

When Anna Deavere Smith's Tony nominated *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* premiered in 1993 the *Los Angeles Times* called it a "one woman riot." Told through a trailblazing format called verbatim theatre and led by a curiosity to understand what caused the Los Angeles uprising in 1992, Deavere Smith interviewed over 200 people across the city of Los Angeles, edited their transcripts into a performance piece, and performed each of the characters herself. Anna Deavere Smith is a professor at New York University, a writer, and Tony Award nominated film, television, and stage actress. She received a *Drama Desk Award* for solo performance, is a Theatre World Award recipient, and was granted the MacArthur Genius Award in 1996. Deavere Smith's performance pieces offer compelling views of urban, racial, and class conflict. One of her skills lies in creating works that help those who are diametrically opposed to see the viewpoint of the other side. Her work has advanced performance theory and introduced a new way for the theater to reflect, and reflect upon, society. Her one-woman shows, *Fires in the Mirror* (1991), *Twilight, Los Angeles* (1993), and *House Arrest* (1997), are part of a series called *On the Road: A Search for American Character*, which she began developing in 1983. Deavere Smith states that the goal of her series is to, "capture the personality of a place by attempting to embody its varied population."

*Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* is a beautiful tapestry that allowed for the people and voices of a city torn apart after the Los Angeles uprising, following the not guilty verdict of the four white police officers accused of beating black unarmed motorist Rodney King, to come together in one space. Within the time and space of the theatre, *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* makes space for differing and often opposing perspectives on socially difficult themes such as, race, class, and police brutality, to sit side-by-side each other. Deavere Smith revolutionary theatrical device allows voices such as, African American Congresswoman Maxine Waters, Mexican American painter Rudy Salas, Korean liquor store owner Walter Park, and the white former LAPD Chief of Police Daryl Gates to be considered and hold equal weight in ways that never could outside of the theatre. Additionally, being a work of verbatim documentary theatre, every word that you hear tonight is exactly as the interviewer spoke it.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Los Angeles uprising. As a production firmly holding hands with history, KSU's production of *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* is a dynamic play that resides at the center of our contemporary headlines and conversations such as, the politics of policing and police accountability, the role of the media, racial oppression, and the on-going fight

for social justice in communities of color. Haunted by the simple yet ever present question that Rodney King laid before a bewildered city almost 25 years ago, “Can’t we all just get along?”, *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* allows us to think critically and with great self-reflection on King’s profound question and just how far we have gone in 25 years. Are we, as a nation, anymore able to watch a video of an unarmed African American person being assaulted by the police, be that Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Alton Sterling, Sandra Bland, Philando Castille, or 12-year-old Tamir Rice, and be able to come to a consensus about what “we” just witnessed let alone how “we” should proceed as a country deeply haunted by its own history?

-Skylar Resna Jackson, Assistant Dramaturg