



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Playbill for Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992

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ABOUT ON THE ROAD: A SEARCH FOR AMERICAN CHARACTER

[[1st column]]

Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992 is part of a series I developed called On the Road: A Search for American Character. To create the first On the Road, I literally walked up to people on the streets and said, "I know an actor who looks like you...if you'll give me an hour of your time, I'll invite you to see yourself performed." For the first performance I created a theatre piece based on interviews, using 20 actors and 20 "real people." Since that time, I have been creating one-woman shows out of interviews. I do the interviews and then perform all of the interviewees. The resulting performance is meant to capture the personality of a place by attempting to embody its varied population and varied points of view in one person-myself. Often, the shows are built around a specific controversial and timely event or series of events.

Although I do not do impersonations in the way that, for example, a stand-up comic would, I do represent each person verbatim. During the last 10 years, I have been trying to perceive how the act of speaking reveals individual and social identity. What fascinates me is not just what people say, but how they say it. I am

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also interested in the changing roles of men and women in society and our current challenge to find new and creative ways to negotiate racial and ethnic differences. This is reflected in the people I interview. Each show has a diverse assembly of points of view about current issues. Some of the interviewees are in the public eye and others are not. To create Twilight, I interviewed over 220 people. Unfortunately, I have only been able to include a fraction of the material.

On the Road includes pieces created for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre (Hymn, a collaboration with Judith Jamison); Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities; the Bay Area Playwrights Festival (Identities, Mirrors and Distortions); the Eureka Theatre (From the Outside Looking In: San Francisco, 1990); the Rockefeller Conference Center, Bellagio, Italy (Fragments: On Intercultural Performance); Crossroads Theatre (Black Identity and Black Theatre); Princeton University (Gender Bending); and The National Conference of Women and the Law.
-Anna Deavere Smith

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Enjoy your favorite drink at the liquor bar before the show and during intermission.

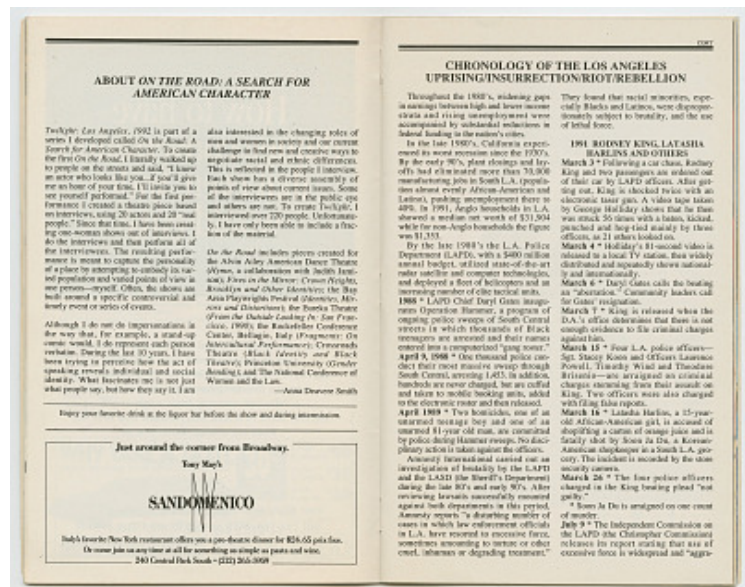
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CORT

CHRONOLOGY OF THE LOS ANGELES
UPRISING/INSURRECTION/RIO/REBELLION

[[1st column]]

Throughout the 1980's, widening gaps in earnings between high and lower income strata and rising unemployment were accompanied by substantial reductions in federal funding to the nation's cities.

In the late 1980's, California experienced its worst recession since the 1930's. By the early 90's, plant closings and layoffs had eliminated more than 70,000 manufacturing jobs in South L.A. (population almost evenly African-American and Latino), pushing unemployment there to 40%. In 1991, Anglo households in L.A. showed a median net worth of \$31,904 while for non-Anglo households the figure was \$1,353.

By the late 1980's the L.A. Police Department (LAPD), with a \$400 million annual budget, utilized state-of-the-art radar satellite and computer technologies, and deployed a fleet of helicopters and an increasing number of elite tactical units.

1988 * LAPD Chief Daryl Gates inaugurates Operation Hammer, a program of ongoing police sweeps of South Central streets in which thousands of Black teenagers are arrested and their names entered into a computerized "gang roster."

April 9, 1988 * One thousand police conduct their most massive sweep through South Central, arresting 1,453. In addition, hundreds are never charged, but are cuffed and taken to mobile booking units, added to the electronic roster and then released.

April 1989 * Two homicides, one of an unarmed teenage boy and one of an unarmed 81-year old man, are committed by police during Hammer sweeps. No disciplinary action is taken against the officers.

Amnesty International carried out an investigation of brutality by the LASD (the Sheriff's Department) during the late 80's and early 90's. After reviewing lawsuits successfully mounted against both departments in this period, Amnesty reports "a disturbing number of cases in which law enforcement officials in L.A. have resorted to excessive force, sometimes amounting to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment."

[[2nd column]]

They found that racial minorities, especially Blacks and Latinos, were disproportionately subject to brutality, and the use of lethal force.

1991 RODNEY KING, LATASHA HARLINS AND OTHERS

March 3 * Following a car chase, Rodney King and two passengers are ordered out of their car by LAPD officers. After getting out, King is shocked twice with an electronic taser gun. A video tape taken by

George Holliday shows that he then was struck 56 times with a baton, kicked, punched and hog-tied mainly by three officers, as 21 others looked on.

March 4 * Holliday's 81-second video is released to a local TV station, then widely distributed and repeatedly shown nationally and internationally.

March 6 * Daryl Gates calls the beating an "aberration." Community leaders call for Gates' resignation.

March 7 * King is released when the D.A.'s office determines that there is not enough evidence to file criminal charges against him.

March 15 * Four L.A. police officers - Sgt. Stacey Koon and Officers Laurence Powell, Timothy Wind and Theodore Briseno - are arraigned on criminal charges stemming from their assault on King. Two officers were also charged with filing false reports.

March 16 * Latasha Harlins, a 15-year-old African-American girl, is accused of shoplifting a carton of orange juice and is fatally shot by Soon Ja Du, a Korean-American shopkeeper in a South L.A. grocery. The incident is recorded by the store security camera.

March 26 * The four police officers charged in the King beating plead "not guilty."

* Soon Ja Du is arraigned on one count of murder.

July 9 * The Independent Commission on the LAPD (The Christopher Commission) releases its report stating that use of excessive force is widespread and "aggra

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