders, while such respect has disappeared among younger members. As a result, the elders have lost respect for the young members.

He felt more respect when he moved to the Valley because he was in rival territory. He felt strong because his gang did not protect him. He projected the image of being a one-man army that did not need any homeboys. He and his brother would wear their gang colors while walking in rival gang neighborhoods just to make their rivals worry and wonder about them. His rivals knew he carried a gun and was not afraid to use it, even in broad daylight.

He figured out an intimidation technique based on a counterintuitive idea of gun use. He figures that if he shoots someone in broad daylight, most people will be scared and run away rather than stay around to identify him as the shooter. This philosophy makes his rivals nervous because they never know what he might do, so they tend to leave him alone.

The Territory, Surfer's Desert

The Territory, Surfer's Desert Summary

Mike Davis, a writer and urban critic based in Los Angeles interviewed in 1993, discusses the changes he has seen in California since his childhood. He describes the feelings of self-destruction among a generation of kids who are susceptible to despair. He thinks the gang truce is miraculous. It shows that there is a generation that refuses to commit suicide. The truce also represents the reestablishment of traditions of pride and struggle linked to the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Davis notes the rise of Latino gang violence and increasing gang activity among the children of recent immigrants. He calls on the city to put more resources toward making contact with the kids. Davis says the city refuses to talk to its own children. By labeling them "looters" and "gang-bangers," the city fosters an environment of fear.

When he was in the civil rights movement in the early 1960s, the vision was that "black kids could be surfers too" and that there were core opportunities that would be free to all. The simple things he enjoyed as a kid are no longer possible because of increased police patrols and a proliferation of laws against acts like cruising in cars or sleeping on the beach. He laments the loss of freedom and illustrates his point by noting that people who move to the desert now do so to live in "armed compounds." In his day, people went to the desert to find freedom.

The Territory, Lightning But No Rain

The Territory, Lightning But No Rain Summary

In her interview, Theresa Allison, the mother of the gang truce organizer Dewayne Holmes and founder of Mothers Reclaiming Our Children (Mothers ROC), says she started the group after her nephew, Tiny, was killed in 1991. This death also prompted her son to think about a gang truce.

Tiny had five bullets in his body, she says. The police shot forty-three times, but there were no bullets in anyone but Tiny. Allison says the police like to make killings look like drive-by shootings. When the police killed Tiny, they dressed like gang members and they were going to blame the killing on a gang from another project.

On the night of the killing, the lights were out in the project. Tiny was gathering up the children to save them from the shooting that generally occurred when the lights were out. Allison had been shopping at the Fox Hill Mall when she had a feeling that something was wrong. The sky that day looked to her like the day of Jesus' crucifixion with lightning but no rain. When she arrived home, her daughter told her that Tiny had been killed. Tiny's death convinced her that change had to come.

There was a demonstration of 850 people when they came back from Tiny's funeral. The participants included Spanish people and white people. She says the police do not want peace or cooperation.

On another night when the lights were out in the project, the police were looking for someone named Holmes and stopped Dewayne, refusing to believe he was not the person they wanted. When they put him in their car, neighbors went to get Allison who proceeded to lie down in front of the car to keep the police from taking her son away. She told the police that her son did not have a warrant out on him, but the police insisted that he did. She asked them to run his name through their computer, but they said they could not do it from the car and had to take him to the station. She and her neighbors were prepared to turn the car over to stop the police from taking Dewayne away. The police were not going to kill her son, she says, and that was what they wanted to do. Eventually, one of the officers admitted they were mistaken. Someone in the crowd demanded an apology from the police and so a sergeant said he was sorry.

After this incident, Dewayne could not go anywhere without being harassed by law enforcement. They wanted to get him, and they wanted to stop the demonstrations Allison and others organized. The police did not want anyone to know they were corrupt, Allison says. The police in Los Angeles have always been corrupt. They will often take children from one project and drop them off in rival gang territory to be killed. They do it because of racism, Allison says.

The woman police officer that shot Tiny had won some kind of award, but she shot him in the face. According to Allison, this officer used to take children as young as twelve, hit their heads against trees and kick them. Allison asks why black kids have to be treated like that. Why can't they just handcuff them and take them to jail? Why couldn't they have just handcuffed Tiny and taken him to jail? He couldn't move after they first shot him, so why did they have to shoot him in the face? The police try to cover up their mistakes all the time, she says. Allison questions why the police have so much power and why the system works for them, but not for her people.

When she was gone, the police came and took her son Dewayne away.

The Territory, A Bloodstained Banner

The Territory, A Bloodstained Banner Summary

The scholar Cornel West theorizes that gangsterism arises from the frontier myth and the myth of the gunfighter in American history. He believes that both gang members and police officers operate under the influence of these myths. Gunfighters were heroes because of their guns. Being a gunfighter meant you were tough. On one level, West says, this kind of force allowed those in power to expand their markets and utilize the resources of the land by subordinating the people who lived on that land. Gang members with guns are tough like soldiers and think of themselves as military men. When they fight the police, they can be tougher than the police; their brutality can be greater than police brutality. Gangs play the same game as the police, according to West.

He sees racial reasoning as an attempt by black people to join together for protection. Most of this protection is the province of men, however, because they act as the policing agents. The interests of black women are subordinated. Black men become heroes because they defy authority while women cannot. Black heroes defy people who are themselves the same kind of machismo heroes. Any encounter between these heroes takes courage.

Instead of "turf policing," as West calls it, there should be an internationalist and multiracialist component in the relationship. These elements have been missing from the dynamic since the demise of the Black Panther Party as organized by Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. For all their faults, says West, these men had a wide-ranging vision that acknowledged a role for all progressive people who identified with the poor and the workers. Since the demise of Newton and Seale, however, progressive forces have been in disarray. Conservative forces, especially those of businesses and corporations, have been allowed to reshape society to further their own interests. West says this is what people have been fighting for twenty years.

Here's A Nobody, Carmen

Here's A Nobody, Carmen Summary

Angela King, Rodney King's aunt, says her parents were like the characters in "Carmen," the film starring Dorothy Dandridge and Harry Belafonte. Her father was conservative politically, but he and her mother drank heavily and fought often. When Angela was twelve or thirteen, she and her brothers and sisters were separated and sent to live in different homes. She and her brother were kept together. Her brother was Rodney King's father.

She used to go fishing with Rodney and their friends. She says that Rodney could catch fish with his bare hands. This disconcerted her because he seemed like "one of them wild Africans" when he fished like that.

She is accustomed to calling Rodney by another name, Glen. She says she saw the video of the police beating him on television. When she first saw him after the beating, he was difficult to recognize, and he could not talk at all; he just made the same noise over and over. She cries when she talks about the beating and Rodney's condition.

King says they were not raised in a racist way. They had friends of all races, and no one made a big thing of it. That is why the beating and the following events were so shocking to her. She defends her right to make comments to the media and to vent her anger. Angela represented the King family to the media because Rodney's mother and other family members did not want to become involved due to their religious beliefs. Angela says she wanted to fight for every piece of justice and fairness she could.

She compares her reaction to Rodney's beating with how people react if something happens to the President. Even though Rodney "was a nobody" she felt the same way and did not care about religion or anything else. She wanted justice for what she saw on that video tape. She notes the lack of remorse among the police officers brought to trial for Rodney's beating. Angela says that since the trial, her telephone has been tapped, and she does not feel comfortable using it anymore.

Here's A Nobody, Where the Water Is

Here's A Nobody, Where the Water Is Summary

Sergeant Charles Duke of the Los Angeles Police Department's Special Weapons and Tactics Unit was a defense witness in the federal trials of the police officers involved in the Rodney King beating. He says that Officer Powell was not using his police baton effectively. Powell had no strength or power in his baton strikes because he was not holding it the right way. That is why it took fifty-six baton blows to subdue Rodney King. On the night of the beating, Powell had been to baton training because it was known that he was weak with his baton. Duke thinks Powell should have been taken out of the field until he had taken more instruction in the use of the weapon.

Duke then relates the history of the use of the upper-body-control holds, also known as chokeholds, which the LAPD used in the past. Members of the black community exerted pressure to stop the police from using these holds. They cited some twenty deaths between 1976 and 1982 attributed to the holds. The police department elevated the classification of these holds from "intermediate use of force" to "deadly force." According to Duke, Gilbert Lindsay watched a demonstration of baton use and said he did not want to see his people beaten with it. He wanted police to bring back the chokehold instead. Other community leaders favored the use of the baton over the chokehold, however. This created a political environment for the elimination of upper-body-control holds.

Duke believes that Daryl Gates, head of the LAPD at the time, and other members of the command staff decided to show the city what it would happen with the elimination of the upper-body-control holds. Duke told his superiors that someday there would be real trouble, and police would be indicted and sent to jail because of baton use, but the attitude of the LAPD command was not to worry about it.

When he discussed his concerns with Gates, Duke says Gates told him that he was tired of hearing about it and that the police were going to "beat people into submission and break bones." According to Duke, Gates said that since the Police Commission took the upper-body-holds away from the officers, they would show the city what life would be like without them, namely an increase in lawsuits and all the things associated with them.

Here's A Nobody, Indelible Substance

Here's A Nobody, Indelible Substance Summary

Josie Morales is a clerk-typist for the city of Los Angeles who witnessed the Rodney King beating. She lived in the apartment next to that of George Holliday, the man who shot the video tape of the beating. Morales reports seeing ten or twelve officers in a circle around King starting to hit him. They hit him with sticks, and then kicked him, and one officer pummeled him in the face. Morales watched the beating with her husband, thinking that the victim was really in danger. She says she knew it was wrong for the police to be doing what they were doing. Her husband said they should go inside and not watch anymore, but Morales told him they had to stay and watch because it was wrong. Her husband was afraid because he had grown up in Mexico where police abuse is prevalent.

Josie Morales was scheduled to testify at the trial but never called. She was upset about it because she had a lot to say. She received her subpoena and she was told by prosecutor Terry White that he would call to tell her when she had to testify. He never called her, however, so she began to call him. When she contacted him, he said he probably would not call her as a witness because her testimony contradicted that of another witness, Melanie Singer.

Morales then faxed him a letter saying that the officers were going to be acquitted if the prosecution did not put up witnesses to tell what they had seen. She believes he thought that the video tape would provide all the proof he needed to convict the officers, but she says the video does not show how the officers assaulted King in the beginning. She became very upset about the situation because she felt that the officers would be acquitted. Morales had a dream in which they were acquitted, and her dream came true.

Here's A Nobody, Your Heads in Shame

Here's A Nobody, Your Heads in Shame Summary

An anonymous juror from the Simi Valley trial describes the state of the courtroom after the verdict was handed down. There were plainclothes police everywhere because it was known that some people would be unhappy with the verdict. The juror says that if he had known what would happen afterwards, he would have sent a note to the judge to say that he could not be on the jury because of what it put him and his family through.

As they left the courthouse, a police officer told the jurors not to worry if people threw rocks and bottles because the windows of the bus they were traveling in were bulletproof. The juror then saw a huge mob. There were already reporters trying to get interviews with jurors. The police were trying to get them into a bus and told them to cover their faces. A reporter asked why they were hiding their heads in shame and if they knew that people were dying and burning buildings in South LA because of them.

When the juror arrived home twenty minutes later this same reporter was at his door. The juror and his wife told the reporter that they did not want to talk to anyone, and then slammed the door in the reporter's face. The juror watched as LA's Mayor Bradley and President Bush condemned the verdicts on television. He felt as though he and the other jurors had been pawns in somebody's game.

The judge in the trial never came to talk with the jurors after the verdict. The judge could have withheld the jurors' names for a while, but he did not. He released the names immediately, and he must have known they would be harassed. The juror says he received several threats, both letters and phone calls. Newspapers all over the country released the names and addresses of the jurors. The juror says what made him most upset was receiving a letter from the Ku Klux Klan pledging support and inviting him to join the organization. The letter horrified him.

Here's A Nobody, Magic

Here's A Nobody, Magic Summary

Gil Garcetti, Los Angeles District Attorney, begins his 1993 interview by discussing jurors in general. Garcetti believes that most jurors take their oath seriously and because the burden of proof in a criminal trial is very high, jurors must carefully examine and consider all the evidence in a case.

Most people have respect for the police, and in a courtroom, this respect translates into a kind of magic that surrounds the officers. People want to believe them because they think these individuals protect them. A police officer who is testifying in a case can dispel the magic aura surrounding him if he comes in wearing a raid jacket with guns visible, but in general, if the officer is professionally dressed and polite, a jury is likely to believe that the officer's testimony is truthful.

Garcetti believes that the current environment of fear has made the credibility of the police somewhat more questionable, but most people want to believe them. Police walk into a courtroom with that magic aura, and only they themselves can destroy that aura for the jury.

Here's A Nobody, Hammer

Here's A Nobody, Hammer Summary

Stanley K. Sheinbaum, the former president of the LA Police Commission, describes what it was like for him when he first heard the verdict in the Rodney King case. He was on his way downtown at five-thirty in the afternoon when he heard about it. He had an experience at that moment that hinted at the trouble to come. Traveling next to his car on the freeway was a newer black BMW driven by an African-American woman. Her window was open, and she had a hammer in her hand.

When he got to Parker Center about an hour later, Daryl Gates was getting into his car. Sheinbaum asked where he was going, and Gates told him he had to go to a fund-raiser where he was lobbying against Proposition F, which was an effort to limit the police chief's term to five years. Sheinbaum wondered how Gates could leave his post at a time when everything could easily fall apart.

At seven o'clock, Sheinbaum heard women screaming about people coming into the building. When he went to the front, a rock came through the seven to ten-foot high plate-glass windowpanes.

The War Zone, Riot

The War Zone, Riot Summary

Chung Lee, president of the Korean-American Victims Association, describes his experiences on the day the Rodney King verdicts were announced. His son translates his story from the Korean. Lee says he called his neighbor's store and was told that his own store had been completely looted and that his stock was scattered all over the project across the street. Lee then realized that a riot had begun, so despite the fact that his property was scattered all over the street, he and his family decided to let go of any attachment to their possessions. The neighbor called Lee at about twelve and told him that his store was on fire.

The War Zone, Messages

The War Zone, Messages Summary

Tom Bradley, the former mayor of Los Angeles, was in his office at City Hall when the verdict was handed down. He and his staff realized that they needed some kind of strategy to address reactions to the verdict. They had planned to go to the media at about five o'clock. He knew that the verdict was due that afternoon and had devised four different messages to deliver, depending on what the verdict was. He did not seriously think that a complete acquittal was possible, but had created a message just in case it occurred. When there was an acquittal, the mayor's staff got their message on the air directly to the public within an hour and a half. Essentially, the message expressed his outrage at the verdict, but he also wanted to tell the public that there had been too much progress to destroy everything through violence. He encouraged people to express their dissatisfaction with the verdict, but to do so verbally rather than by engaging in violence.

The War Zone, "Don't Shoot"

The War Zone, "Don't Shoot" Summary

Richard Kim, a Korean-American appliance storeowner, begins his 1993 interview discussing his father's experiences the day of the verdict. Kim says his father told him that there were no police to be found when the looting started. They called all the police stations and could not get any information from any of them. They told the stations that there were hundreds of people looting stores and that they should send officers. When they received no useful response from the police stations, Kim, his father, and some neighbors got into a van and drove to their store.

Kim says he knew people were carrying guns and that his mother had been shot on the corner. It was like going into a war, and by the time they arrived, there were hundreds of people at their store. He heard gunshots and saw his neighbor wounded. There was an exchange of gunfire between several people with handguns and someone with a shotgun. Kim pulled his van in between the person firing at him, thinking he could use the van to protect a man in front of the store. He yelled for everyone to stop shooting, but people just pointed their guns directly at him.

He went into his van and took the rifle that was inside. He pulled the trigger but there was no bullet in the chamber, so he went back, loaded the gun and began to return fire. He did not want to hurt anyone, he says. He just wanted them to disperse. The people firing at him eventually left. Kim thinks they decided it was not worth it to keep shooting at him.

The War Zone, Butta Boom

The War Zone, Butta Boom Summary

Joe Viola, a television writer, says he was terrified for the first time in his life when he was caught in the riots. He was standing in front of a store when a kid with a nine-millimeter gun pointed it in his general direction and told him he was going to kill him. Viola says he just sat down on the corner out of shock.

Then he heard screams and began to cross the street when he saw a teenage girl hit a man in the head with a two-by-four. The man was young, carrying a briefcase, and it was about one-thirty in the afternoon. When he was hit, he dropped his case and with blood on his face walked toward the car from which the girl had come. People on the street were screaming, and a black girl ran over to him to pull him away from the car. The girl was on her way to a temporary job when she saw this man with blood on his face.

A guy in the car told the kid in the passenger seat to shoot, so he shot the girl in the leg. Two minutes later, the car came up to Viola, and the next thing he knew he was running home. He yelled to his wife that he was going to get their kids.

The War Zone, War Zone

The War Zone, War Zone Summary

John and Murika Tur took a video from their helicopter over the intersection of Florence and Normandie. This was the video of Reginald Denny's beating on the day of the riots. Judith Tur, reporter for the LA News Service, talks about the video as it is being shown. The video shows the beginning of the riots when several men beat Reginald Denny. It also shows some women taking pictures of the beating. No one came to help him right away, and when two men tried to help, one of the men doing the beating told them to go away. Several other people tried to help Denny. As she watches the video, Tur becomes angry and says that what it shows is not her United States. It is like being in a war zone, she says. She points out a man with a rifle and how he shoots at Denny and misses him.

The way she feels, Tur says, is that nobody is better than she is, and she does not care what color people are. However, she thinks the people of South Central are taking advantage of the situation. She thinks they should go out a work for a living as she did when times got hard for her. She worked several jobs after her husband gambled away all their money. She would never go on welfare, she says, and she would not rob somebody at gunpoint. She is angry and believes white people are getting so angry they are moving back fifty years in their attitudes towards race instead of moving forward.

The War Zone, Bubble Gum Machine Man

The War Zone, Bubble Gum Machine Man Summary

Allen Cooper, also known as Big Al, is an ex-gang member and ex-convict involved with the national truce movement. He refers to the men tried for beating Reginald Denny as the L.A. Four. He questions the government's actions in charging them with a crime. He believes that Denny may have been trying to intimidate the neighborhood by driving his truck down a residential street. He thinks Denny was trying to prove something.

Cooper says that his people are expressing the way black people are treated in this community through the beating of Denny. He criticizes the media for handling the situation like a soap opera. When Rodney King was beaten, it was just the most recent of twenty to thirty years of black people suffering from beatings from law enforcement. Cooper says there was nothing new about it; it was just brought into public view this time.

He describes an incident in which a man at a bubble gum machine pulled a gun on him. He asks why a bubble gum machine man should be carrying a gun at all and then explains that the conditions in which he lives are so dangerous that everyone must be qualified to carry firearms.

Cooper notes that it was okay for the National Rifle Association to have fully automatic weapons, but when African-American people get these weapons, it becomes a problem and a crime. Black people did not bring the guns into the neighborhood in the beginning. He believes the authorities put the guns there to entrap African-Americans. The Reginald Denny situation is just a delusion and not the real problem. He looks to the history of race relations for an explanation.

The War Zone, A Weird Common Thread in Our Lives

The War Zone, A Weird Common Thread in Our Lives Summary

Reginald Denny, whose beating on the day of the Rodney King verdict was videotaped and repeatedly shown to the public, describes how he had made that same trip in his truck every day. He would get off the freeway at the same place and had to take up a lot of space when turning because his truck was so big. People would become upset that he took two lanes, but he did not have a choice.

All he remembers is confusion and seeing broken glass on the ground. The truck in front of him was carrying medical supplies, and when Denny was beaten, he was hit with an oxygen canister. He says he did not know the verdict had come down when he made his turn into the neighborhood. He did not really pay attention to the trial because he thought it was someone else's problem. Denny explains that he had no idea of what was going on when he saw all the people in the street. All he knew was that something was wrong.

The next thing he remembers is waking up in the hospital five or six days later. The doctors did not tell him there had been a riot until he had been in the hospital for a few weeks because they thought it would upset him. He was on morphine much of the time, and he remembers his hospital experience like it was a movie. He remembers the Reverend Jesse Jackson coming to see him, and Arsenio Hall, and by the time he left the hospital he knew what had happened to him.

He met the people who helped to take him away from the beating and saved his life. He did not know how to thank them and said it was strange meeting them. They were not exactly strangers, he says, because there was a common thread in their lives. All he knows about the beating is what people told him and the videotape he saw on television. He does not remember it happening to him.

Denny says that someday, when he gets his own house, he will have a room dedicated to the riot. It will not be a sad place, he says. It will have all the things people sent him when he was recovering, all the letters and notes expressing love and compassion. There will not be a color problem in this room, he says. When a man needs help, he does not care about the color of the person who provides it. Denny wants people to see an individual person and not a race.

The War Zone, A Badge of Courage

The War Zone, A Badge of Courage Summary

Captain Lane Haywood of the Compton Fire Department describes how there was too much fire in a building for the number of men he had to extinguish completely. He decided to get on the roof of the building to handle the fire better, but when he got up on the roof, he and his men found themselves to be the targets of gunfire. Haywood is not sure that the fire was directed specifically at them, but it was close enough for them to duck and get off the roof. He found out later the shots came from police firing into the air to move back a crowd of people that was rushing at them.

It took Haywood and his men a long time to get the fire under control, and while they were fighting the fire, they could hear gunshots up and down the street and throughout other stores. He saw looters breaking the windows of Pep Boys and trying to get in right in front of the police. Traffic was redirected through the mall parking lot, and motorists became angry. Haywood says he has never seen such hostility in females as he saw that day. He says they were yelling from their car windows to let everything burn.

Several stores were on fire at the time, and he saw a well-equipped fire company from Huntington Beach tackle a fire across the street from where he was. He wondered why they did not come to help him and his four men with the huge fire they were fighting without bulletproof vests or any police aid. Haywood says that the police took the bulletproof vests for themselves rather than notify the Fire Department that the vests were available.

The chief of the department does not want firefighters to wear the vests because he thinks it will signal to the public that Compton is a dangerous place. The chief told them that the fire department badge is their protection, a badge of courage. Haywood does not want to be hurt by gunfire and says he has a responsibility to come home to his family. He accepts the dangers associated with fighting fires, but gunfire is not something he is willing to face as part of his job.

The War Zone, To Look Like Girls from Little

The War Zone, To Look Like Girls from Little Summary

Elvira Evers, a Panamanian woman who is a general worker and cashier at Canteen Corporation, discusses the looting that went on after Rodney King verdict. Evers states that everyone was taking things and was acting as if they were at a carnival. She and her friend Frances were talking about the looting when someone threw a bottle. Evers felt some tingling, itching and moisture, and wondered if she was bleeding.

After she walked home, her friend examined her and saw that she had been shot. Evers was surprised because she did not hear a gun. She called for an ambulance and was told it would arrive in fifteen minutes. Evers told Frances she could not wait and got into her car, thinking she would drive herself to the hospital. Her children were crying, upset at the blood on her dress.

Frances did not let her drive and took over. Evers was pregnant, and both the women were worried about the baby. It took a while to get to the hospital because of all the traffic. When they arrived, Frances told the front office that her friend had been shot. They took her in for treatment right away and put a monitor on her to check the baby's condition. Her doctor was at the hospital, and he told her he would have to operate and take the baby immediately.

Evers does not remember anything beyond signing the papers to allow the operation. The baby girl was delivered successfully, but she had a bullet in her elbow, which the doctors removed. Evers is happy that her child is fine now. When the baby girl was seven days old Evers pierced her ears as is common in her culture. She says that in Panama they believe it protects the child. Her doctor told her the bullet destroyed the placenta. The baby caught the bullet in her arms. If she had not, both she and her mother would be dead.

The War Zone, National Guard

The War Zone, National Guard Summary

Julio Menjivar, a lumber salesman and driver, was watching the looting and confusion when some police officers passed by laughing, telling people that it was fine that they were destroying their own neighborhood. The police were encouraging them to do it. Then there were jeeps and trucks everywhere in the intersection. The National Guard had arrived, and guardsmen threw all the people on the ground. Menjivar was lifted up by his arm and threatened by a guardsman. He is overweight, and it was difficult for him to get up, so the guardsman insulted his weight and kicked him. He heard his wife and father calling his name. His mother, sister and wife tried to get to the street corner. The Guard almost shot them because they were so angry.

The Guard started to ask questions of everyone, but many of the people did not speak English so the police slapped them in the face. Law enforcement put everyone in a city bus and took each one of them to the Southwest police station. One man was crying because his handcuffs were too tight, and Menjivar says he himself felt very bad. He had never been arrested in his life, and he was scared to be among so many criminals. He says law enforcement had them on their knees for two hours. He was praying and thinking of all the bad things that could happen to him. Now he has a police record, he says, and a $250 fine and probation for three years.

The War Zone, That's Another Story

The War Zone, That's Another Story Summary

Katie Miller, a bookkeeper and accountant, explains the problems between Blacks and Koreans. Miller thinks that the burning of Korean-owned stores in the Black neighborhood occurred because the Koreans never tried to get to know the people that came into the stores. There was much discussion of the looting that occurred in Koreatown, but Miller says it was not black people who did the looting. It was the Mexicans. She thinks the stores were looted because the Koreans did not respect those who shopped at their stores. All they wanted to do was take their money and get them out as quickly as possible.

It was the same during the riots in 1965, and everyone tried to make an issue of the relationship between blacks and Koreans then too. She did not approve of the looters hitting Pep Boys, but thought the store was looted because its prices were too high. Miller did not loot this time, but she praised the ones who did. She thought some stores should be burned.

After it was over and she went around the neighborhood to see the damage, she saw people looting the exclusive Magnin store. These were people who did not have the money to buy things there. Miller is angry with Paul Moyer, an LA television newscaster who, according to her, makes millions a year for reading a piece of paper. After she saw the Magnin looting, she watched Moyer on television talking about how he used to go to that store as a child. This really bothered her because she interpreted his remarks to mean that it was fine if other stores were looted, but stay away from a store that was important to him and other rich people. Miller found it offensive that he said it was wrong to loot a store where rich people go. His comments made her sick, she says.

The War Zone, Godzilla

The War Zone, Godzilla Summary

A Hollywood agent, who wished to remain anonymous, discusses his experiences during the riots. He says the atmosphere was uneasy. He went to lunch in Beverley Hills and could feel the tension in the restaurant. Everyone was exchanging what little information he or she had about the disturbances. The upper middle class, successful, white people in the restaurant worked themselves up into a frenzy about it. He says they felt a collective guilt and talked about the need to buy guns for protection.

When he and his friends went to get their cars in the garage after lunch they saw many people running as if they were being chased by Godzilla or something. Then someone said "they" were burning down the Beverly Center, and the panic increased. He describes the crowd as yuppies in Armani suits streaming out of their office buildings in a panic despite the fact that nothing was actually happening in their location.

He began to wonder if maybe he deserved this because of his social status. Maybe he deserved feeling as if his family was in danger. He believes the Rodney King verdict was the spark that set off a reaction to a system that treats people unequally. The people who were burning the Beverly Center were victims of the system. He says it was awful and heartbreaking to see the damage caused by people burning down their own neighborhoods.

The War Zone, Kinda Lonely

The War Zone, Kinda Lonely Summary

Walter Park is a Korean storeowner who was the victim of a gunshot during the looting. He is brain-damaged and he was heavily sedated during the interview. He talked about wanting to return to Korea, and about how lonely he feels. He said he tries to talk with his wife about how he feels, but because of the way Koreans are raised, he must hide certain things, and so must she. He has accepted the way his wife expresses her love for him, as long as he knows she loves him.

The War Zone, To Drive

The War Zone, To Drive Summary

Chris Oh is a medical student and the stepson of Walter Park. He received no information about the prognosis for his stepfather from the doctors who treated him. He knows that a bullet passed through his stepfather's temple and went through his left eye to lodge in the frontal lobe of his brain. The frontal lobe is where learning skills and a person's basic character is, according to Oh. His father can remember how things used to be and the things he used to do, but he cannot do them anymore. He cannot drive, for example, and Oh knows that he wants to drive.

The War Zone, And in My Heart for Him

The War Zone, And in My Heart for Him Summary

Mrs. June Park is Walter Park's wife. She states that he came to the United States twenty-eight years before, a highly educated man. He created a business and worked hard. He had donated a lot of money to the Compton area, and the police officers there know him. Mrs. Park does not understand why her husband was shot, and she is very sad and angry about it. She says she cries often. She goes to the hospital ICU to be with her husband, and even though family members are not usually allowed to stay there, the nurses know her and let her stay with him. She brings doughnuts to the nurses and doctors every time she goes to the hospital. She says they know how much she loves her husband so they let her stay with him all day. Mrs. Park says she spends all her time with him.

The War Zone, Execution Style

The War Zone, Execution Style Summary

Chris Oh, Walter Park's stepson, reports that when Walter was shot he pressed down on his car's accelerator and ran into a telephone pole. An African-American woman in the car behind him saw what happened and said it was an African-American who shot him. Oh says that he heard that the gunman came up to his stepfather's car when he was at a stoplight, broke the window on the driver's side, and shot him in the head, at close range, execution style.

The War Zone, The Beverly Hills Hotel

The War Zone, The Beverly Hills Hotel Summary

Real estate agent Elaine Young had a date on the day of the verdict, but her date cancelled. Because she had been only recently separated and she did not want to be alone, she called a friend and they decided to go out. They found all the places they wanted to go were closed, but figured that a hotel would not close. She suggested they go to the Beverly Hills Hotel, which is near her house and where she often went to conduct meetings or to relax.

When she arrived there, it seemed like all of Los Angeles had decided to do the same thing. Young says everyone was talking about the riots and trying to forget about them. People would stay at the hotel until three or four in the morning. They would talk about how terrible the events were and then question how this could happen in their town. After a while, they could not talk about it anymore and went on with their lives.

She went to the Polo Lounge for three nights so she would not be alone. She wants everyone to know that she took the riots very seriously, that she is interested in social attitudes and did not think it was a joke. When she was interviewed on television at the closing of the Polo Lounge, she mentioned how everyone went there and huddled together during the riots. Young received a letter criticizing her for her attitude. She says she did not mean to be flippant. It was just people staying together to find safety in numbers. No one could hurt her at the Beverly Hills Hotel because "it was like a fortress."

The War Zone, I Was Scared

The War Zone, I Was Scared Summary

A young female student from the University of Southern California who wished to remain anonymous describes how scared she was when the riot started. She and her friends were afraid that "they" might try to attack the sorority and fraternity houses on campus because "they" had attacked them during the Watts riots. They went house to house and smashed windows. She does not remember who told her this, but somebody knew it, and the information spread quickly. Everyone in her house started to pack their suitcases, and they all put on their tennis shoes. Then they sat in the hallways and talked about what they would do if rioters came in the front door.

The girl's parents were driving across country to California as part of a caravan of classic car enthusiasts. Her father has a 1941 Cadillac, and she wanted to call them to tell them to turn around and go home. All she could think of was a bottle hitting her father's classic car. She describes all the other classic cars in his collection: Lincoln Continentals, Town and Countries, but his favorite is the 1941 Cadillac. He keeps the cars for five or ten years until he can get a good value for them, then sells them. It is a business as well as his hobby. She did not know what car he would be driving to California, but he takes pride in all of them. He keeps them polished and in perfect condition. All she could think of was a bottle hitting one of his cars.

The War Zone, The Unheard

The War Zone, The Unheard Summary

Maxine Waters, Congresswoman from the 35th District, gave a speech at the First African Methodist Episcopal Church shortly after Daryl Gates resigned from the LAPD. In her speech, Waters reminded listeners that there had been an insurrection in Los Angeles before the Rodney King disturbance and that it had resulted from police brutality. She reminded them of the Kerner Commission report issued after that insurrection and how the report discussed the ills of society, institutionalized racism, lack of services and the lack of government response to people. If that report was read now, in 1992, she said we would find that all the things cited twenty years before still exist.

Waters called out to the President, telling him that people are hungry in the Bronx and in Atlanta and in St. Louis. She told him that children's lives are at risk and that she wanted to address the problems of young men who are just hanging out with nowhere to go and nothing to do. These young men are not in school, do not have jobs and do not really live anywhere. They just move from their mother's house to their grandmother's house to their girlfriend's house, or they go on relief and sleep under a bridge.

Waters called on the President and the governor and others in authority to recognize that not everyone in the streets was a criminal. She contrasted the crime of stealing Pampers for a baby with the crime of the Rodney King verdict and other violations by the authorities. She said she would not tell her people to be calm as black leaders did in the 1960s. She knows how to talk to her people, and she will show anger when she has the right to be angry. What people do when they are frustrated and angry is unfortunate, but whether anyone likes it or not, a riot represents the voice of the unheard.

The War Zone, Washington

The War Zone, Washington Summary

Maxine Waters, Congresswoman from the 35th District, says Washington D.C. is a place where rituals and customs do not allow lawmakers to talk about things that do not fit a preset formula. Leaders in the United States are so removed from reality that they really do not know what goes on with people. They do not see things, and so they do not understand them and have no idea how to resolve problems associated with race or poverty.

Waters has had to force her ideas onto lawmakers by pushing into meetings where she was not invited. Once she got into a meeting at the White House being held to discuss some type of urban package. She had not received an invitation, and she was incensed that they would try to have a meeting on this issue without involving her, since she was the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. Her appearance at the meeting disconcerted the other attendees. The President was there, along with his Cabinet members, and a representative from the Department of Health and Human Services. After listening to a few of the statements, Waters broke in to tell the President that he had to deal with the serious problems of unemployment, hopelessness and despair that existed in the cities. She told him there should be a jobs program with stipends for young people who have never worked in their lives. These people are angry and frustrated, she told him.

The President, not knowing how to respond to her statements, focused on something she said about the Justice Department. Waters told him that the excessive use of force by police made problems worse and that the Justice Department had to find a way to intervene when city police departments got out of control. A black man from the Department of Labor told the President that Waters was right. The country is falling apart, he said.

The War Zone, Trophies

The War Zone, Trophies Summary

Paul Parker is the chairperson of the Free the LA Four Plus Defense Committee. In his interview in 1993, Parker said that Police Chief Daryl Gates and the LAPD had been strongly criticized for their actions when the rebellion started. This suggests their efforts to find and arrest the people responsible for Reginald Denny's beating were mostly a public relations program prompted by that criticism.

The LAPD sent two SWAT teams to arrest Parker's brother, Lance, and had television cameras there to film the arrest. The police said Lance was a known gang member and a drug dealer. According to Parker, Lance went to college for four years and was working as a process server for a law firm. He was accused of attempted murder for shooting at Denny. He was also accused of blowing up some gasoline pumps. Parker notes that when his father was shot eleven years before during a petty robbery, the police ignored the crime. He believes that they do not care if black people are the victims of crime, but if a white person is a victim, they will go to any length to convict some black person for the crime.

This has made him bitter, so he decided to quit his job to correct the media portrayal of his brother. He was voted in as chairman of the Defense Committee and has been working full-time at defending all the accused. Parker believes the charges were brought because Denny is white. If he had been a minority race, no one would care. Denny's beating was the only one to be publicized in the media, despite the fact that many people were beat up at the same time. He does not think he needs to have any empathy for one white man.

He takes issue with the idea that blacks burned down their own neighborhoods. He says they burned down Koreans in the neighborhoods. Ninety-eight percent of the burned stores were owned by Koreans. Parker says they got rid of all the Koreans and "put them in check." More was done in three days than politicians had done in years. Now blacks have some weapons and some pride, and they acted in a way that was just. The rebellion was created for Kunta and Kizzy and Chicken George from "Roots." It was victory. Now the authorities are prosecuting eight people out of the thousands involved in the looting and burning. Parker believes he is making a stand against injustice toward blacks. No justice, no peace, he says, and he will do everything in his power to make this statement true.

The War Zone, It's Awful Hard to Break Away

The War Zone, It's Awful Hard to Break Away Summary

Daryl Gates, former chief of the Los Angeles Police Department and a current talk show host, wanted to correct the perception that he was at a fundraiser when the disturbances began. He says it was a group of people against Proposition F, people who supported him from the beginning. These people begged him to be at the gathering so he attended despite the fact that he does not like those kinds of things. He had a commitment, he says, and he is the type of person who honors his commitments.

Gates admits now that he should not have gone to that meeting. It would not have changed anything because he had been in constant contact with his forces while he was at the gathering, but attendance at the gathering was not as important as his commitment to the general community.

When he realized that a riot was starting, he tried to get away, but he now says it was difficult to do. People kept stopping him on his way out the door, and it took longer to leave than he thought it would. He admits he was wrong not to be where the trouble was, though he really wonders if it would have made any difference in how events unfolded if he had been in his office.

The police department is demoralized, and he has become the symbol of police oppression to African-Americans in the U.S. and maybe in the world. He does not understand why, after 43 years in law enforcement, he has become a symbol of police oppression. Before the riots, polls indicated he was the most popular Republican in Los Angeles. He had more support than Ronald Reagan did, and then suddenly, he became this symbol. The day of the Rodney King beating, the President of the United States was declaring him a national hero for his work with kids and narcotics. Then he became the symbol of police oppression because "some officers whacked Rodney King while I was in Washington, D.C."

The War Zone, Human Remains

The War Zone, Human Remains Summary

Dean Gilmour, Lieutenant, Los Angeles County Coroner, describes how he was helping an attorney who was trying to have a young woman declared dead. She was in an appliance store with some other looters when it caught fire. Her boyfriend was the only one who got out of the building. The girl's mother says she has not heard from her since that day and there's no reason to think that she did not die in that building. The place has been searched four times, but the fire was so hot it is difficult to find any human remains. The family cannot get on with their lives until they have some resolution.

Gilmour began his investigation thinking there were sixty deaths during the riots, but he wondered if they could all definitely be attributed to the riots. There are shootings every day of the year, so were all gang shootings on those days riot-related? He cannot tell. Gilmour says that in Hollingback Division in East LA there were no riot-related deaths. By July, he had reduced the number of riot-related deaths and then found some human remains in the rubble a few months later. In a hot fire, human remains are charred, and after a few months, there is usually animal activity that "disarticulates" the bodies. The most difficult part of his job is the survivors. Gilmour himself lost his first child, and his brother was murdered. A drunk driver killed his sister. He empathizes with the survivors.

His final report showed there were forty-one gunshot wounds during the riots. Twenty-six victims were black, eighteen were Hispanic, ten were Caucasian and two were Asian. There were six traffic deaths, four assaults, four arsons and four others. There were fifty-one males and seven females dead. There were seven officer-related deaths. Four involved the Los Angeles Police Department; one involved the sheriff, one Compton, and one the National Guard. Gilmour prays for peace.

Twilight, Long Day's Journey into Night

Twilight, Long Day's Journey into Night Summary

Peter Sellars, the director of the Los Angeles Festival, says the United States is like his father who is too cheap to replace burnt-out light bulbs. Things are burned out here and there in the U.S. Why can't we replace them? His father worked his whole life to support his family, but he will not replace the burnt-out bulbs. All he cares about is success. His father is just like America now. America has a good economy, but there is no family. We cannot live in our own house, Sellars says. Our own house is burning. This is the city we live in; it is like one house. If somebody starts a fire in the basement, the people on the top floor are going to be hurt. Sellars says he has a strong sense of being incinerated. He believes Eugene O'Neill wrote the classic drama about the American Dream (Long Day's Journey into Night).

Twilight, I Remember Going...

Twilight, I Remember Going... Summary

Reverend Tom Choi is the minister at Westwood Presbyterian Church. He remembers going out to do some clean-up work after the disturbances and deciding to wear his clerical collar, which he had not done for some time. He wore it for protection because he was afraid someone would mistake him for a Korean shop owner. He is disappointed in himself because he knows this is not an appropriate reason for a minister to wear his collar.

He remembers hearing people complain that Korean-Americans did not patronize black businesses, so when he went to the bank he stood up straight so everyone would see his collar plainly. He asked people in line at the bank how they were doing, and everyone replied that they were doing all right. He had many conversations with these people and found that there was nothing but warmth coming from them.

His experience was so different from what he had heard on television programs that emphasized hostility between races. He found only friendliness and solidarity. After a while, he stopped wearing his collar for protection. He realized that if there is any real protection in the world it comes from the love you have for people, the love God has taught him to share. This is what he learned from the disturbances.

Twilight, A Jungian Collective Unconscious

Twilight, A Jungian Collective Unconscious Summary

Paula Weinstein, a movie producer, and her husband Mark called a press conference at the Warner Brothers lot on the day the verdict came down. Her press release used the word "uprising" and objected to the verdict, and some entertainment industry people objected to it. She considered their objections a paternalistic response. The older, more established people wanted to say something about stopping the violence, but did not want to object to the verdict. She went ahead over their objections.

The Weinstein's house became a gathering place for about fourteen young people in their twenties who felt their houses were no longer safe. They came to the Weinstein's because of their political views. They had heard about the political thinking of the 1960s but had not had anywhere to direct their own political impulses until the press conference. There were both white and black kids in her house, Weinstein says, and they had a "Jungian collective unconscious" connection.

As a group, they went into South Central, some for the first time in spite of living in LA their entire lives. They went throughout the city asking for donations to help the damaged areas. Then they went into the riot area and distributed food. There was a multiracial crowd of young people working together, and every time someone in an expensive car drove up to make a donation, everyone would cheer. Weinstein says there was a real sense of community and the feeling that things could really change.

However, a year later, nothing has changed. Everyone made big gestures right after the disturbances, but nothing substantial has changed. What bothered Weinstein about the week of the verdict was watching rich white people guarding their houses and sending their children out of LA. She blames the media for making white people afraid of the African-American community.

No real connection was made between whites and blacks after the verdict. White people just retreated into their own world out of a continuing sense of fear. "Everybody's scared in LA," Weinstein says.

Twilight, Application of the Laws

Twilight, Application of the Laws Summary

Bill Bradley, Democratic Senator from New Jersey, acknowledges that the law treats different people in different ways. One of the things that struck him about the events in Los Angeles was the following. An African-American friend who was interning at a big law firm in LA was pulled over by police while driving to one of the law partners' homes. He was thrown down and handcuffed at gunpoint. When he finally made them understand who he was and what he was doing in that neighborhood, the police let him go and drove away like nothing had happened.

Bradley says that the Rodney King beating was nothing new. Bradley questions why the partner of the law firm did not call anyone to complain about the treatment of his intern. Everyone has a responsibility to try to improve race relations in the U.S. The moral power of corporations and institutions has to be brought to bear when people are treated as the intern was. The law should apply equally to everyone, although that is not the case now.

Twilight, Something Cooking Here

Twilight, Something Cooking Here Summary

Otis Chandler, director of the Times Mirror Company, says that not many of the American families that have had the opportunity to accumulate wealth have used this wealth to make real contributions to their communities over the generations. Most wealthy families just waste their money.

Chandler feels neither that things are hopeless nor that everything can be improved by throwing money around. There must be a long-term commitment to making things better. Everyone must be patient and resolute. They must work toward the day when everyone will live in a safe and pleasant city regardless of their occupation or race. There is no easy answer, he says, but we cannot let the situation deteriorate.

There was the same sense of mission and community after the Watts riots, and this led to the establishment of the McClellan Commission. After two years, however, everyone forgot about Watts and the commitments and alliances they had made. Now it has happened again, and everyone must make another commitment to work consistently for the kind of city they want. There must be regular meetings and significant financial investment over the long-term. Perhaps a sales tax or gasoline tax will have to be imposed to raise the money. It is important that cities are not allowed to deteriorate as they have been.

Twilight, A Deadeye

Twilight, A Deadeye Summary

Owen Smet of the Culver City Police Department is the former range manager of the Beverly Hills Gun Club. He says after the riots club membership went up by fifty percent. There are members who always shoot at the club, but after the riots, there was a feeling of danger in the community. People wanted the chance to defend themselves.

Shooting is a skill, and it takes practice to become a "deadeye," which is what Smet calls a very good shooter. Smet is a deadeye, trained in Vietnam. He shows off his selection of guns. The least powerful are in the top row of a rack and the most powerful are at the bottom. Smet usually starts people out with a thirty-eight. The most popular gun for drive-by shootings is the nine millimeter. Smet says gang members use all kinds of guns, though, and that "they are probably better armed than we are."

Twilight, Ask Saddam Hussein

Twilight, Ask Saddam Hussein Summary

Elaine Brown is the former head of the Black Panther Party and author of *A Taste of Power*. She thinks people do view the Black Panther Party as an organization solely identified with guns. She knows young men are drawn to the group by its guns, but she always tells them the story of Jonathan Jackson. Jonathan Jackson was seventeen years old, a science genius and not a gang member. He went to court by himself, and for a moment, gave voice to the power of revolution and freedom for his brother and others in prison. Then she asks the young men with guns in their hands if they think it would have been better if Jackson were still alive to do his work instead of dying that day in court. She would rather have him alive.

She believes that just picking up a gun and going into the streets without a plan or any reason other than rage is foolish. Brown says all anyone has to do to understand what this is all about is ask Saddam Hussein about the power and weapons of the United States government and its willingness to use them. There is not another country or community as well organized and well-armed as the U.S., so if you think about taking it on, you have to be clear about what you are doing. Ask Saddam Hussein, she says.

If you just want to die and be on a poster, fine; but if you want to make a real change for your people, get serious, Brown says. You must be committed and base your commitment on love, not hate. She tells the young men not to be enamored of their own images wearing berets and holding guns. They must think in terms of the long struggle and what they can do for their people. Currently, there is only a poorly organized, poorly armed, poorly led army. It is going to take another twenty years to figure out what happened to the Black Panther Party.

Twilight, Twilight #1

Twilight, Twilight #1 Summary

Homi Bhabha is a writer, scholar and literary critic. He speaks of the twilight moment as an in-between moment of ambivalence. The ambivalence of what happened in Los Angeles is what people are trying to understand. According to Bhabha, when we look at the disturbances in twilight we see that the sharp outlines visible in daylight, which make it easy for use to put things in order, disappear. We see the intersection of events with others that are obscured by daylight. He believes that more interpretations of events must take place in twilight. Twilight challenges us to be aware of how we project ourselves into a situation and how we are part of an event. We have to react to an event in twilight in a more interpretive and creative way.

Twilight, Magic #2

Twilight, Magic #2 Summary

Betye Saar, an artist who lives in Laurel Canyon, describes her experiences on the evening of the verdict. She and her friend Tony were walking to their car in the twilight. Tony, who is political, definitely thought there would be trouble because of acquittal.

They had a difficult time driving to the restaurant because there were crowds of people in the streets. Saar was surprised because this was West Hollywood, populated mostly by gays and lesbians. Most of the crowd was made up of gay men who were protesting the verdict by writing "Guilty" on posters. They were doing graffiti, and the street was barricaded. She and her friend heard more protesting of the verdict on the radio in the restaurant.

Saar really wants to talk about how the sky looked that night. She says it was a surreal time of day, between day and night. It was a limbo time, a transition, even magical. Saar notes that magic is not always good, however, because it can imply evil and control. She just means something like enchantment, a mystical quality. Some people, she says, think magic is the work of Satan.

Justice, Screw through Your Chest

Justice, Screw through Your Chest Summary

Harland W. Braun was counsel for Theodore Briseno, a defendant in the Rodney King beating trial. He did not want to take the case because he thought it was a racial beating, and his son had been involved in a racial incident.

His son was the passenger in a two-seater Mercedes driven by his friend through Westwood. The friend's mother is a partner at a law firm. They were pulled over by the LAPD. Braun's son is outspoken, he says, and he jumped out of the car and told the officer that he knew they had been stopped because his friend was black. The police officer turns to Braun's son and tells him to shut up or he would "put a screw through your chest."

Braun says he never heard that expression before. He felt ambivalent about the event. On one hand, he says, you want to kill the cop, and on the other, you want to strangle your son for putting himself in danger. Braun says his son was lucky he was in Westwood in a public place. This is why Braun did not want to get involved with the Rodney King case.

Then he realized that he could be wrong about the whole thing. How could anyone know what justice would be in this case, he asks. He illustrates his point by discussing Pontius Pilate and the trial of Christ. He says Pontius Pilate asked all the right questions. Pilate talked about rioting in the city. Braun thinks it is clear the Pontius Pilate tried to balance the fact that the man on trial before him was innocent with the fact that there would be disorder if the man were not condemned. Pilate would not condemn him, though. He had other people condemn him. Pilate asks what truth is. That question is relevant to the King case. Braun asks whether the truth is that Powell and Koon were guilty or the fact that society must protect itself by finding them guilty?

Justice, Swallowing the Bitterness

Justice, Swallowing the Bitterness Summary

Mrs. Young-soon Han is a former liquor store owner. Before the riots, she believed that America was "the best." She says she still believes it now that she is a victim of violence. As financial and mental turmoil continued to affect her after the riots, she began to realize that Korean immigrants had been left out of American society. She questions whether this is because they are Korean, because they do not speak English well, or because they have no politicians working for them.

Koreans are not qualified to receive welfare or food stamps. She believes that African-Americans who never worked get at least the minimum amount of money to help them survive, but Koreans get nothing. She wants to know where she can find justice. Maybe black people feel they got justice, but they got their rights by destroying innocent Korean merchants.

She says she respects Martin Luther King, but does not like Jesse Jackson. King was the model of nonviolence, but in 1992, black people destroyed innocent people with violence. She wonders if that is really justice. She is happy for black people, though; they got something back after fighting for their rights for two hundred years. Let us just forget Korean victims and the other victims.

Maybe other minorities like Hispanics or Asians have to suffer more in the mainstream as blacks did. She says she understands the blacks and wants celebrate with them, but after the verdict, it was too difficult to get together. There were too many differences. The fire still exists, she says, and it can burst out at any time.

Justice, Lucia

Justice, Lucia Summary

Gladis Sibrian is the director of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, USA. When she was thirteen or fourteen years old, her relatives would ask how she thought she could change anything in Panama after sixty years of military dictatorship. She would not change anything, they told her. The same question was asked at her school: how can young people change things with their power, faith and convictions? Everyone said she and her friends were idealistic and romantic.

She admits that in the process of change some people died. She had a *nom de guerre* in those days: Lucia, which means "light". Light is what happened in Los Angeles, she says. Sibrian calls it a "social explosion" instead of an "uprising" because it was unplanned and spontaneous. On one hand, it excited her that people did not let the injustice of the verdict pass them by. On the other hand, she was sad because the response was not planned or organized in any way. It made her sad that many people would die without knowing why they died. There is no sense that things can be changed in LA. There is no sense of the future because the people do not believe they have the power within themselves to change things.

Justice, Limbo/Twilight #2

Justice, Limbo/Twilight #2 Summary

Twilight Bey is an organizer of the gang truce. He is called Twilight because he is known for staying out until the sun comes up, all night, every night. He says he is a watchdog. He stays up in the neighborhood to make sure rival gangs do not attack it. People called him Twilight when they found out what he was doing. They told him he was smarter than many people twice his age for doing what he did.

He remembers writing his name one night and noticing that "twi" was an abbreviation for the word "twice." The word "light" symbolizes knowledge and wisdom in the Koran and the Holy Bible. Therefore, he figures he has twice the knowledge and understanding of others his age.

Twilight is the time of day between day and night. He calls it limbo. When he first talked about a gang truce in 1988, his homeboys told him it was something that could not be done and that he was "before his time." In 1992, though, they made it a reality.

He feels like he is stuck in limbo. He is in a place where not many people exist. He does not connect darkness to anything negative, though. He just considers it what came first. Concerning his color, he knows he is a dark individual. In limbo, he sees the darkness as himself, and he sees light as knowledge and wisdom. To be a true human being, he cannot stay in darkness forever. He cannot identify with all people while understanding only his own.

He feels like he stays up twenty-four hours, and what he sees at night bothers him. He sees children eight to eleven years old outside at three in the morning beating up an old man at a bus stop. In his own neighborhood, he sees the living dead, those who are addicted to crack and who stay up all night doing whatever they need to do to get their next hit. Bey believes everything that occurs in the daytime creates what happens at night.

Twilight, Los Angeles, 1992 Analysis

Anna Deavere Smith's one-woman performance piece is based on interviews with people connected to the civil disturbances in Los Angeles in 1992 after police officers were acquitted of charges in the case of the Rodney King beating. Because the piece uses the actual words of the people interviewed it is more a documentary than a work of fiction. It is necessary to remember that the work was designed to be performed and not just read.

Analysis of the piece requires knowledge of the historical background of the events. To this end, Smith provides a timeline that begins with the beating and arrest of Rodney King on March 3, 1991, and ends December 7, 1993, with the sentencing of Damian

Williams to a maximum of ten years for attacks on Reginald Denny. The interviews selected for inclusion in the piece reflect various incidents along that timeline.

One theme to emerge from the interviews is the ambivalence in peoples' feelings about prejudice, race, authority, law and community. On one hand, everyone wants to get along, but on the other, everyone has his or her grievance. This ambivalence is summed up by the use of the word "twilight" in the title. Another theme is that of complexity. There are no easy solutions to the problems presented.

The piece has several parts, each of which tries to illustrate or explain the complex emotions felt by the individuals interviewed on issues of race relations in general and the disturbances in particular. The difference in how people perceived the events is emphasized by the words they use to describe them. Some call what happened after the Rodney King verdict "the riots." Others refer to the "rebellion" or the "uprising." The fact that there is no agreement among the interviewees about how to label the events illustrates the divide between people of different races in Los Angeles during this period.

The first part of the piece, "Prologue, My Enemy," comprises a single interview with Rudy Salas, Sr., a sculptor and painter. It illustrates the way in which the opinions of parents are handed down to their children. He states that he first learned a hatred of *gringos* from his father who fought against them before he was born. The interview also shows that the experiences Salas and his father had, which soured them on white people in general, are similar to those experienced by his children in the current society. While Salas acknowledges his enjoyment at the discomfort of white people in the presence of minorities, he is ambivalent about his feelings. He does not want to feel the hatred he feels. He does not want to be happy when a white police officer dies. Yet, the continuing racism he sees on television or reads in the newspapers enrages him daily. His interview sets the tone for the rest of the work in showing Salas' anger and his ambivalence about that anger.

The second part of the piece is called "The Territory." This section has seven interviews with people who describe encounters between police officers, who are chiefly white, and individuals, who are chiefly African-American. Three of the interviews dramatized are with whites: the former president of the LA Police Commission, who tried to talk with gang members to understand them better; an actor who acknowledges he is probably treated differently by police because he is white; and a writer and urban critic who believes race relations have gotten worse since his first contact with the civil rights movement in the 1960s. The experiences of these interviewees contrast strongly with those of the non-whites in this section, who either have received serious beatings at the hands of the Los Angeles police themselves or they know someone who has. For them, the police are the enemy, always looking to hurt them, always overreacting to situations, never trying to understand the neighborhoods they patrol, and focusing on the power they have over others. This section establishes the immediate background for the reactions to the Rodney King verdict in South Central LA.

The third part is called "Here's A Nobody" and includes an interview with Rodney King's aunt, whose anger is so strong that she refuses to be silenced by her family and others

who believe she should not speak with the media. There is an interview with a woman who witnessed the beating of King but the prosecutors never called her to testify at the officers' trial. The section also includes the observations of a police-training officer who speculates that Rodney King was beaten with batons to pressure city officials to reinstate use of the chokehold. The section illustrates how a single person, a nobody, can become the victim of forces beyond his control. In the beginning, Rodney King was just a speeding motorist, but with his beating, he became a pawn, a symbol and a rallying point for a variety of interests.

The fourth and longest section, entitled "The War Zone," includes interviews with people who describe their experiences, perceptions and interpretations of the three days of civil disturbances that occurred after the acquittal. They describe how frightening and violent the situation was. They describe both real and perceived danger and panic. There is a strong contrast again between the experiences of whites, who are outside the Compton area and who generally fear that the violence with spread to their neighborhoods, and the experiences of African-Americans, who view the disturbances as a long-awaited demand for justice and revenge taken on those that have harmed them. A third set of experiences are those of the Korean storeowners who lost their livelihoods chiefly because they did not know how to fit in to the neighborhood.

The interviews in this section illustrate the anger, outrage, sadness and ambivalence of people who are prisoners of their own prejudices and perceptions and their actions as they are caught up in a mob mentality. This section describes the terrible loss of life and damage to property and how difficult it was for people to try to help each other once the mob mentality took hold. The section describes how far out of hand things can get, and once this point has been reached, there is no stopping the force unleashed.

The next section, "Twilight," describes the aftermath of the civil disturbances when people are beginning to reflect on what has happened. Several of the interviews describe about this period as being a "limbo" between dark and light. The section offers some hope that solutions to the problems that set off the disturbances could actually be found if people have the will to find them. Twilight represents the space between the darkness of hatred and violence and the light of cooperation and love.

The final section is called "Justice" and it includes interviews with people who are trying to view problems between the races with some clarity. Interviewees include an attorney who speculates on the nature and imperfections of the law as it is applied in the real world. Community organizers are interviewed and they state their belief that taking violent action without a plan is foolish and accomplishes nothing. They agree that each individual is responsible for improving society. Everyone must make the effort to understand people outside their own group if similar disturbances are to be avoided in the future.

Characters

Character Introduction

Although Smith interviewed about 175 people in her research for *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, in the published work containing their monologues she includes just under a third of them. In any given performance of her play, she further limits the number of persons depicted but had included some who are not in the published work. An example is Maria, Juror #7 in the second Rodney King trial, who was interviewed and added to the Mark Taper Forum production of the play two weeks after it opened. Another example is the opera diva Jessye Norman,

There is actually no set cast of characters in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*. As she deems appropriate, Smith selects the cast from her gallery of choices both to fit her specific audience and her artistic aims of the moment.

Theresa Allison

The founder of Mothers Reclaiming our Children (Mothers ROC), Theresa Allison is also the mother of gang-truce negotiator Dewayne Holmes. She explains that her organization started after the killing of her nephew, Tiny, who was shot in the face. She speaks of the unjust system, and her belief that Tiny was actually shot by officers dressed as gang members, two of whom she calls "Cagney and Lacey." She recalls the day of the shooting as looking "like the crucifixion of Jesus." It was a day, too, that changed some happy people to "hurting people." She goes on to tell how her son, Dewayne, was arrested and how she and her friends surrounded the police cruiser, fearful that the cops wanted to kill him. He was set free but was marked thereafter and was eventually picked up and sentenced for a crime that Theresa insists he did not commit.

Anonymous man

An unnamed white juror in the first Rodney King trial, this soft-spoken man breaks into tears as he recalls his ambivalent feelings about the verdict and its aftermath. He speaks of the personal confusion and the threats on his life. Most agonizing was a letter received from the KKK offering the jurors its support and extending an offer of membership. That invitation shamed the man and left him remorseful.

Twilight Bey

A slight, graceful young black, Twilight Bey is a member of the Crips gang and one of the organizers of the truce between the Crips and the Bloods, a rival gang. He speaks very confidently of his youth, as a community "watchdog," and of the significance of his

name as indicating that he has "twice the knowledge of those my age." He relates his name to the idea of limbo, as somehow being caught in a place ahead of his time, and he talks about what he sees at night, the drug-addicted "walking dead" and the young kids beating up elderly people at bus stops. He is also the titular character of the play, partly because what he says about limbo a place between darkness and understanding is an appropriate thematic metaphor for the entire work.

BigAl

See Allen Cooper

Elaine Brown

A woman in her early fifties, Elaine Brown is the former head of the Black Panther Party and author of *A Taste of Power*. She grieves over the fact that the protesters took to the street with no plan, just rage. She says that commitment must be based "not on hate but on love," and that change cannot be brought about by a "piss-poor, ragtag, unorganized, poorly armed" and "poorly led army."

Allen Cooper

A large, ex-gang member and former convict, Big Al is an activist in the nation-wide trace movement. He offers a defensive litany on life in the LA ghetto, where even a bubble gum machine packs a gun and nothing spells trouble 'til the black man gets his hands on it." He repeatedly says, "You gotta look at history, baby." He sees the African American as victim, and questions whether Reginald Denny might have driven his truck into the black neighborhood as an "intimidation move."

Reginald O. Denny

Reginald Denny, the white truck driver beaten and shot at during the LA riot, describes what little he remembers of the experience. He is "upbeat" and "speaks loudly." He admits to being unaware of the King verdict and its aftermath until visitors came to speak with him at the Daniel Freeman Hospital. He talks about Jesse Jackson, Arsemo Hall, and the four people who rescued him Titus, Bobby, Terry, and Lee with whom he feels "a weird common thread in our lives." He describes what he has seen on video tapes and what his rescuers have told him. He talks about a room in a future house that will be a memorial, "a happy room," one where "there won't be a color problem." Denny seems hopeful and remarkably free of bitterness.

Sergeant Charles Duke

Sergeant Charles Duke is a member of the LAPD Special Weapons and Tactics Unit and a defense witness in both trials of the officers who beat Rodney King. Duke explains that Officer Laurence Powell mishandled his baton while beating Rodney King, making his blows weak and ineffective. He laments that "upper- body control holds" were outlawed in 1982 as inhumane, even though they provided a better method of subduing suspects on drugs. He relates, too, that he had tried to find alternatives to the use of batons but was rebuked for his efforts. He believes that Chief Daryl Gates wanted to provoke a law suit to prove that the City Council and Police Commission had made a mistake in banning older choke holds techniques.

Elvira Evers

Elvira Evers is a Panamanian woman, who, during the rioting, while pregnant, is shot and taken by ambulance to St. Francis Hospital. Doctors operate to trace the bullet's course and deliver her baby girl via Caesarean section. The baby has the bullet lodged in her elbow, but it is successfully removed. Describing the events, Elvira remains remarkably unemotional.

Daryl F. Gates

Daryl F. Gates, Chief of the LAPD during the rioting, attempts to explains his absence from his post after the verdict in the first Rodney King trial. He was meeting with a group opposed to Proposition F, but claims to have been in constant contact with his office. He admits that he should have left immediately, but doubts that his presence in LA would have mattered. "I should have been smarter, " he confesses, but primarily because he gave his critics ammunition to use against him. He resents having become "the symbol of police oppression in the United States," and finds it very unjust.

Mrs. Young-Soon Han

A Korean immigrant and former owner of a liquor store, Mrs. Han angrily remarks on the treatment and status of Korean Americans. She bitterly argues that black Americans fare better, and then talks of justice and violence. Although she wishes that Asians and blacks could live together, she sees "too much differences" preventing community peace and harmony a fire that "canuh burst out anytime."

Angela King

Angela King, the aunt of Rodney King, in a relatively long monologue, relates her unsettled family life to the film *Carmen*, starring Dorothy Dandndge and Harry Belafonte. She discusses her closeness with her brother, Rodney's father, recalling childhood

anecdotes. She explains that they were raised without racial hatred and that now she seeks justice for the beating of her nephew. She is particulary upset by the defendants' lack of remorse and the efforts of the authorities "to make you look bad to the people." She is convinced her phone is tapped but that there is nothing she can do about it.

Maria

Juror #7 in the second Rodney King trial, tfaria, a lively black woman, gives a no-holds-arred account of her fellow jurors, whom she nmercifully parodies as "brain-dead." She gives hilarious description of the group's interactive /orkings as they strive to cooperate in their joint bligation as jurors.

lutto Menjivar

A native of El Salvador, Julio Menjivar is a man n his late twenties. A bystander, he describes the arrival and behavior of the National Guard during the unrest, claiming that guardsmen almost shot his mother, sister, and wife, then rounded the residents up and hauled them by bus to jail. He describes his fright, his prayers, and his unhappiness with having a criminal record.

Katie Miller

A big black woman with a powerful voice, Katie Miller claims that the looters and vandals in Koreatown were not blacks but Mexicans. Although she did not engage in looting, she went "touring" with friends after the rioting. She is sarcastic and very angry with local newscaster Paul Moyer because he called the looters of an I. Magnm store "thugs." She is outraged because the media seem to suggest that looting in the poor sections of LA was vindicated, but not in "a store that rich people go to."

Paul Parker

Paul Parker, the Chairperson of the Free the L. A. Four Plus Defense Committee, argues that the defendants charged with attacking Reginald Denny were victimized because it was a black-on-white affair, and that the authorities would go "any extremes necessary" to gain a conviction. He takes intense pride in his African-American heritage, and warns that as long as there is no justice for blacks, there will be no peace for whites.

Rudy Salas, Sr.

Rudy Salas, Sr., a sculptor and painter, is a large man of Mexican descent. Partly deaf, he wears a hearing aid in both ears. His deafness resulted from a police beating back in the 1940s. Rudy retains hatred for "gringo" policemen and other whites, whom he refers

to as "my enemy." He calls the feeling "insanity," and knows it is a waste, but he can not help it. He is convinced that whites fear "people of color," and he relishes their discomfort. He indicates that his hatred has been fortified by the experiences of his sons.

Second anonymous man

This well-dressed, handsome man, an unidentified Hollywood agent, starts out by remarking that the anticipated unrest from the King trial verdict did not at first dampen his "business as usual" activities. He noted the gossip and tension among his white, upper-middle class associates, but panic did not set in until the rioting began, when the flight of working whites from downtown LA lacked only "Godzilla behind them." He admits that the verdict was unfair, and that he started to "absorb a little guilt." He was saddened by the television coverage showing people destroying their own neighborhoods.

Stanley K. Sheinbaum

Stanley K. Sheinbaum, former president of the LA Police Commission, is seventy-three, with "the smile and laugh of a highly spirited, joyous, old woman." He speaks in two monologues In the first, he talks of "these curious people," the gang members at a truce meeting he had witnessed with Congresswoman Maxine Walters. He is troubled by the assumption that the gangs are always the enemy, and that he must be on a side that prevents understanding. In the second monologue, he recalls driving downtown after the King verdict and seeing a black woman driving on the freeway holding a hammer in her hand, which spelled "trouble." He recalls encountering Chief Daryl Gates leaving the police garage as he arrived, then being inside LAPD headquarters when the first rock came through a plate-glass window.

Judith Tur

A ground reporter, Judith Tur gives a running commentary on the beating of Reginald Denny as video taped from a helicopter by John and Marika Tur. She describes the event as "like being in a war zone," and becomes very angry at the "real brave men" who beat and tried to shoot Denny. She tells of her own hard life to explain why she has little sympathy for the rioters, who, she charges, are "really taking advantage."

Maxine Waters

Maxine Waters is a U. S. Representative from the 35th District in California, representing South-Central LA. She is an "elegant" woman and powerful orator. She vents her anger with Washington's insensitivity to inner-city problems and describes how she crashed an exclusive White House meeting on the issue to speak her mind to President Bush.

Henry Keith Watson

One of the L.A. Four accused in the attack on Reginald Denny, Keith Watson, twenty-nine, escaped punishment when acquitted in the subsequent trial in October of 1993. Defending his anger and the burning and looting of the rioters, he says that "justice didn't work."

Cornel West

A scholar, Cornel West relates the civil turmoil to analogous issues, including the frontier and the gunfighter and the "deep machismo ethic" of a "gangsterous orientation" seen in the character of Sylvester Stallone's Rambo and rap music. He argues that blacks are "playing exactly the same game," attempting to "outbrutalize the police brutality." He notes that black women remain subjugated because of the machismo and laments the end of the Black Panther movement and the loss of the "internationalism and multiracialism" that it represented. He maintains that "conservative forces" have held the civil rights movement in disarray.

Elaine Young

An experienced realtor, Elaine Young has sold many homes to Hollywood stars. She has also received publicity because of her problems with silicone implants. During the rioting, fearful of being alone, she goes to the Beverly Hills Hotel, staying until early morning on three consecutive days. After being interviewed at the Polo Lounge, she receives an accusative letter from a man who calls her "a dumb shit bimbo" for her flippant lack of concern over the unrest. That clearly upsets her.

Themes

Anger and Hatred

Closely related to themes of race and racial prejudice, anger and hatred have a powerful, resonating presence in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*. Some of the persons, like Rudy Salas, Sr., the Mexican artist, seem almost consumed with hatred. His is directed against "gringos," especially white police officers. His anger is shared by others, mostly by inner-city blacks and Latinos who resent the treatment afforded them by the LAPD, what Theresa Allison calls "the hands of our enemy, the unjust system."

Atonement and Forgiveness

Some of the more reflective voices in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* express a prayer or hope that what LA citizens experienced throughout the unrest will give way to a future reconciliation and community harmony and peace among different ethnic groups. It is the "room" that Reginald Denny plans for his future house, a room that is "just gonna be people," where a person's race will not matter. It is the hope, too, of Otis Chandler, former publisher of the LA *Times*. He believes that someday LA can become "a safe, pleasant city, for everybody, regardless of where they live or what they do or what the color of their skin is." The new harmony would be the community's atonement for the past, and it would have to involve forgiveness.

Others are far more pessimistic, however. There is, for example, Mrs. Young-Soon Han, who believes that racial hatred still burns deeply and can ignite at any time, although, as a Korean, she would like to find a way to live together with blacks. And mere are those like Gladis Sibrian, Director of the Farabundo Mart National Liberation Front, who believe that "there is no sense of future, sense of hope that things can be changed."

Civil Rights

The failure of the first Rodney King trial to produce an acceptable verdict led to a second, federal trial on the grounds that the LAPD officers had violated King's civil rights. The issues of civil rights and justice thus lie at the core of the play's matter, and the idea that minority groups have been denied those rights is echoed by various persons. According to Mike Davis, writer and urban critic, the thrust of the civil rights movement was to insure equality for everyone, but, ironically, even privileged whites are losing rights to police-enforced laws that limit such freedoms as movement and the right of assembly. Another figure, Bill Bradley, a U.S. Senator from New Jersey, recounts the experience of a black friend who was stopped by LAPD officers while riding in a car with a white woman. The friend was forced to lie face-down on the ground and was questioned while an officer held a gun to his head. Bradley laments that the "moral power" of the law firm where his friend was interning was not invoked by the firm's

partners. Without that moral coercion, the laws that give us all citizens equal rights remain only theoretical.

Class Conflict

Although the central conflict associated with the LA turmoil was based in racial divisions, there is clearly a relationship between race relations and economic class, particularly in the distinction between the impoverished inner-city residents "of color" and wealthy suburban whites. Some of the bitterness of the blacks and Latinos is based on what is perceived as class privilege, not just race. For example, much of Katie Miller's anger is directed against the implicit assumption by the media that the poor people who looted the I. Magnin store on Wilshire Boulevard were "thugs," inferior to the rich people who shopped there. She deplores the "give me your money and get out of my face" attitude of inner-city store owners who lack any respect for their customers.

Fear

One response to the LA turmoil was fear, a feeling prevalent among whites but also expressed by many others. The rage that gripped the rioters and looters induced panic in white people like the Hollywood agent (Anonymous Man #2); Elaine Young, the realtor; and the co-ed at the University of Southern California (Anonymous Young Woman). Paula Weinstein, a movie producer, remembers "watching rich white people guard their houses and send their children out of L.A. as if the devil was coming after them." As Owen Smet reports, after the riots, latent fears almost doubled the business of the Beverly Hills Gun Club, because "there's no place safe in LA County, daylight or dark."

Some of the minority people found a positive thing in the fear felt by whites. Rudy Salas, Sr., for example, takes great personal pleasure in the fear that whites have of minorities. Others, like Paul Parker, see the white fear as a catalyst for achieving racial justice.

Guilt and Innocence

To some extent, culpability goes hand in hand with fear in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*. As the Hollywood agent remarks, the "victims of the system," the ones burning and looting, "got the short shrift." He admits that he "started to absorb a little guilt" for what was happening. Shame also seems to overwhelm the juror in the first Rodney King trial when talking about the KKK letter of support for the jurors.

Too often, though, guilt is deflected through a displacing of personal responsibility. For example, LAPD Chief Daryl Gates, criticized for slipping off to a Republican fund raiser during the crisis, rationalizes his behavior and complains of being victimized as a "symbol of police oppression," despite his excellent record and work he "had done with kids."

Justice and Injustice

Many of the figures in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* talk of justice, especially in the context of victimization. For the blacks, the first Rodney King trial resulted in a travesty of justice, and many others agreed with that assessment, believing the verdict wrong. The civil unrest started from a protest against that injustice. For Theresa Allison and others, the struggle of the inner-city blacks is against injustices largely perpetuated by police brutality. With sad anger, she asks: "Why do they have so much power? Why does the system work for them? Where can we go to get the justice that they have?" These are questions which *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* can simply raise, not answer.

Law and Order

The riot erupting in the wake of the verdict in the first Rodney King trial represented a basic breakdown of law and order, as described by Compton Fire Department Captain Lane Hay wood and others. While some officials remark on ways the breakdown could have been anticipated and prevented, Congresswoman Maxine Waters, speaking at the First African Methodist Episcopal Church, proclaimed that "whether we like it or not, riot is the voice of the unheard."

For some, like Julio Menjivar, the efforts to restore law and order involved the misuse of power by both the LAPD and the National Guard, which, he claims, victimized his family and unjustly arrested him. Such complaints against the abuse of power by the police thread through the remarks of many of the inner-city minority speakers. Measured against these, Sergeant Charles Duke's conclusion that the lawlessness arose from improper or inadequate use offeree to maintain peace seems tragically discordant.

Prejudice and Tolerance

Racial intolerance also threads through the speeches of various persons and is intrinsically bound to other themes. L.A.'s ethnic diversity still lies at the root of some of its problems. Images of white cops and black or Latino victims are common in the accounts, but so too are statements of mutual intolerance voiced by the blacks and Korean Americans. For Paul Parker, the chairperson of the Free the LA Four Plus Committee, "the Koreans was like the Jews," store owners from an earlier era, and targets of much of the black rage.

Race and Racism

Obviously related to questions of anger and intolerance, racial identity is a very important theme in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*. Implicit in the work is the paradoxical idea that cultural diversity is both a source of a community's discord and its potential strength, a potential that far too few seem to realize. Many of the speakers are racial apologists, defenders of their ethnic heritage, in which they take pride. The dark side of

that pride is racial insularity, a powerful impediment to the creation of a community in which race consciousness no longer exists. Spokespersons too easily place blame elsewhere, outside their own race. The shame is that, like Theresa Allison and Michael Zinzun, they are often justified by what happened.

Victim and Victimization

A feeling of victimization is ubiquitous in Smith's drama. It lies at the root of all complaints about injustice and is the source of much of the frustration and anger. It is expressed by members of all involved minorities black, Latino, and Korean. It is, for example, the focus of Mrs. Young-Soon Han's poignant litany. The former owner of a liquor store destroyed in the riots, she complains that "Korean immigrants were left out from society and we were nothing." It is a charge paralleled in the monologues of blacks and Latinos, too. It is sometimes tied to the idea of revenge, justifying the carnage of the rioting. That is the message of Paul Parker, for example, and it is the warning of Congresswoman Maxine Waters, who insists that people who have "been dropped off everybody's agenda " will grow angry and take to the streets to vent their anger and frustration.

Style

Colloquialism

The language of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* is not the invention of the playwright. It consists of the actual words used by the real people that she interviewed, and it reflects various dialects and levels of command of English. For many of the figures, English is an adopted language, thus many speeches are rich with unidiomatic expressions and non-standard grammar. Smith's characters talk like real people because they are real people, and Smith as playwright-performer captures the colloquial cadences and texture of their speech in her literal transcriptions. In the case of Chung Lee, President of the Korean-American Victims Association, she even uses a figure who speaks Korean that must be translated by his son. As with her other "characters," Smith studied Lee's speech and renders his voice verbatim in her performances.

Documentary

Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 has been called a work of "documentary theater." The events discussed by the "characters" are real, as are the characters themselves. Smith's method is journalistic, but it is made dramatic by her on-stage renderings or performance of the real persons she depicts. On paper, her work is a collection of monologues compiled from her interviews. Her own voice is removed and her questions merely implied. On stage, Smith strives for objectivity and completely obscures her role as interviewer as she adapts the character and voice of those she had interviewed. Speaking of the published text of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, Smith says her book "is first and foremost a document of what an *actress heard* in Los Angeles," and that her "performance is a reiteration of that."

Monologue

Almost all the characters in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* present themselves in monologues in isolation from the rest of the *dramatis personae*. There is, in fact, a total absence of dialogue, the usual engine and necessary method of advancing story in dramatic form. The nature of the monologues varies greatly, as do the voices presenting them. Some are very articulate, rational, and coherent, while others are charged with emotion and often inchoate. The content of the monologues also varies greatly, running a gamut from self-vindication to heated diatribes against perceived injustices.

Narrative

Drama, as a presentational form, unfolds in the here and now, and it ordinarily uses narrative primarily for exposition and the reporting of offstage actions. A common character in much traditional drama is the "messenger," who, for example, reports the

outcome of a battle that cannot be depicted on stage. To some degree, the characters in *Twilight; Los Angeles, 1992* are all messengers, and the events they allude to or describe are things that have happened in the offstage world of South-Central Los Angeles. They are somewhat like media commentators and interpreters, not actors in a unfolding scene. It precisely for this reason that Smith's drama defies traditional classification.

Stream of Consciousness

Smith faithfully renders what her subjects have actually said in their interviews with her. She removes only her own voice. Although the monologues are not interior stream-of-consciousness monologues, some of them are similar to that narrative technique in their free association of ideas. They are full of non-sequiturs, hesitation, and verbal hemming and hawing. That impromptu, unrehearsed quality is fundamental to the documentary authenticity of the work.

Symbolism

There is really no symbolism in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, at least not in the ordinary sense. Symbolism suggests a conscious artistry on the part of the writer, but Smith as writer is primarily a reporter and arranger. Her artistry is largely the interpretive artistry of theater, revealed in her performance of the voices that she has objectively recorded. Still, there is a sort of emblem in the concept of "twilight," a word used not only because it is the name of her titular figure, Twilight Bey, but also because it is used by others to suggest a kind of condition, the limbo of which Bey speaks. Twilight sees himself as "stuck in limbo," a place between dark and light For him, light is the "knowledge and wisdom of the world," while darkness, although not negative, means a narrower perspective, of, as he says, "just identifying with people like me and understanding me and mine." That limbo, that twilight, seems equally descriptive of the condition of the City of Los Angeles and its people.

Urban Realism

Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992, with its focus on the problems of a great metropolis, is a work of urban realism. Like traditional narratives dealing with life in ghettos and slums, the work shows the plight of many inner-city residents, people who have to live with despair, anger, and frustration, subjected as they are to drive-by shootings, unemployment, drug trafficking, police brutality, economic exploitation, and a host of other problems. It does not, of course, suggest ways to solve the problems. Instead, it offers an almost clinical study of their effect on the lives of the people whose voices Smith gives public hearing on stage.

Historical Context

Natural Disasters Take Toll in U.S. and Abroad

In August of 1992, Hurricane Andrew hit the Homestead area of South Florida, killing 15, leaving 250,000 homeless and causing $20 billion in property damage. In the same year, flooding in Chicago and a violent Nor'easter staking East Coast states caused considerable damage and loss of life.

In the next year, another violent storm struck the Eastern Seaboard in March, claiming 240 lives and causing extensive property damage. In the summer, flooding of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers took 50 lives and destroyed an estimated $12 billion in property and crops.

Abroad, by 1992, famine in Somalia had killed over 300,000 people, and the ensuing anarchy prompted President Bush to send U. S. troops into Somalia under a United Nations mandate. Civil wars in Sudan, Angola, and Mozambique also created mass starvation. The next year, violent rains and earthquakes took over 20,000 lives in areas of India and Bangladesh.

Terrorism Hits America's Homeland

At home, the United States got its first serious taste of the kind of terrorist activities that have plagued many foreign countries. On February 26, 1993, a bomb set by Islamic fundamentalists at New York's World Trade Center killed six and forced 100,000 persons to evacuate the twin towers. Unlike the violence of the Los Angeles noting, arising from domestic problems, the attack on the World Trade Center was prompted by the foreign policy of the United States. It was also premeditated, not a spontaneous reaction to a specific perceived injustice.

Many Americans Remain in Poverty

The plight of the "unheard" inner-city minorities for whom Smith provides a voice in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* is reflected in the fact that in 1993 over ten percent of all Americans had to depend on food stamps to get enough to eat. The total number, 26.6 million, was the highest in the program's history. Clearly, the improving economic picture was not helping the nation's poor, many of whom lived in urban slums like South-Central Los Angeles.

Efforts to Control Gun Sales Continues

In an on-going effort to reverse the growth of violent crime, including urban drive-by shootings, the federal government passed the "Brady Bill," signed into law on November

30, 1993. The law requires a five-day waiting period in the purchase of handguns. Earlier in the same month, the Senate passed a bill banning the manufacture and sale of assault-style automatic weapons, despite a major campaign launched by the National Rifle Association to prevent its passage. Demands for controls increased in the wake of the Long Island Railroad train attack by Colin Ferguson, who, on December 7, 1993, gunned down several commuters, leaving five dead and eighteen wounded.

Abortion Issue Continues to Divide America

Domestic violence in the United States was hardly limited to the economic and racial problems contributing to the upheaval in Los Angeles. America was divided over the issue of legalized abortion, for example. On March 10, 1993, during a demonstration outside a women's clinic in Pensacola, Florida, an anti-abortion advocate shot and killed Dr. David Gunn, Activists burned down or sprayed other abortion clinics with noxious chemicals in protest of an "abortion on demand" policy.

Siege of Branch Davidian Cult at Waco Ends in Disaster

Anti-government groups, including private militias, continued to spring up in the United States, as did some religious cults with similar political agendas. The Branch Davidians, led by David Koresh, stood off a 51-day siege by government agents in Waco, Texas. On April 19, 1993, when stormed by federal law enforcement agents using tear gas, the cult members set fire to their compound, killing over 80 cult members, including two dozen children. The event contributed fuel to the anti-government activity that continues to afflict the nation.

Critical Overview

Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* has garnered considerable critical acclaim through its production history, stretching from venues in Los Angeles and New York to Washington, D. C. and London, England. Its success in theaters far removed from the play's focus and epicenter, the Spring, 1992, civil upheaval in South-Central Los Angeles, attests to its power to transcend the topicality of its content the real-world social problems that have led P. J. Corso and others to call her play a "docudrama."

For some critics, in her *On the Road series*, of which *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* and *Fires in the Mirror* are the most compelling and successful parts, Smith has created what a reviewer in *Time* claims is "a new art form." But what that new form is remains very controversial. So, too, does Smith's classification as a writer.

In analyzing *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* and other pieces from *On the Road*, some critics have pondered over this very issue. For Chris Vognar, the question is "what to call her? Actress/playwright? Anthropologist/ethnographer?" Smith's text, after all, is primarily an archive of the actual words of real people who lived through and in or near the turmoil that began with the beating of Rodney King and exploded into the South-Central Los Angeles rioting and looting. Smith compiled and arranged the monologues from interviews that she conducted with these people, leading some to discuss her role as writer as largely that of a journalist or "oral historian" in the mold of her acknowledged mentor, Studs Terkel. The argument was rehashed by the 1994 Pulitzer Prize jury in drama, which removed *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* from consideration, as Sean Mitchell reported, because "its language was not invented but gleaned from interviews," It was also the opinion of the jury that the work could be performed only by Smith, because she alone conducted the interviews.

That critical caveat is not so troubling to those who see Smith as a "performance-playwright" and concentrate on her stage artistry rather than her compiled, inanimate text Part of Smith's skill is revealed in the dramatic tapestry of disparate voices that she weaves in performance. As Jan Stuart notes, "Smith lines up her characters in a boldly ironic juxtaposition," threading her way through what Robert Brustein calls the "victims, victimizers, and viewers" that she depicts.

More an arranger than a composer perhaps, but Smith, for most reviewers, has nevertheless worked theatrical magic in the various productions of *Twilight.* Almost no critic denies Smith's mimetic skills, her great artistic gift in depicting a broad spectrum of characters through what Monica Cortes calls "acting otherness." Martin Hernandez describes her as a "human chameleon, embodying each character with astounding flexibility.'" Through sudden shifts in her posture, gesture and voice, accompanied by minor, quick-change adjustments in dress, Smith transforms herself from one person into another, crossing chasms of race, gender, age, and class in the blink of an eye. Describing her technique, Richard Schechner claims that Smith "works by means of deep mimesis, a process opposite to that of 'pretend.'" He maintains that she "incorporates " her characters and that her method "is less like that of a conventional

Euro-American actor and more like that of African, Native American, and Asian ritualists."

More of a sticking point for interpreters of her play is Smith's assumed purpose in *Twilight* and other plays in her *On the Road* series. Most credit Smith with admirable objectivity and basic fairness. Michael Peingold argues that the playwright-actress arranges her materials "so that we see all sides" equitably. Smith "never tilts this balance," he maintains, but moves "inside the anger and hate" of her diverse characters to find "sources of potential community" and the possibility of repairing "our shredded social contract." From this critical vantage point, Smith is a shaman-healer, helping a community and the nation bind up the wounds of class and racial discord.

There are, however, dissenting voices. For Stefan Kanfer, Smith's play is flawed because it advances "an illiberal agenda concealed by a mask of objectivity." He claims that "every member of a minority group is given a shred of dignity, a credible plea of despair," while the depicted whites are shown only as "brutes," "fools," or "insensitive naifs." From this point of view, Smith is biased, and her true agenda is not to heal but to place blame and, presumably, invoke white guilt.

Others, like Robert Brustein, while crediting Smith with "an objective ear," draw pessimistic conclusions from her play and performance. Noting that "hate" and "enemy" are "the operative words" of the play, Brustein claims that *Twilight* "leaves us with a shocking sense of how America's hopes for racial harmony were left burning in the ashes of South-Central L.A." That, of course, is not so much an indictment of the play as it is of society.

The most troubling critical question is whether there is in fact a play without the playwright. As Mitchell says, "it is hard to imagine an Anna Deavere Smith show without Anna Deavere Smith." When read, the matter she enlivens in performance is, according to Mitchell, "only a little more fruitful than trying to read *A Chorus Line* or *Phantom of the Opera*." Furthermore, as Kanfer points out, the final fate of two of the white police officers who beat Rodney King and the $3.8 million civil-suit award granted him "tend to vitiate the impact" of Smith's play. Can her play text survive Smith herself and its ever-increasing distance from the events that inspired it? Only time will tell.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Fiero is an experienced actor and a professor at the University of Southwestern Louisiana. In this essay he discusses Smith's skill as a performer of her own material and its role in the effectiveness of her play.

On January 27, 1997, at the New York Town Hall, Anna Deavere Smith moderated a debate between playwright August Wilson and theater pundit Robert Brustein over Wilson's position that black American playwrights should work within a theater exclusively devoted to black culture. Wilson had taken particular umbrage with the practice of "color-blind-casting," especially as it pertains to casting black actors in "white" plays. According to Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in Wilson's view, "for a black actor to walk the stage of Western drama was to collaborate with the culture of racism," to demean, and to rob the actor of his or her true and distinct identity.

Whether or not Wilson is in some ways "an unlikely spokesman for a new Black Arts movement," as Gates maintains, he has championed a view that seems diametrically opposed to what Smith practices in her multi-cultural, mimetic art. Described by Sharon Fitzgerald as "Anna of a thousand faces," Smith dons the character of her interviewed subjects without a nanosecond's regard for the politically-correct idea that actors should portray only what their birthright entitles them to portray. In her one-woman performances of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, she has impersonated an imposing array of real people of different color, sex, national origin, socioeconomic class, political complexion, and age shedding and donning character guises like a human chameleon.

Her purpose, too, seems antithetical to what Wilson preaches. As Lauren Feldman argues, "Smith inspires us to scrutinize common constructions of race, our own complicity in the events that continue to shape American race relations, and the role of the arts in reproducing or deconstructing social stereotypes." Thus, in searching for *the* American character, Smith has elected to deal with actual people at critical junctures in their lives, when their identities and even their lives are at risk. Moreover, she maintains that if American theater is to "mirror society" honestly, it "must embrace diversity." To that end, she crowds her dramatic canvass with portraits of diverse people caught in moments of reflection on an emotionally charged and violent set of real events. Hers is an assimilative aim, to synthesize such diverse voices into a "more complex language" which "our race dialogue desperately needs." In contrast, Wilson's separatist aim seems completely inimical to such a race dialogue.

The niggling question is whether that more complex language is inherent in the text of *Twilight; Los Angeles, 1992* or in the artistry of Smith as actress or whether, indeed, the two can ever be separated. She has been credited with silencing "all the questions about racial identity in race-specific plays." For William Sun and Faye Fei, Smith has evolved "a unique genre" that allows her to pirouette convincingly through her characterizations without benefit of masks or makeup. Her range is simply extraordinary, covering a "full spectrum that runs between opposite racial, political, and

ideological poles," In one moment, she is a white, middle-aged male, such as former LAPD Chief Daryl Gates; in the next, through a "morphing" of her face, gestures, posture, and, most of all, her voice, she becomes a female, like Elvira Edwards, the young Panamanian mother, or Elaine Brown, the over-fifty, former head of the Black Panther Party. Then, in a wink of the eye, she is a man again, but this time a proud and angry man, like Mexican-American artist, Rudy Salas, or the old Korean immigrant, Chung Lee, who can only speak in his native tongue. While a backdrop video screen provides footage of the Los Angeles rioting and beatings of Rodney King and Reginald Denny, the remarkable metamorphoses themselves are usually aided with only the barest theatrical amenities: slide projections identifying each character by a caption, name and, brief identifier; some minimal adjustments in stage and hand properties; and some slight costume changes, usually involving only one or two items of dress, like a hat and a shirt, or a pair of shoes and a jacket.

Her rendering of these "characters" has earned Smith warm praise from critics and audiences alike. She has repeatedly awed theater patrons with her rare mimetic gifts, leading more than one commentator to remark on her virtuosity. She has also been praised for her boldness, for her crossing of race, gender and language barriers, for finding and mining the humor that somehow survives the cataclysmic events behind the work, and for her innovative blending of theater arts, journalism and social sciences into that unique genre identified by scholars Sun and Fei.

Wisely, Smith does not depict herself as a character. She simply discards her real persona, the writer who spent countless hours interviewing her subjects. Furthermore, as Michael Feingold remarks, at some point early on in her performance, the actress, AnnaDeavere Smith, paradoxically "disappears," leaving just "men, women, and children, talking in a torrent of diverse languages, living out then- anger, their pain, their injuries and resentments and joys and fears." Each character speaks in a monologue, seldom, if ever, making reference to Smith or revealing the inquiry-response format of the interview process. She delivers their words "verbatim to an audience that often includes her 'characters' themselves," as Sun and Fei have noted. Her great skill in "acting otherness" has convinced even the most dubious members of her audience that she "can be as true as, or even truer than" those real persons she presents to the critical ear and eye.

In the final analysis, Smith does not really disappear during performance. She cannot and does not try to replicate her subjects through elaborate theatrical cloning. The audience is never invited to penetrate any sort of disguise, because, in truth, she never really dons one. Maskless through each of her portrayals, she maintains, however tenuously, her own identity, not as writer but as actress. Furthermore, it is her persistent presence as a black actress that provides a powerful counterpoint to her dramatic portrayals. This "simultaneous presence of performer and performed" is what Richard Schechner calls "doubling," a quality "that marks great performances." That is part of Smith's "shamanic invocation," a way of inviting the audience to "allow the other in, to feel what the other is feeling," a way of achieving an extraordinary degree of empathy.

Smith's play text does not, of course, consist of her own words. As she has indicated, in *Twilight* she has assembled a "document of what an *actress* heard in Los Angeles." In doing so, says Monica Cortes, she "shares the authority of authorship with the community that is the subject of her piece." Using the actual language of people who normally remain unheard, Smith gives them significant weight, shouldered by the "authority" of their shared authorship.

Yet, because she only recorded what others said, some have questioned her legitimacy as a playwright. Such reservations arise from a strict adherence to a single-author concept, what Iris Smith labels the "modernist notion of authorship." An alternate model, coming into its own of late, is whatshe calls "the theater collective," amethod by which "play *writing* is intertwined with play *staging*, and often done by the same actors, directors and artists." Although Anna Smith acts in solo performance, she has worked extensively with dramaturges as collaborators, and has continued to deal with *Twilight* as a theatrical work in progress, not something forever restricted to the order or mclusiveness of a text which is at once both more and less the play. For critic Smith, Anna Smith qualifies as one of those "willing to risk losing control over the work, if the text can go out and do good work in the world."

Good work is surely the playwright's aim. She admits to a polemical purpose, to demonstrate that we "must reach across ethnic boundaries" to achieve some sympathetic understanding in the race dialogue she so fervently seeks. She also admits to being political, the inevitable legacy of her gender and race. "I am political without opening my mouth," she says; "my presence is political."

Therein may lie the rub. Smith has expressed an interest in having other actors perform her play, perhaps an ensemble of players. But one must wonder if other interpreters of the text could or would do justice to her purpose the promotion of a new community dialogue. Sandra Loh, who maintains that Smith's cross-ethnic depictions involve an "ironic twist," argues that the actress-playwright could never get away with "impersonating" her array of sexually and racially mixed characters "if she were a white heterosexual male." Probably not, but more to the point, if the play were interpreted by a white actor, male or female, its meaning would certainly drift off Smith's intended course, thanks to unavoidable nuances that would result from the "doubling" effect of which Schechner writes.

One must also question whether anyone who has not dealt one-on-one with the real people of Smith's docudrama could, as Lauren Feldman remarks, "capture the characters with the same convincing compassion." One suspects that, at the least, Smith herself would have to coach the audacious actor who attempts to follow in her solo-performance footsteps. That possibility, like the community's memory of the events behind the play, is transitory. It also gives rise to Feldman's question: "will *Twilight* lose force with each additional degree of separation?" The answer is probably "*yes*," but it will not really matter if the race dialogue that Smith seeks is in authentic progress.

Source: John Fiero, in an essay for *Drama for Students*, Gale, 1997.

Critical Essay #2

In the following review, noted drama critic Brustein examines Smith's work in Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992, taking particular note of the multicultural issues that surrounded the Los Angeles riots.

The most cogent commentators on our stormy times have unquestionably been not the columnists but the cartoonists, which is another way of noting that representational satire has more capacity than political commentary to relieve the pressures of a fractious age. On stage two inspired performers have recently been offering their own perspectives on the issues that divide us, and while the African American Anna Deavere Smith and the Jewish Jackie Mason seem worlds apart in tone, attitude, focus and ethnicity, they each provide more perspective on the nature of our discords than an army of op-ed pundits.

It is true that Smith might be more accurately described as a sociologist than as a satirist. Both in her previous *Fires in the Mirror*, which covered the Crown Heights affair, and in her current piece at the Joseph Papp Public Theater, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, which deals with the riots in South-Central L.A., she has drawn her matenal from interviews with the actual participants in those events. Still, Smith is not only an objective ear but a characterizing voice, and just as she shapes her text through editing and selection, so she achieves her emphasis through gesture and intonation. During the course of the evening the actress impersonates forty-six different people, capturing the essence of each character less through mimetic transformation, like an actor, than through the caricaturist's body English and vocal embellishments. Just look at her photographs: you'd never guess from any of those contorted head shots that she's an extremely handsome young woman.

Smith's subjects divide essentially into victims, victimizers and viewers, though it is sometimes difficult to determine which is which. If the former L.A. Police Chief Daryl Gates (defending himself against charges that he permitted the riots to rage while attending a fundraiser) and Sergeant Charles Duke (complaining that Officer Lawrence Powell was "weak and inefficient with the baton" because he wasn't allowed to use the "choke-hold") are clearly the patsies of the piece, the rioters, looters, gang members and assailants often appear more sinned against than sinning. A white juror in the first Rodney King trial asked by a reporter, "Why are you hiding your heads in shame?" is appalled to receive approving calls from the KKK. Keith Watson, one of those acquitted of beating Reginald Denny, justifies his rage and the burned-out vacant lots by saying "justice didn't work," while Paul Parker, chairperson of the Free the L.A. Four Defense Committee, charges "You kidnapped us, you raped our women.. .you expect us to feel something for the white boy?" One gringo-hating Latino, ranting against the "peckerwoods" and "rednecks" who have persecuted his family, expresses pleasure in the way Mexicans are able to terrify whites. Another Latino is encouraged by a policeman to "go for it, it's your neighborhood." A black woman "touring" in the white neighborhood loots I. Magnin because she finds it "very offensive" that rich stars should feel protected from rioting.

Then there are the other victims: the Asian shopkeepers who, in those tumultuous days, lost 90 percent of their stores and a number of their family members. At the same time that a spokesperson for a young black girl shot by a Korean shopkeeper (who was acquitted) is raging against Asians, Mrs. Young Soon Han, a former liquor store owner, speaks of her disenchantment with blacks. There were none in the Hollywood movies she saw in Korea; she thought this country was the best. Now "they" have destroyed the shops of innocent merchants simply because "we have a car and a house-----Where do I find justice? What about victims' rights?" Another store owner, inveighing against shoplifting and looting, remarks, "After that, I really hate this country, I really hate we are not like customer and owner but more like *enemy*."

"Enemy" and "hate" are the operative words of *Twilight*. With each ethnic group bristling at the other, one might think "cultural diversity" had become a euphemism for race war. A Mexican woman reporter, told her life is in danger, replies: "How could they think I was white?" The African American Parker boasts how "we burnt down the Koreans they are like the Jews in this neighborhood." And this is countered not by appeals for tolerance but by counsels of caution, like those of Elaine Brown, former Black Panther, reminding the gun-brandishing, swash-buckling looters about America's willingness to use its power: "Ask Saddam Hussein."

To judge by the interviews in *Twilight*, however, the Los Angeles riots caused a lot of soul-searching, and considerable guilt, among some white Americans. The experience certainly stimulated considerable generosity from Denny, who, pleading for recognition as a person rather than a color, expresses profound gratitude to the black people who risked their lives to save him. By contrast, others, such as a reporter named Judith Tur, wonder why South-Central blacks can't be more like Magic Johnson or Arthur Ashe, adding that "white people are getting so angry, they're going back fifty years." A suburban real estate agent named Elaine Young, who has had thirty-six silicone surgeries on her face, whines that "we don't have the freeway, we can't eat anywhere, everything's closed," meanwhile defending her decision to hole up in the Beverly Hills Hotel.

These are easy targets; and it is true that *Twilight* sometimes lacks the dialectical thickness, as well as the surprise and unpredictability, *of Fires in the Mirror*. Lasting over two hours, it seems too long and too short for its subject. The L.A. riots were a response to violence and injustice by means of violence and injustice, and the paradox still to be explored is how looting and burning Korean stores and destroying your own neighborhood, not to mention racial assaults on innocent people, could become acceptable means of protest against inequity and racism. With most of them still in shock, few of Smith's respondents are in a position to examine the irrationality of such acts unless, like Shelby Coffey, they cite "a vast, even Shakespearean range of motives."

Smith makes some effort to penetrate these motives by ending her piece with a poetic reflection by a gang member on the "limbo" twilight of crack addicts, but the metaphor somehow seems inadequate. Still, if she has not always gone beyond the events of this tragedy, she has powerfully dramatized a world of almost universal tension and hatred.

George C. Wolfe's elaborate production, with its videos of King's beating and films of Los Angeles burning, is probably more appropriate for the coming Broadway move than for the stage of the Public. But it leaves us with a shocking sense of how America's hopes for racial harmony were left burning in the ashes of South-Central L.A.

Source: Robert Brustem, "P.C. or Not PC " in the *New Republic*,, Vol. 210, no 18, May 2,1994, pp 29-31.

Critical Essay #3

Stuart praises Smith's writing and acting work in the following review, noting her skill with multiple and complex characters.

Toward the end of her heroic docu-theater event about the police beating of Rodney King and its violent aftermath, Anna Deavere Smith does something very, very clever.

Having impersonated dozens of participants in the 1992 Los Angeles maelstrom for some two hours, Smith steps into the shoes of Maria, ajuror in the second Rodney King trial. We like Maria. She's theatrical, a spiky, pull-no-punches sort with a few choice words reserved for her fellow jurors. "Brain-dead," for starters.

One by one, Maria takes aim and caricatures each of her colleagues with their psychic pants down, constructing before our eyes a devastating archetype of group dynamics and the tortuous process by which strangers plow beyond their dissimilarities to get something done. Maria's impromptu performance is a panic cathartically, bust-agut funny; as our laughter subsides, it may occur to us that the jury's breakthrough mirrors our own progress as we make our way through *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*.

The Maria monologue, indeed, is a microcosm, a summing-up of the experience of watching this challenging "one-person" show. Following the model of *Fires in the Mirror*, Smith's journalistic kaleidoscope of the Crown Heights riots, *Twilight; Los Angeles, 1992* distills dozens of interviews she conducted with players in recent events. African-and Asian-American, white, rich, poor, women, men, brain-dead and alive, the contrasting perspectives pile up before us, each of them so steadfastly believing in the correctness of their positions. Well before it's over, we begin to wonder how anything as implicitly harmonious as a verdict is possible in a multicultural soup such as the United States.

The soup thickens as Smith moves away from Crown Heights and into the L. A. of *Twilight*, whose ethnic and class tensions reflect the broader spectrum of American culture directly affected by the King beating. The racial cauldron *of Twilight spills* over into the shooting of a 15-year-old African-American girl by a Korean-American shopkeeper, as well as the riot attack on white truck driver Reginald Denny that followed the trial of the four officers charged with beating King.

Sliding deftly between interviewees with the suggestive turn of a sweater, Smith lines up her characters in a boldly ironic juxtaposition that recalls the inspired oral histories of Studs Terkel and the political documentaries of Marcel Qphuls, The back-to-back proximity of her subjects provokes two responses: At first we notice the seemingly unbridgeable divide from one monologue to the next; then we are struck by the unexpected bonds. Reginald Denny, sweet-tempered, forgiving, a bit out of it, seems a world away from Paul Parker, the shrewd, rage-driven head of the defense committee for Denny's attackers. As we listen more, we begin to see the synchronicity in their notions of justice; the urgency with which each of them argues their cases is thrilling.

The heightened complexity of Smith's L.A. terrain is matched by a newfound subtlety in her performance (in contrast to George C. Wolfe's booming, projection-happy staging) and a more ambitious use of transcripts. Where *Fires* hugged to a formulaic procession of individual arias, *Twilight* often splices as many as three witnesses into a seamless rush of testimony, working up a fierce, cinematic intensity.

If Smith occasionally tosses us a few sacrificial lambs for those with the guilty need to feel superior (a braying, facelifted real-estate agent who hides out at the Beverly Hills Hotel for the duration of the riots), she discourages the easy laugh and the foregone conclusion. Mostly, Smith gets us to listen. She validates, vigorously and humorously, the other side of the coin. She wants us to entertain the possibility of ambiguity.

By the time Maria launches into her tour-deforce vaudeville of a jury's A.A.-style confessional, we understand that we have already witnessed the same process. *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* is group therapy on a national scale based on the belief that we each have to dump our ugly personal baggage out on the table for all to see, before we can then get down to the difficult business of healing. Smith shows us how to do that with a breathtaking collage of real-life people who make us want to stand up and cheer, then sit back down and reflect.

Source: Jan Stuart," *Twilight*: Group Therapy for a Nation" *inNewsday*, March 24,1994.

Adaptations

As of the spring of 1997, among Smith's plays making up her *On the Road* series, only *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights*, *Brooklyn and Other Identities* had been produced for media presentation. However, since her success with *Twilight* and *Fires*, Smith has appeared on television and radio as speaker, debate moderator, and interviewed guest. She has also taken supporting roles in major films, including Mrs. Travis in Dave (1993), produced by Warner Bros., and Anthea Burton in *Philadelphia* (1993), produced by Tri-Star.

Fires in the Mirror was directed by George C. Wolfe for PBS's *American Playhouse* and aired on television in April, 1993, featuring Smith in solo performance; video is available from the Public Broadcasting System (PBS).

Topics for Further Study

Investigate the controversy that arose m 1991, when a white actor, JohnathanPryce, was chosen for the lead role in the Broadway production of Alan Boublil and Claude-Michel Shonberg's musical *Miss Saigon* (1989). Relate the controversy to Smith's practice in her one-woman interpretations of racially diverse characters.

Research the influence of the Los Angeles civil unrest and subsequent events such as the O. J. Simpson murder trial in debates over the need to reform the American jury-trial system.

Investigate the causes and effects of the riots in the Watts district of Los Angeles in the summer of 1965 and the subsequent report of the Kerner Commission. Relate your findings to the civil unrest resulting from the Rodney King trial in 1992.

Research the role of Anna Deavere Smith in the controversy arising from August Wilson's keynote speech before the Theatre Communications Group in June 1996, in which the celebrated playwright argued the need of a separate and autonomous black American theater.

Investigate the influence of the Los Angeles disturbances of 1992 on popular and underground culture, including "gangsta rap" and politically-incorrect humor.

Investigate the depiction of ethnically-mixed, inner-city neighborhoods in recent film and media treatments, including Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989).

Investigate the excessive use of force over the last decade by law enforcement agencies in Los Angeles or any other large American city and what steps have been taken, if any, to rectify the problem.

What Do I Read Next?

Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights Brooklyn and Other Identities (1992), like *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* is from Smith's *On the Road* series and employs the same technique. Its focus event is the rioting in the Crown Heights area of Brooklyn after the accidental killing of a black child by a Jewish rabbi. Text available as an Anchor Book from Doubleday.

The Hunger Wall, is a collection of poems by James Ragan, inspired by the Los Angeles civil unrest of 1992 and the peaceful breakup of the former Czechoslovakia a month later (Grove Press, 1995).

Spell #7 (1979), a play by Ntozke Shange, offers a tremendous contrast to Smith's work in technique, although both writers are African American women interested in efforts to find an identity in a white-dominated culture.

Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (1941), James Agee' s photo-essay study of Georgia sharecroppers gives voice to the anonymous, unheard common man as Smith does in her *On the Road* series of plays.

Working (1974) and *Coming of Age* (1995), two anthologies of oral histories compiled by Studs Terkel, the common man's historian, which record the voices of ordinary folk interviewed by the author. Smith acknowledges Terkel as one of her mentors; *Coming of Age* is available from The New Press; *Working* is available from Ballantine Books.

"The Street Scene" (1938), Bertolt Brecht's brief essay on primitive "epic theater," which excludes the "engendering of illusion" that characterizes traditional theater. Critics have discussed Smith work in terms of Brecht's theories and practice.

I Am a Man (1995), by OyamO (Charles Gordon), a play about the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers' strike, deals with the civil rights struggle from the perspective of the "unheard," common man to whom Smith also gives a voice. The focus is on T. O. Jones, a sort of Everyman who sets out to right social injustices.

The Coming Race War in America: A Wake-Up Call, by syndicated columnist Carl T. Rowan, investigates the nation's "violent decline" and the lack of change for the vast majority of minority Americans since the civil rights upheaval of the 1960s (available from Little, Brown, 1996).

Further Study

Brustein, Robert "P.C. or NotP.C.," *The New Republic*, Vol. 210, no. 18, May 2,1994, pp 29- 31

A review of the Joseph Papp Public Theater production of *Twilight- Los Angeles, 1992* arguing that Smith might be better classified "as a sociologist than artist." Brustein divides her figures into "victims, victimizers and viewers "

Corso,P J. "Anna Deavere Smith," AFRO AM-L Archives, October 24, 1994. http://www afrmet netMiallh/afrotalk/ afrooct94/0546.html, February 16,1997.

Corso relates Smith's method and matter to the work of Bertott Brecht but argues that the commercial success of her work inhibits its value as a catalyst for social change

Cortes, Monica Munoz "The Works of Anna Deavere Smith: An Exploration of Otherness," 95 McNair *Journal*.http://www.aad.berkeley.edu/95journal/MonicaCortes.html, January 15,1997.

Relates performance theory based on theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan to Smith's "theater of otherness "

Feingold, Michael. "Twilight's First Gleaming" in the *Village Voice*, Vol. 39, no. 14, April 5, 1994, pp. 97,100.

A very favorable review of the *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* staged m New York in which Feingold praises Smith's "triple ability" as interviewer, writer, and actress.

Feldman, Lauren. "A Constellation of Character," *Perspective*, http://hcs harvard edu/~perspy/may96/twilight html.

A review of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* discussing the Smith's staging of the work and its evolution as the playwright's sense of race-relations have changed

Fitzgerald, Sharon. "Anna of a Thousand Faces" m *American Visions*, Vol 9, no. 5, October-November, 1994, pp. 14-18.

Discussing both *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* and *Fires in the Mirror*, article covers both Smith's onstage techniques and motives in her writing.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr "The Chitlin Circuit" in the *New Yorker*, Vol 72, no. 45, February 3,1997, pp 44- 55.

Gates discusses August Wilson's position on the need for a separatist black theater while chastising him for never having been a "Chitlin Circuit" playwright.

Kanfer, Stefan. "Twilight Tragedies" m the *New Leader*,, Vol 77, no 5, May 9,1994, pp 22-23.

A review that finds Smith's play flawed by its "illiberal agenda concealed by a mask of objectivity" and its "unwieldy" material.

Kroll, Jack. "Fire in the City of Angels" in *Newsweek*, Vol. 121, June 28,1993, pp. 62-63.

A very favorable review of the Mark Taper Forum production of *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, applauding Smith as "the most exciting individual in American theater right now."

Lewis, Barbara. "The Circle of Confusion: A Conversation with AnnaDeavereSrmth" in *Kenyan Review*, Vol.54, no 4, Winter, 1993, pp. 54-64.

Although this interview relates primarily to *Fires In the Mirror*, it gives insights to Smith's artistic aims and the influence of Ntozake Shange and George Wolfe on her work

"Lives Altered Forever" in *Time*, Vol. 141, June 28, 1993, p 73

A review of the Mark Taper Forum production of Smith's play, finding the play "sprawling" in its coverage but flawed in its impression that blacks acted almost alone in the rioting and looting

Martin, Carol. "Anna Deavere Smith: The Word Becomes You" in the *Drama Review*, Vol. 37, no 4, Winter, 1993, pp 45-62

An interview conducted with Smith, focusing on *Fires in the Mirror*, but covering Smith's technique and purpose in her whole *On the Road* series.

Mason, Susan Vaneta, editor "Theatre Review" in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 46, 1994, pp 111-18.

A collection of reviews of the Mark Taper Forum production of Smith's play, the article presents an array of opinions from performance artists, writers, and critics.

Mitchell, Sean. "The Tangle over *Twilight*" in *Los Angeles Times*, June 12,1994, pp 7,48

Mitchell addresses the controversy that arose over the classification of Smith's work as journalism or art.

Schechner, Richard "Anna Deavere Smith: Acting as Incorporation" in the *Drama Re view*, Vol. 37, no 4, Winter, 1993, pp. 63-64.

Schechner descnbes Smith's method of creating and performing her work as a sort of "shamanism "

Smith, Anna Deavere "Metaphor's Funeral" on the National Endowment for the Arts website, http://arts endow.gov/ Community/Features/Smith html, January 15,1997.

Given as a speech before a meeting of the National Council on the Arts, Smith claims to desire a "theatre that reclaims performance" and laments the fact that "conversation has collapsed "

Smith, Anna Deavere. "Not So Special Vehicles" in *Peformmg Arts Journal,* Vol. 50/51, May-September, 1995, pp. 77-92.

Printed text of a keynote address delivered in 1993 at a meeting of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, this speech discusses ethnocentric theater and the danger of "specialness" in the arts

Smith, Ins. "Authors in America: Tony Kushner, Arthur Miller, and Anna Deavere Smith" in *Centennial Review*, Vol 40, no. 1, Winter, 1996, pp 125-42

Smith discusses two "models" of theater authorship: the lone author, represented by Miller, and the "theater collective," as represented by Kushner and Smith

Stuart, Jan "*Twilight*; Group Therapy for a Nation" in *Newsday*, March 24,1994.

Stuart reviews the Joseph Papp Public Theater staging of Smith's play, applauding Smith's skill in providing the audience "with a breathtaking collage of real-life people who make us want to stand up and cheer, then sit back down and reflect"

Sun, William H, and Faye C Fei. "Masks or Face Re-Visited: A Study of Four Theatrical Works Concerning Cultural Identity" in *Drama Review*, Vol 38, no 4, Winter, 1994, pp. 120-32.

This article relates the mask to the problem of ethnic identities in plays and role interpretations Although its focus is on thePBS./lmencan *Playhouse* televised production *of Fires m the Mirror* (April 28,1993), it argues that Smith's work has "silenced" the problems of "racial identity in race-specific plays."

Vognar, Chris "Quite an Impression" in the *Daily Calif-ornian* website, http://www dailycal org/Issues/09.29.95/ smith txt, February 16,1997

A brief tribute to Smith's work, praising her achievement as performance-playwright and her ability to go beyond "mere language and into the realm of the personality and the soul "

Wald, Gayle. "Anna Deavere Smith's Voices at Twilight" in *Postmodern Culture,* Vol. 4, no. 2, January, 1994. Website at hhttpV/jefferson.village Virginia edu/pmc/issue.194/ review-1.194.html, January 22,1997

A review of *Twilight, Los Angeles, 1992* as staged at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey, this piece offers an extensive description of Smith's performance technique.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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