

# All men are created equal

Linguistics, English



Essay Twilight) English 102 WonJae Song All men are created equal Equality is a of the mind. It is a paradigm which has been constantly repressed or suppressed by various belief systems who maintain that humans can be segregated into various groups based on their physical attributes. In Twilight: Los Angeles, Anna Deavere Smith draws upon the issue of suppression as she tries to give voice to scores of real life characters in their quest for equality.

Presented in a mosaic set of the violent aftermath of the trial, verdict and acquittals of the police officers charged with beating motorist Rodney King in 1992, Anna Deavere Smith illustrates how the complicated issue of marginalization still exists in the very nucleus of a super power such as the United States of America. She weaves her narrative intricately through a labyrinth of human emotions as she brings together adversaries, victims, eyewitnesses, and observers who have never stood within the same four walls, let alone spoken to each other. The gamut of characters she delves in: from the LAPD Police Chief Daryl Gates to a gang member, from Korean store owners to a white juror, from a Panamanian immigrant mother to a teenaged black gang member, from beaten truck driver Reginald Denny to Congresswoman Maxine Waters alongwith other black, white, Asian and Latino characters: aptly portrays the myriads and pressures of a fractious age.

It is interesting to note how Anna Deavere Smith resonates the theme of equality in her text with the issues of race, racial prejudice, anger and hatred. Through characters such as Rudy Salas, Sr., the Mexican artist, she elucidates the consuming hatred of the " Other" 1 in the Saidian sense of the

term. In Sally's hatred against the "gringos," especially the white police officers, he is not only shown like the other inner-city blacks and Latinos who resent the treatment afforded to them by the LAPD, but is made a proto type of a race which has borne the brunt of neo colonisation.

Anna portrays the psychological turmoil of the colonised through contexts such as Rodney King, a working class African-American, who was brutally beaten for speeding by the white L. A police officers on the March of 1991. She elucidates the horror of colonisation by the means of a witness, Josie Morales, who comments on the Rodney King episode:

'I felt like "oh, my goodness" because it was really like he was in danger there. It was such an oppressive atmosphere (66).'

That Anna Deavere Smith is more of a sociologist than a satirist is elucidated in her treatment of the issue of ethnicity in the personage of Paul Parker, the Chairman of the LA Four Plus Defense Committee. Parker's statement:

'they basically feel that if it's a black-on-black crime, if it's a nigger killin' a nigger, they don't have no problem with that. But let it be a white victim, they gonna go to any extremes necessary to basically convict some black people (171).'

1 See Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, pp 241

reminds one of the dubious standards of equality in a country which boasts of being one of the oldest democracies if the world. She points out the the fallacies of a system where the abuser- abused relationship is based upon the norms of inequality.

In its depiction of the anguished soul of a city and a nation in crisis , the text offers an etymological explanation of the problems of racism as it presents

the discourse of race struggle in the perspectives of ethnocentrism and xenophobia. In the psychological exploration of her characters, Anna also shows the effects of reverse racism alongwith the fear of being oppressed. It reminds us the fact that racism is not merely an aberration of displaced aggression, but a perversive form of institutionalisation which exists even today. Twilight: Los Angeles emphasises the threat of murderous violence which lies latent in an exploiter-exploited equilibrium. The text cannot be defined by any particular umbrage but points out the heart of darkness embedded at the very core of civilisation.

#### Works cited

Said, Edward. (1978). Orientalism. Penguin