My Enemy
Rudy Salas, Sr. Sculptor and painter

(A large very warm man, with a blue shirt with the tails out and blue jeans and tennis shoes. He is at a dining-room table with a white tablecloth. There is a bank of photographs in frames on the sideboard next to the table. There is a vase of flowers on another table near the table. There are paintings of his on the wall. Nearest the table is a painting of his wife. His wife, Margaret, a woman in glasses and a long flowered dress, moves around the room. For a while she takes photo albums out of the sideboard and out of the back room, occasionally saying something. She is listening to the entire interview. He has a hearing aid in his left ear and in his right ear. He is sitting in a wooden captain's chair, medium-sized. He moves a lot in the chair, sometimes with his feet behind the front legs, and his arms hanging over the back of the chair. He is very warm.)

And then my my grandfather,
N. Carnación,

uh,
was a

gringo hater

'cause he had run-ins with gringos

when he was riding.

He had been a rebel,

so see there was another twist—

he had rode with Villa and those people and he remembers when he

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fought the gringos when they went into Chihuahua
Pershing went in there to chase Villa and all that?
So I grew up with all this rich stuff at home,
(Three quick hits on the table and a double sweep)
and then at school,
first grade, they started telling me
I was inferior
because I was a Mexican,
and that’s where:
(He hits the table several times, taps, twenty-three taps until line “the enemy” and then on “nice white teachers” his hand sweeps the table)
I realized I had an enemy
and that enemy was those nice white teachers.
I wonder what is it,
why
did I have this madness
that I understood this?
It’s not an enemy I hated.
It’s not a hate thing.
the insanity that I carried with me started when I took the beating
from the police.
Okay, that’s where the insanity came in.
In forty-two,
when I was in my teens
running around as a zoot-suiters,
one night the cop really tore me up bad.
I turned around I threw a punch at one of ’em.
I didn’t hit him hard,

but that sealed my doom.
They took me to a room
and they locked the door behind me
and there was four guys, four cops there
kicking me in the head.
As a result of the kicks in the head they fractured my eardrum,
and, uh,
I couldn’t hear
on both ears.
I was deaf,
worse than I am now.
(He pulls out one of his hearing aids)
So from that day on
I, I had a hate in me,
even now.
I don’t like to hate, never do,
the way that my Uncle Abraham told me that to hate is to waste
energy and you mess with man upstairs,
but I had an insane hatred
for white policemen.
I used to read the paper—it’s awful, it’s awful—if I would read about a cop shot down in the street, killed, dead,
a human being!
a fellow human being?
I say,
“So, you know, you know, so what,
maybe he's one of those motherfuckers that,
y'know . . .”
and I still get things like that.
I know this society.
I'm hooked on the news at six and the newspapers
and every morning I read injustices
and poor Margaret has to put up with me
'cause I rave and I rant and I walk around here.
I gotta eat breakfast over there,
I can't eat breakfast with her
'cause I tell her,
“These goddamned peckerwoods,”
so she puts me out there.
But I don't hate rednecks and peckerwoods,
and when I moved in here
it's all peckerwoods.
I had to put out my big Mexican flag out of my van.
Oh heck,
I told my kids a long time ago, fears that I had—
not physically inferior,
I grew up with the idea that
whites are
physically . . .
I still got that—see, that's a prejudice,
that whites are physically afraid of, of
minorities,
people of color, Blacks and Mexicans.
It's a physical thing.
it's a mental, mental thing that they're physically afraid.
I, I can still see it,
I can still see it,
and, and,
and, uh-uh,
I love to see it.
It's just how I am.
I can't help myself when I see
the right
person
do the right thing,
if I see the right white guy
or the right
Mexican walk down the mall
(He makes a face and laughs)
and the whites,
you know, they go into their thing already.
I don't like to see a gang of choiós
walking around,
you know, threatening people
with their ugly faces—
that's something else.
Well, they put on the mask—you ever notice that?—
it's sort of a mask,
it's, uh . . .
(He stands up and mimics them)
You know how they stand in your face with the ugly faces.
Damn, man,
I'd like to kill their dads.
That's what I always think about.
I always dream of that—
break into their houses and drag their dads out.
Well, you see, that relieves me.
But, you see, I still have that prejudice against whites.
I'm not a racist!
But I have white friends, though,
but I don't even see them as whites!
I don't even see them as whites! And my boys,
I had a lot of anxiety, I told
them, "Cooperate, man,
something happens,
your hands . . .
(Puts his hands up)
let them call you what they want,
be sure tell me who they are."
But they never told me.
Stephen was in Stanford!
Came home one weekend
to sing
with the band.
One night
cop pulled a gun at his head.
It drove me crazy—
it's still going on,
it's still going on.
How you think
a
father feels,
stuff that happened to me
fifty years
ago
happened to my son?
Man!
They didn't tell me right away,
because it would make me sick,
it would make me sick,
and, uh,
my oldest son, Rudy.
Didn't they,
Margaret,
insult him one time and they pulled you over . . .
the Alhambra cops, they pulled you over
and, aww, man . . .
My enemy.
These Curious People
Stanley K. Sheinbaum  Former president, Los Angeles Police Commission

(A beautiful house in Brentwood. There is art on all the walls. The art has a real spirit to it. These are the paintings by his wife, Betty Sheinbaum. There is a large living room, an office off the living room which you can see. It is mostly made of wood, lots of papers and books. The office of a writer. There are glass windows that look out on a pool, a garden, a view. Behind us is a kitchen where his wife, Betty, was, but eventually she leaves. Stanley is sitting at a round wooden table with a cup of coffee. He is in a striped shirt and khaki pants and loafers. He has a beard. He is tall, and about seventy-three years old. He seems gruff, but when he smiles or laughs, his face lights up the room. It's very unusual. He has the smile and laugh of a highly spiritual, joyous, old woman, like a grandmother who has really been around. There is a bird inside the house which occasionally chirps.)

Very interesting thing happened.
Like a week and a half (very thoughtfully trying to remember),
Maxine Waters calls me up—
You know who she is?
We're very good friends—
she calls me up and she says,
"Ya gotta come with me.
I been going down to Nickerson Gardens and

Twilight
the cops come in and break up these gang meetings
and these are gang meetings
for the purpose of truces.”
(I was momentarily distracted)
Pay attention.
The next Saturday afternoon,
the next day ever,
I go down with her,
uh,
to,
uh,
Nickerson Gardens
(an abrupt stop, and
second pause, as if he’s forgotten something for a moment)
and I see a whole bunch of, uh,
police, car
sirens and the lights
and I say, “What the hell’s going on here?”
So sure enough, I pull in there
(three-second pause).
We pull in there
and, uh,
I ask a cop what’s going on
and he says,
“Well, we got a call for help.”
There’s a gang meeting over there.
There’s a community park there and there’s a gym
and I go down to the . . .
we go down to the gang meeting
and half of ’em
outside of the
gym
and half of ’em
inside
and here’s about a hundred cops lined up over here
and about another hundred
over here
and, uh,
I go
into the, uh,
into the group of gang members who were outside.
Even Maxine got scared by this.
I gotta tell you I was brought up in Harlem.
I just have a feel for what I can do and what I can’t do
and I did that.
And I spent about
two, two
hours talkin’ to these guys.
Some of these guys were ready to kill me.
(A bird chirps loudly; maybe this is a parakeet or an inside
bird)
I’m the police commissioner
and therefore a cop
and therefore all the things that went along with being a
cop.
It was a very interesting experience, God knows.
One guy who was really disheveled and disjointed
and disfigured
opens up his whole body
and it’s clear he’s been shot across . . .
not in that . . . not in that day,
months or years before,
and, you know, these guys have been through the wars down there and, you know, I hung around long enough that I could talk to them, get some insights. But the cops were mad, they were really mad that I would go talk to them and not talk to them and I knew that if I went and talked to them I'd have bigger problems here. But I also knew as I was doing this, I knew they were gonna be pissed. Two days I got a letter and I was... the letter really pleased me in some way. It was very respectful. "You went in and talked to our enemy." Gangs are their enemy. And so I marched down to Seventy-seventh and, uh, I said, "Fuck you, I can come in here anytime I want and talk to you." Yeah, at roll call. I said, uh, "This is a shot I had at talking to these curious people about whom I know nothing.

and I wanna learn. Don't you want me to learn about 'em?" You know, that kind of thing. At the same time, I had been on this kick, as I told you before, of... of fighting for what's right for the cops, because they haven't gotten what they should. I mean, this city has abused both sides. The city has abused the cops. Don't ever forget that. If you want me to give you an hour on that, I'll give you an hour on that.

Uh, and at the end, uh, I knew I hadn't won when they said, "So which side are you on?" When I said, I said, it's... my answer was "Why do I have to be on a side?" Yu, yuh, yeh know. Why do I have to be on a side? There's a problem here.

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When I Finally Got My Vision/Nightclothes
Michael Zinzun Representative, Coalition Against Police Abuse

(quoted from Michael Zinzun's account, much edited and changed)

You see,
Eugene Rivers was his name and, uh,
we had our community center here
and they was doin' it right across the street from it.
So I went out there 'long with other people and we
demanded they stop.
They tried to hide him by draggin' him away and we
followed him
and told him they gonna stop.
They singled me out.
They began Macing the crowd, sayin' it was hostile.
They began
shooitin' the Mace to get everybody back.
They singled me out.
I was handcuffed.
Um,
when I got Maced I moved back
but as I was goin' back I didn't go back to the center,
I ended up goin' around this . . .
it was a darkened
unlit area.
And when I finally got my vision
I said I ain't goin' this way with them police behind me,
so I turned back around, and when I did,
they Maced me again
and I went down on one knee
and all I could do was feel all these police stompin' on my
back.
(He is smiling)
And I was thinkin' . . . I said

I witnessed police abuse.
It was
about one o'clock in the morning
and, um,
I was asleep.
like
so many of the other neighbors,
and I hear this guy calling out for help.
So myself and other people came out in socks
and gowns
and, you know,
nightclothes
and we came out so quickly we saw the police had this
brother
handcuffed
and they was beatin' the shit out of him!

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why, sure am glad they got them soft walkin' shoes on,
because when the patrolmen, you know, they have them cushions,
so every stomp,
it wasn't a direct hard old . . .
yeah
type thing.
So'
then they handcuffed me.
I said they . . .
well,
I can take this,
we'll deal with this tamarr [sic],
and they handcuffed me.
And then one of them lifted my head up—
I was on my stomach—
he lifted me from behind
and hit me with a billy club
and struck me in the
side of the head,
which give me about forty stitches—
the straight billy club,
it wasn't a
P-28, the one with the side handle.
Now, I thought in my mind, said hunh,
they couldn't even knock me out,
they in trouble now.
You see what I'm sayin'?
'Cause I knew what we were gonna do,
'cause I dealt with policc abuse

and I knew how to organize.
I say they couldn't even knock me out,
and so as I was layin' there
they was all standin' around me.
They still was Macing, the crowd was gettin' larger and
larger
and more police was comin'.
One these pigs stepped outta the crowd with his flashlight,
caught me right in my eye,
and you can still see the stitches (He lowers his lid and
shows it)
and
exploded the optic nerve to the brain,
ya see,
and boom (He snaps his fingers)
that was it.
I couldn't see no more since then.
I mean, they . . .
they took me to the hospital
and the doctor said, "Well, we can sew this eyelid up and
these
stitches here
but
I don't think we can do nothin' for that eye."
So when I got out I got a CAT scan,
you know,
and
they said,
"It's gone."
So I still didn't understand it but I said

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well,
I'm just gonna keep strugglin'.
We mobilized
to the point where we were able
to get two' officers fired,
two officers had to go to trial,
and
the city on an eye
had to cough up one point two million dollars
and so
that's why
I am able to be here every day,
because that money's bein' used to further the struggle.
I ain't got no big Cadillac,
I ain't got no gold . . .
I ain't got no
expensive shoes or clothes.
What we do have
is an opportunity to keep struggling and to do research and to organize.
Powell holds the baton
like this
and that is
not a good . . . 
the proper way of holding the baton
is like this.
So one of the things
they keep talking about
why did it take fifty-six baton blows.
Powell has no strength and no power
in his baton strikes.
The whole thing boils down to . . .
Powell was ineffective with the baton.
You're aware
that that night
he went to baton training
and the sergeant held him afterward
because he was weak and inefficient with the baton
training.
That night. That night.
He should have been taken out of the field.
He needed to be taken up to the academy and had a couple days of instruction get him back into focus.

(He drinks water)
Oh, I know what I was gonna do. Prior to this we lost upper-body-control holds in 1982. If we had upper-body-control holds involved in this, this tape woulda never been on, this incident woulda lasted about fifteen seconds. The reason that we lost upper-body-control holds because we had something like seventeen to twenty deaths in a period of about 1975-76 to 1982, and they said it was associated with its being used on Blacks and Blacks were dying.

Now, the so-called community leaders came forward and complained

(He drinks water)
and they started a hysteria about the upper-body-control holds—that it was inhumane use of force—so it got elevated from intermediate use of force, which is the same category as a baton, to deadly force, and what I told you was that it was used in all but one of the incidents.

High levels of PCP and cocaine were found in the systems of those people it was used on. If PCP and cocaine did not correlate into the equation of why people were dying, how come we used it since the fifties and we had maybe in a ten-year period one incident of a death?

The use of force policy hasn't changed since this incident. And Gilbert Lindsay, who was a really neat man, when he saw a demonstration with the baton he made a statement that "you're not gonna beat my people with the baton, I want you to use the chokehold on 'em."

And a couple other people said, "I don't care you beat em into submission, you break their bones, you're not chokin' 'em anymore."

So the political framework was laid for eliminating upper-body-control holds, and Daryl Gates—I believe, but I can't prove it—but his attitude supports it. He and his command staff and I started use-of-force reports come through my office, so I review 'em and I look for training things and I look for things that will impact how I can make training
better.
So I started seeing a lot of incidents similar to Rodney King
and some of them identical to Rodney King
and I said we gotta find some alternative uses of force.
And their attitude was:
“Don’t worry about it,
don’t worry about it.”
And I said, “Wait a minute,
you gonna get some policemen indicted,
you gonna get some policemen sent to jail,
and they’re gonna hurt somebody and it’s gonna be
perceived to be
other than a proper use of force,
and then you guys in management are gonna scurry away
from it,
you’re gonna run away from it,
you’re gonna get somebody . . . somebody
is gonna go to the joint because of your lack of effort.”
And the last conversation I had was with one of my . . .
He walked by my office,
so I ran out of my office and I catch up with him right by
the
fountain,
right by where the water is.
I said,
“Listen, we got another one of these . . .
we gotta explore some techniques and we gotta explore
some options,”
and his response to me:
“Sergeant Duke,
I’m tired of hearing this shit.

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We’re gonna beat people into submission
and we’re gonna break bones.”
And he said the Police Commission and the City Council
took this
away from us.
“Do you understand that,
Sergeant Duke?”
And I said, “Yes, sir,”
and I never brought it up again.
And that, to me,
tells me
this is an “in your face” to the City Council and to the
Police
Commission.
And like I said,
I can’t prove this,
but I believe that Daryl Gates
and the Command staff were gonna do an “in your face” to
the City
Council and the Police Commission, saying,
“You took upper-body-control holds away from us.
Now we’re really gonna show you what you’re gonna get,
with lawsuits and all the other things that are associated with it.”
Indelible Substance
Josie Morales Clerk-typist, city of Los Angeles uncalled witness to Rodney King beating, Simi Valley trial
(In a conference room at her workplace, downtown Los Angeles)

We lived in Apartment A6,
right next to A8,
which is where George Holliday lived.
And, um,
the next thing we know is, um,
ten or twelve officers made a circle around him
and they started to hit him.
I remember
that they just not only hit him with sticks,
they also kicked him,
and one guy,
one police officer, even pummeled his fist into his face,
and they were kicking him.
And then we were like “Oh, my goodness,”
and I was just watching.
I felt like “Oh, my goodness”
’cause it was really like
he was in danger there,
it was such
an oppressive atmosphere.
I knew it was wrong—

whatever he did—
I knew it was wrong,
I just knew in my heart
this is wrong—
you know they can’t do that.
And even my husband was petrified.
My husband said, “Let’s go inside.”
He was trying to get me to come inside
and away from the scene,
but I said, “No.”
I said, “We have to stay here
and watch
because this is wrong.”
And he was just petrified—
he grew up in another country where this is prevalent,
police abuse is prevalent in Mexico—
so we stayed and we watched the whole thing.
And
I was scheduled to testify
and I was kind of upset at the outcome,
because I had a lot to say
and during the trial I kept in touch with the prosecutor,
Terry White,
and I was just very upset
and I, um,
I had received a subpoena
and I told him, “When do you want me to go?”
He says, “I’ll call you later and I’ll give you a time.”
And the time came and went and he never called me,
so I started calling him.
I said, "Well, are you going to call me or not?"
And he says, "I can't really talk to you
and I don't think we're going to be using you because
it contradicts what Melanie Singer said."
And I faxed him a letter
and I told him that those officers were going to be acquitted
and one by one I explained these things to him in this letter
and I told him, "If you do not put witnesses,
if you don't put one resident and testify to say what they
saw,"
And I told him in the letter
that those officers were going to be acquitted.
But I really believe that he was dead set
on that video
and that the video would tell all,
but, you see, the video doesn't show you where those
officers went
and assaulted Rodney King at the beginning.
You see that?
And I was so upset. I told my co-worker, I said, "I had a
terrible dream
that those guys were acquitted."
And she goes, "Oh no, they're not gonna be acquitted."
She goes, "You, you,
you know, don't think like that."
I said, "I wasn't thinking I had a dream!"
I said, "Look at this,
they were,
they were acquitted."
Yeah, I do have dreams
that come true,
Your Heads in Shame
Anonymous Man  Juror in Simi Valley trial

(A house in Simi Valley. Fall. Halloween decorations are up. Dusk. Low lamplight. A slender, soft-spoken man in glasses. His young daughter and wife greeted me as well. Quietness.)

As soon as we went into the courtroom with the verdicts there were plainclothes policemen everywhere.
You know, I knew that there would be people unhappy with the verdict, but I didn’t expect near what happened.
If I had known what was going to happen, I mean, it’s not, it’s not fair to say I would have voted a different way. I wouldn’t have—that’s not our justice system—but I would have written a note to the judge saying, “I can’t do this,” because of what it put my family through.
Excuse me.
(Crying)
So anyway,

we started going out to the bus and the police said right away, “If there’s rocks and bottles, don’t worry the glass on the bus is bulletproof.” And then I noticed a huge mob scene, and it’s a sheriff’s bus that they lock prisoners in. We got to the hotel and there were some obnoxious reporters out there already, trying to get interviews.
And, you know, the police were trying to get us into the bus and cover our faces, and, and this reporter said, “Why are you hiding your heads in shame? Do you know that buildings are burning and people are dying in South LA because of you?” And twenty minutes later I got home and the same obnoxious reporter was at the door and my wife was saying, “He doesn’t want to talk to anybody,” and she kept saying, “The people wanna know, the people wanna know,” and trying to get her foot in the door. And I said, “Listen, I don’t wanna talk to anybody. My wife has made

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that clear."
And I,
you know, slammed the door in her face.
And so she pulled two houses down
and started
filming our house.
And watching on the TV
and seeing all the political leaders,
Mayor Bradley
and President Bush,
condemning our verdicts.
I mean, the jurors as a group, we tossed around:
was this a setup of some sort?
We just feel like we were pawns that were thrown away by
the
system.
I mean,
the judge,
most of the jurors
feel like when he was reading the verdicts
he . . .
we thought we could sense a look of disdain on his face,
and he also had said
beforehand
that after the verdicts came out
he would like to come up and talk to us,
but after we gave the verdicts
he sent someone up and said he didn’t really want to
do that then.
And plus, he had the right and power to
withhold our names for a period of time

and he did not do that,
he released them right away.
I think it was apparent that we would be harassed
and I got quite a few threats.
I got threatening letters and threatening phone calls.
I think he just wanted to separate himself . . .
A lot of newspapers published our addresses too.
The New York Times published the values of our homes.
They were released in papers all across the country.
We didn’t answer the phone,
because it was just every three minutes . . .
We’ve been portrayed as white racists.
One of the most disturbing things, and a lot of the jurors
said that
the thing that bothered them that they received in the mail
more
than anything else,
more than the threats, was a letter from the KKK
saying,
"We support you, and if you need our help, if you want to
join
our organization,
we’d welcome you into our fold."
And we all just were:
No, oh!
God!
because they are there to help you,
the law-abiding citizen,
because most jurors have not had contacts
with police—
if they have
it's a traffic ticket
or they did a sloppy job
investigating their burglary
but not enough that it sours them on the police.
They are still there to help
and to protect you.
That's what we've been sold all our lives,
so when an officer comes in
and tells you
something from the witness stand
there is something magic
that comes over that individual
as opposed to you or Suzanne or me,
uh, going to testify.
And perhaps——
this is my trial experience . . .
seen it . . .
and it can be dispelled very easily.
I mean, if a cop, for example, comes in with a raid jacket
and guns bulging out
he'll wipe himself out very quickly,
because he'll look like he's a cowboy.
But if you have a man coming in
or a woman coming in——
you know, professionally dressed,
polite

It goes back to what I said about jurors.
Much to most people's surprise;
they really very seriously take their oath.
For the most part
there [sic]
the burden of proof in most criminal cases
is really extremely high,
and if you take it seriously, your oath seriously,
you really have to look at it.
I mean, you really have to look carefully at the evidence.
For the most part people have a respect for police,
even people who are annoyed by police.
At least in a courtroom setting
that magic comes in.
You want to believe the officers,

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with everyone—
the magic
is there
and it's a . . .
it's an aura,
it's aye [sic] feeling
that is conveyed to the jury:
"I am telling the truth.
and I'm here to help you,
to protect you,"
and they want to believe that,
especially today they want to believe it,
because everyone is living
in a state of fear,
everyone.
I think you're seeing across the country
the credibility of the police
is
more uncertain,
but still for the most part
people want to believe the police officers
and do believe the police officers
unless the police officer
himself
or herself
gives 'em reason not to.
But you walk in with magic
and only you can destroy that magic.
Every single day
I must make this trip to Inglewood—no problem—
and I get off the freeway like usual,
taking up as much space as I can in the truck.
People don't like that.
Because I have to.
That little turn onto Florence
is pretty tricky,
it's really a tight turn.
I take two lanes to do it in
and
it was just like a scene
out of a movie.
Total confusion and chaos.
I was just in awe.
And the thing that I remember most vivid—
broken glass
on the ground.
And for a split second I was goin'
check this out,
and the truck in front of me—
and I found out later—
the truck in front of me,
medical supplies goin' to Daniel Freeman!
(He laughs)
Kind of a
ironic thing!
And the, uh,
the strange thing was
that what everyone thought was a fire extinguisher
I got clubbed with,
it was a bottle of oxygen,
'cause the guy had medical supplies.
I mean,
does anyone know
what a riot looks like?
I mean, I'm sure they do now.
I didn't have a clue of what one looked like
and
I didn't know that the verdict had come down.
I didn't pay any attention
to that,
because that
was somebody else's problem
I guess I thought
at the time.
It didn't have anything to do with me.
I didn't usually pay too much attention of what was going on in
California

or in America or anything
and, uh,
I couldn't for the life of me figure out what was goin' on.
Strange things do happen on that street.
Every now and again police busting somebody.
That was a street that was never . . .
I mean, it was always an exciting . . .
we,
lot of guys looked forward to going down that street
'cause there was always somethin' going on, it seemed
like,
and the cool thing was I'd buy those cookies:
from
these guys
on the corner,
and I think they're, uh,
Moslems?
And they sell cookies
or cakes,
the best-tasting stuff,
and whatever they were selling that day,
and it was always usually a surprise,
but it was very well known
that it was a good surprise!
Heck, a good way to munch!
But when I knew something was wrong was when they
bashed in the
right window of
my truck.
That's the end of what I remember as far as anything
until five or six days later.
They say I was in a coma.
And I still couldn’t figure out,
you know,
how I got here.
And
It was quite a few weeks after I was in the hospital
that they even let on that there was a riot,
because the doctor didn’t feel it
was something I needed to know.
Morphine is what they were givin' me for pain,
and it was just an interesting time.
But I’ve never been in an operating room.
It was like . . .
this is just . . .
I 'member like in a movie
they flip on the big lights
and they’re really in there.
(He laughs)
I was just goin’ “God”
and seein’ doctors around with masks on
and I still didn’t know why I was still there
and the next thing
I know I wake up a few days later.
I think when it really dawned on me
that something big might have happened
was when important people wanted to come in and say hi.
The person that I remember that wanted to come in and see me,
the first person that I was even aware of who wanted to see me,
was Reverend Jesse Jackson,
and I’m just thinkin’:
not this guy,
that’s the dude I see on TV all the time.
And then it was a couple days later that
Arsenio Hall came to see me
and he just poked his head in, said hello,
and, uh,
I couldn’t say nothin’ to him.
And then, about then I started to, uh,
started to get it.
And by the time I left Daniel Freeman I knew what
happened,
except they wouldn’t let me watch it on TV.
I mean, they completely controlled that remote-control
thing.
They just had it on a movie station.
And if I hadn’t seen some of the stuff,
you know, of me doin’ a few things after everything was
done,
like climbing back into the truck,
and talking to Titus and Bobby and Terry and Lee—that’s the four people
who came to my rescue,
you know—they’re telling me stuff that I would never
even have known.
Terry,
I met only because she came as a surprise guest visit to the
hospital.
That was an emotional time.
How does one say that
someone
saved
my life?
How does a person,  
how do I  
express enough  
thanks  
for someone risking their  
neck?  
And then I was kind of . . .  
I don't know if "afraid" is the word,  
I was just a little,  
felt a little awkward meeting people  
who  
saved me.  
Meeting them was not like meeting  
a stranger,  
but it was like  
meeting a  
buddy.  
There was a weird common thread in our lives  
That's an extraordinary event,  
and here is four people—  
the ones in the helicopter—  
and they just stuck with it,  
and then you got four people  
who seen it on TV  
and said enough's enough  
and came to my rescue.  
They tell me  
I drove the truck for what? About a hundred or so feet.  
The doctors say there's fight or flight syndrome.  
And I guess I was in flight!  
And it's been seventeen years since I got outta high school!

I been driving semis,  
it's almost second nature,  
but Bobby Green  
saw that I was gettin' nowhere fast and she just jumped in  
and  
scooted me over  
and drove the truck.  
By this time  
it was tons of glass and blood everywhere,  
'cause I've seen pictures of what I looked like  
when I first went into surgery,  
and I mean it was a pretty  
bloody mess.  
And they showed me my hair,  
when they cut off my hair  
they gave it to me in a plastic bag.  
And it was just  
long hair and  
glass and blood.  
Lee—  
that's a woman—  
Lee Euell,  
she told me  
she just  
cradled me.  
There's no  
passenger seat in the truck  
and here I am just kind of on my knees in the middle of the  
floor  
and, uh,  
Lee's just covered with blood.
and Titus is on one side, 'cause Bobby couldn't see out the window. The front windshield was so badly broken it was hard to see. And Titus is standing on the running board telling Bobby where to go, and then Terry, Titus's girlfriend, she's in front of the truck weaving through traffic, dodging toward cars to get them to kind of move out of the way, to get them to clear a path, and next stop was Daniel Freeman Hospital! Someday when I, uh, get a house, I'm gonna have one of the rooms and it's just gonna be of all the riot stuff and it won't be a blood-and-guts memorial, it's not gonna be a sad, it's gonna be a happy room. It's gonna be . . . Of all the crazy things that I've got, all the, the

love and compassion and the funny notes and the letters from faraway places, just framed, placed, framed things, where a person will walk in and just have a good old time in there. It'll just be fun to be in there, just like a fun thing, and there won't be a color problem in this room. You take the toughest white guy who thinks he's a bad-ass and thinks he's better than any other race in town, get him in a position where he needs help, he'll take the help from no matter who the color of the guy across . . . because he's so self-centered and -serving, he'll take it and then soon as he's better he'll turn around and rag on 'em. I know that for a fact. Give me what I need and shove off. It's crazy, it's nuts.
That's the person I'd like to shake and go,
"Uuuh,
you fool,
you selfish little shit"—
those kind of words.
"Uhhh, man, you nut."
(Pause and intense stare, low-key)
I don’t know what I want.
I just want people to wake up.
It’s not a color, it’s a person.
So this room,
it’s just gonna be
people,
just a wild place,
it’s gonna be a blast.
One day,
Lord.
Willing, it’ll happen.
To Look Like Girls from Little

Elvira Evers General worker and cashier, Canteen Corporation

(A Panamanian woman in a plaid shirt, in an apartment in Compton. Late morning, early afternoon. She has a baby on her lap. The baby has earrings in her ears. Elvira has a gold tooth. There is a four-year-old girl with large braid on top of her head and a big smile who is around throughout the interview. The girl's name is Nella.)

So everybody was like with things they was takin', like a carnival,
and I say to my friend Frances, "Frances, you see this?"
and she said, "Girl, you should see that!"
it's getting worst.
And I say, "Girl, let me take my butt up there before something happen."
And, um, when somebody throw a bottle
and I just . . .
then I felt like moist,

and it was like a tingling sensation—right?—
and I didn't like this,
and it was like itchin',
and I say, "Frances, I'm bleedin'."
And she walk with me to her house
And she say, "Lift up your gown, let me see."
She say, "Elvira, it's a bullet!"
I say, "What?"
I say, "I didn't heard nothin'."
She say, "Yes, but it's a bullet."
She say, "Lay down there. Let me call St. Francis and tell them that you been shot
and to send an ambulance."
And she say, "Why you?
You don't mess with none of those people.
Why they have to shoot you?"
So Frances say the ambulance be here in fifteen minutes.
I say, "Frances, I cannot wait that."
I say, "I'm gone!"
So I told my oldest son, I say, "Amant, take care your brothers. I be right back."
Well, by this time he was standing up there, he was crying, all of them was crying.
What I did for them not to see the blood—
I took the gown and I cover it and I didn't cry.
That way they didn’t get nervous.
And I get in the car.
I was goin’ to drive.
Frances say, “What you doin’?”
I said, “I’m drivin’.”
She say, “No, you’re not!”
And we take all the back streets
and she was so supportive,
because she say, “You all right?
You feel cold?
You feel dizzy?
The baby move?”
She say, “You nervous?”
I say, “No, I’m not nervous, I’m just worried about the
baby.”
I say, “I don’t want to lose this baby.”
She say, “Elvira, everything will be all right.” She say, “Just
pray.”
So there was a lot of cars, we had to be blowing the horn.
So finally we get to St. Francis
and Frances told the front-desk office, she say,
“She been shot!”
And they say, “What she doin’ walkin’?”
and I say, “I feel all right.”
Everybody stop doin’ what they was doin’
and they took me to the room
and put the monitor to see if the baby was fine
and they find the baby heartbeat,
and as long as I heard the baby heartbeat I calmed down,
long as I knew whoever it is, boy or girl, it’s all right, and

matter of fact, my doctor, Dr. Thomas, he was there at
the emergency room.
What a coincidence, right?
I was just lookin’ for that familiar face,
and soon as I saw him
I say, “Well I’m all right now.”
Right?
So he bring me this other doctor and then told me,
“Elvira, we don’t know how deep is the bullet.
We don’t know where it went. We gonna operate on
you.
But since that we gonna operate we gonna take the baby out
and you don’t have to
go through all of that.”
They say, “Do you understand
what we’re saying?”
I say, “Yeah!”
And they say, “Okay, sign here.”
And I remember them preparing me
and I don’t remember anything else.
Nella!
No.
(Turns to the side and admonishes the child)
She likes company.
And in the background
I remember Dr. Thomas say, “You have a six-pound-twelve-
ounce little
girl.”
He told me how much she weigh and her length
and he
say, "Um,
she born,
she had the bullet in her elbow,
but when we remove . . .
when we clean her up
we find out that the bullet was still between two joints,
so
we did operate on her and your daughter is fine
and you are fine."
(Sound of a little child saying "Mommy")
Nella!
She wants to show the baby.
Jessica,
bring the baby.
(She laughs)
Yes,
yes.
We don't like to keep the girls without earrings. We like the little
girls
to look like girls from little.
I pierce hers.
When I get out on Monday,
by Wednesday I did it,
so by Monday she was five days,
she was seven days,
and I
pierced her ears
and the red band is just like for evil eyes.
We really believe in Panama . . .
in English I can't explain too well.

And her doctor, he told . . .
he explain to me
that the bullet
destroyed the placenta
and went through
me
and she caught it in her arms.
(Here you can hear the baby making noises, and a bell rings)
If she didn't caught it in her arm,
me and her would be dead.
See?
So it's like
open your eyes,
watch what is goin' on.
(Later in the interview, Nella gave me a bandaid, as a gift.)
That's Another Story
Katie Miller Bookkeeper and accountant

(South Central, September 1992. A very large woman sitting in an armchair. She has a baseball cap on her head. She speaks rapidly with great force and volume.)

I think this thing
about the Koreans and the Blacks . . .
that wasn't altogether true,
and I think that the Korean stores
that got burned in the Black neighborhood that were
Korean-owned,
it was due to lack of
gettin' to know
the people that come to your store—
that's what it is.
Now,
they talk about the looting
in Koreatown . . . those wasn't blacks,
those wasn't blacks, those was Mexicans
in Koreatown.
We wasn't over there lootin' over there,
lootin' over there,
but here,
in this right here.
The stores that got looted for this one reason
only is that . . . know who you goin' know,
just know people comin' to your store, that's all,
just respect people comin' in there—
give 'em their money
'stead of just give me your money and get out of my face.
And it was the same thing with the '65 riots,
same thing.
And this they kept makin' a big
the Blacks and the Koreans.
I didn't see that,
and now see like
Pep
Boys that right there . . .
I didn't like the idea of Pep Boys myself,
I didn't like the idea of them hittin' Pep
Boys.
Only reason I can think they hit 'em is they too damn
  high—
that's the only reason.
Other than that
I think that Pep Boys just
came, people say
to hell with Pep boys, Miney Mo and Jack.
Let me just go in here,
I'm get me some damn
whatever the hell they have in there.
Now, I didn't loot this time.
Get that out,
because in my mind it's more
than that,
you know.
But I didn't loot this time.
I was praisin' the ones that had,
you know,
you oughta burn that sucker down.
But after it was over,
we went touring,
call it touring,
all around,
and we went to that Magnin store,
seemin' people comin' out of that Magnin store,
and I was so
damn mad at that Paul Moyer.
He's a damn newscaster.
He was on Channel 7,
now that sucker's on Channel 4,
makin' eight million dollars.
What the hell,
person can make eight million dollars for readin' a piece of
paper,
but that's a different story.
Highest of any newscaster.
I don't know why.
To read some damn paper.
I don't give a damn who tells me the damn news,
long as they can talk,
long as I can understand 'em,
I don't care,
but that's a different story.
Anyway, we went to Magnin
and we seen people run in there and looted.
It's on Wilshire,
very exclusive store,
for very . . . you know,
you have to have money to go in there to buy something, and the people I seen runnin' out there that didn't have money to buy...

And I turned on the TV and here is Mr. Paul Moyer saying, "Yeah, they, they, uh, some people looted, uh, I. Magnin. I remember goin' to that store when I was a child."

What he call 'em?

He called 'em thugs, these thugs goin' into that store.

I said, "Hell with you, asshole."

That was my, my...

I said, "Okay, okay for them to run into these other stores,

you know, "but don't go in no store that I, I grew up on that has...

that my parents took me to that is expensive—

these stores, they ain't supposed to be, to be looted.

How dare you loot a store that rich people go to?

I mean, the nerve of them."

I found that very offensive.

Who the hell does he think he is?

Oh, but that was another story, they lootin' over here, but soon they loot this store he went to, oh, he was all pissed.

It just made me sick, but that's another story too.
Godzilla
Anonymous Man #2  (Hollywood Agent)

(Morning. A good looking man in shirt and tie and fine shoes. A chic office in an agency in Beverly Hills. We are sitting in a sofa.)

There was still the uneasiness that was growing when the fuse was still burning, but it was business as usual. Basically, you got such-and-so on line one, such-and-so on line two. Traffic, Wilshire, Santa Monica. Bunch of us hadda go to lunch at the Grill in Beverly Hills. Um, gain major show business dead center business restaurant, kinda loud but genteel. The . . . there was an incipient panic— you could just feel— the tension

...in the restaurant it was palpable, it was tangible, you could cut it with a knife. All anyone was talking about, you could hear little bits of information— did ya hear? did ya hear? It's like we were transmitting thoughts to each other all across the restaurant, we were transmitting thoughts to each other. All the, frankly, the white upper class, upper middle class— whatever your, the definition is— white successful . . . spending too much money, too, ya know, too good a restaurant, that kinda thing. We were just getting ourselves into a frenzy, which I think a lot of it

134 Anna Deavere Smith
involved
guilt,
just generic guilt.
When we drove back,
and it's about a ten-minute drive,
talking about the need
for guns
to protect ourselves,
it had just gone from there to there.
But I'm tellin' you, nothin' happened!
I don't mean somebody in the restaurant
had a fight
or somebody screamed at someone—
nothing, just,
ya know,
Caesar salad,
da-de-da,
ya know,
but the whole
bit
went
like that.
We walked in
from the underground garage into here and we looked at
each other
and we could see people
running around
instead of . . . like,
people walk fast in this business
but now they were, they were like running,

and
we looked at ourselves—
"we gotta close the office."
So we had gone from
"I'm a little nervous"
to "We gotta close the office,
shut down."
This is a business
we don't shut down.
Memo goes
out saying:
"Office closed for the day.
Everyone please leave
the office."
And then
I remember somebody said:
"Did you hear?
They're burning down
the Beverly Center."
By the way, they . . .
No no no, it's . . .
There is no who.
Whaddya mean, who?
No, just they.
That's fair enough.
"Did you hear they are burning down the Beverly Center?"
Oh, okay, they . . .
Ya know what I mean?
It almost didn't matter who,
it's irrelevant.
Somebody.

136 Anna Deavere Smith
It's not us!
That was one of the highlights for me.
So I'm looking outside
and the traffic is far worse
and people were basically fleeing the office
and we were closing all the blinds
and this is about,

um,
I guess about four o'clock.
The vision of all these yuppies
and aging or aged yuppies,
Armani suits,
and, you know,
fleeing like
wild-eyed . . .
All you needed was Godzilla behind them,
you know,
like this . . .
chasing them out of the building.
that's really it.
Aaah, aaah.
(He laughs, a very hearty laugh)
Still,
still,
nothing had happened—
I don't mean to tell you that bombs were exploding—
nothing, zero.
So we,
I was one of the last to leave,
as usual,
and the roads were so packed it

it must be like
they were leaving
Hiroshima
or something,
Dresden . . .
I've never been in a war or . . .
just the daily war of . . .
(Intercom beeps)
Who's that?
Do you need me?
One sec. (He leaves, then returns)
Where was I?
Yeah.
What, what was, was
"I deserve it,"
you know,
was I, was I getting
my . . .
when I was fearing
for
safety
or my family or something . . .
those moments.
Because the panic was so high
that, oh my God,
I was almost thinking:
"Did I deserve this,
do I, do I deserve it?"
I thought me, personally—no,
me, generically,
maybe so.

138 Anna Deavere Smith
Even though I, I...
what's provoked it—
the spark—
was the verdict,
which was
absurd.
But that was just the spark—
this had been set
for years before.
But maybe,
not maybe,
but, uh, the
system
plays unequally,
and the people who were
the, they,
who were burning down the Beverly Center
had been victims of the system.
Whether well-intentioned or not,
somebody got the short shrift,
and they did,
and I started to
absorb a little guilt
and say, uh,
"I deserve,
I deserve it!"
I don't mean I deserve to get my house burned down.
The us
did
not in . . .
not,
(This interview is from a speech that she gave at the First African Methodist Episcopal Church, just after Daryl Gates had resigned and soon after the upheaval. FAME is a center for political activity in LA. Many movie stars go there. On any Sunday you are sure to see Arsenio Hall and others. Barbra Streisand contributed money to the church after the unrest. It is a very colorful church, with an enormous mural and a huge choir with very exciting music. People line up to go in to the services the way they line up for the theater or a concert.

(Maxine Waters is a very elegant, confident congresswoman, with a big smile, a fierce bite, and a lot of guts. Her area is in South-Central. She is a brilliant orator. Her speech is punctuated by organ music and applause. Sometimes the audience goes absolutely wild.)

First
African
Methodist Episcopal Church.
You all here got it going on.
I didn’t know this is what you did at twelve o’clock on Sunday.
Methodist,
Baptist,
Church of God and Christ all rolled into one.
There was an insurrection in this city before and if I remember correctly it was sparked by police brutality.

Twilight 159
We had a Kerner Commission report.
It talked about what was wrong with our society.
It talked about institutionalized racism.
It talked about a lack of services,
lack of government responsive to the people.
Today, as we stand here in 1992,
if you go back and read the report
it seems as though we are talking about what that report cited
some twenty years ago still exists today.
Mr. President,
THEY'RE HUNGRY IN THE BRONX TONIGHT;
THEY'RE HUNGRY IN ATLANTA TONIGHT,
THEY'RE HUNGRY IN ST. LOUIS TONIGHT.
Mr. President,
our children's lives are at stake.
We want to deal with the young men who have been
dropped off of
America's agenda.
Just hangin' out,
chillin',
nothin' to do,
owhere to go.
They don't show up on anybody's statistics.
They're not in school,
they have never been employed,
they don't really live anywhere.
They move from grandmother
to mama to girlfriend.
They're on general relief and
they're sleepin' under bridges.

Mr. President,
Mr. Governor,
and anybody else who wants to listen:
Everybody in the street was not a thug
or a hood.
For politicians who think
everybody in the street
who committed a petty crime,
stealing some Pampers
for the baby,
a new pair of shoes . . .
We know you're not supposed to steal,
but the times are such,
the environment is such,
that good people reacted in strange ways. They are not all
crooks and
criminals.

If they are,
Mr. President,
what about your violations?
Oh yes.
We're angry,
and yes,
this Rodney King incident.
The verdict.
Oh, it was more than a slap in the face.
It kind of reached in and grabbed you right here in the heart
and it pulled at you
and it hurts so bad.
They want me to march out into Watts,

160 Anna Deavere Smith

Twilight 161
as the black so-called leadership did in the sixties,
and say, “Cool it, baby,
cool it.”
I am sorry.
I know how to talk to my people.
I know how to tell them not to put their lives at risk.
I know how to say don’t put other people’s lives at risk.
But, journalists,
don’t you dare dictate to me
about what I’m supposed to say.
It’s not nice to display anger.
I am angry.
It is all right to be angry.
It is unfortunate what people do when they are frustrated
and angry.
The fact of the matter is,
whether we like it or not,
riot
is the voice of the unheard.

Oh, Washington
is, um,
a place where
ritual and custom
does not allow them
to,

uh,
talk about things that
don’t fit nicely into
the formula.
I mean, our leadership
is so far removed
from what really goes on in the world
they, um,
it’s not enough to say they’re insensitive
or they don’t care.
They really
don’t
know.
I mean, they really don’t see it,
they really don’t understand it,
they really don’t see their lives in
relationship to
solving these kinds of problems.
Um,
not only did they not talk about it,

um,
I had to force myself
on them in every way
and I did.
I was outrageous
in things that I did. (She laughs)
When I heard about a meeting at the White House
to talk about a kind of urban package,
I could not believe
that they would attempt to even try to have this meeting
without involving,
if not me,
The chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus,
if not me,
John Lewis,
who’s supposed to be part of the leadership,
he is a whip,
part of the leadership, right?
I heard about this meeting on television,
And when I checked in with the Speaker
I asked the Speaker if there was a meeting going on.
He said yes.
I said, “I was not invited.”

Uh.

“Who was invited?”
He said, “It’s the leadership.
I don’t control the

White House invitations. The President does the inviting
and it’s not up to me to decide who’s in the meeting.”

And I told him,
I said,
“Well,

uh,
what time is this meeting?”
He said, “Well, I’m on my way over there now.”
And I said,
“Well, I’ll meet you over there,
because,” I said,
“T’m coming
over.”
And I was angry
and I went out,
I caught a cab.
I drive
but I didn’t drive because I didn’t trust myself.
I was angry.
I caught a cab.
I told the cabdriver, I said,
“Take me to the White House.”
I said, “Hurry, I’m late.
I have an appointment at the White House.”
He kind of looked at me like,
“yeah, right.”
He took me there.
I used my little card,
my little
congressional card,
to show to the gate guard.

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They don't know if I'm supposed to
be in this meeting or not,
so I show them the card. They open the gate. I went down,
opened the door.
Some lady inside
said, "Oh my God, we weren't expecting you."
I said, "You better tell them I'm here."
And I saw this big guard come out
and I was thinkin' to myself:
If they try
and put me out . . .
I started to plan what I was gonna do to this guard,
where I was gonna kick him,
and he looked at me
and he walked past, he didn't do anything.
Someone came out and said, "Right this way,
Congresswoman."
I said, "Thank you."
And the young lady ushered me.
I said,
"Where is my seat?"
And people kind of looked at me
and I sat down
and everybody sat down
and when the President
came in
everybody stood
and the President looked around the room
and he looked.
When he saw me
he looked,

he had a kind of quiz
on his face,
but he was nice.
His cabinet was there.
And, oh,
Sullivan
from
Health and Human Services,
one other
black was there,
and he went around the room
and they started to talk about this bill
that was being proposed, the enterprise zone bill,
and after about five or six persons I said,
"Mr. President,
Hi. I'm here because I want to tell you about what I think is
needed
to deal with the serious problem
of unemployment,
hopelessness, and despair
in these cities."
I said, "Los Angeles burned
but Los Angeles is but one
city
experiencing
this kind of hopelessness and despair,"
I said, "and we need a job
program
with stipends . . ."
I said, "These young people
really,
ya know,
are not in anybody's statistics
or data.
They've been dropped off of everybody's agenda.
They live
from grandmama to mama to girlfriend."
I said,
"We now got young people
who are twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two years old
who have never worked a day of their lives."
I said, "These are the young people in our streets
and they are angry
and they are frustrated."
I said, "Don't take my word for it.
Ask Jack Kemp.
He's in housing projects. Ask him
what's going on out there."
Jack Kemp goes, "That's not my
department.
That's better asked of Secretary
Lynn Martin."
Well,
Lynn Martin was not there, but
her representative
was there
and it turns out
that this was a black man who didn't look black at
all.
He looked at the President
and he said,
"Mr. President,
she's right."
Well, the President's back stiffened
and he didn't try and relate to that.
He picked up on a part where I had talked about
the Justice Department.
I also said
that all of this anger and despair
was
exacerbated by the
excessive use of force
by police departments,
that the Justice Department
has never ever used its power
to do anything about
excessive force in these cities,
and that, in addition
to
this,
dealing with this joblessness,
the Justice Department of the United States is
going to have to find a way to intervene in these cities when
these
police departments are out of control.
So when this gentleman
from the Department of Labor supported
what I was saying and looked at the President
and said,
"This country is falling
apart."
Trophies
Paul Parker Chairperson, Free the LA Four Plus Defense Committee

(Afternoon, October 1993. His girlfriend's house in Westwood. He is dressed in Ivy League clothing. I had seen him in court several times, where he wore African clothing. He told me he wore Ivy League clothing in Westwood, so as to be able to move with the "program" and not to attract too much attention.)

So it's just a PR type of program.
Gates knew that the police were catching a lot of flak and he also caught a lot of flak from being at a benefit banquet,
'un, the time when the rebellion was comin' down,
jumpin' off.
It just goes to show more or less the extremes that he went to just to get these brothers.
And when they came for my brother Lance more or less,
they sent out two SWAT teams simultaneously,
one to my brother's and my fiancée's residence and one to my mom's.
They basically had America's Most Wanted TV cameras there.
Saying he was a known gang member,
a big head honcho drug dealer in the underground world for the last two years,
he owns two houses,
things of this nature,
and here my brother went to college for four years,
he's been working in a law firm as a process server.
They basically paraded him around in the media,
saying we got the gunman, we got this guy.
They accused him of attempted murder, of shootin' at Reginald Denny,
'um, with a shotgun. They said he attempted to blow up some gas pumps
and my father got shot in the streets eleven years ago over a petty robbery,
and Van de Kamp, their attitude was "We don't want to bring your family through the trauma and drama,
just stir up some more trouble."
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, oh, they gonna... they gonna go to any extremes necessary to basically convict some black people.
So that's more or less how... really what made me bitter and I said well, I ain't gonna stand for this,
I'm not gonna let you
just put my brother's face around world TV headline news, CNN world span,
and just basically portray him as a negative person.
I'm not gonna let you do that.
So that's more or less when I just resigned from my job,
more or less quit my job, and I just took it on.
And like I said, I been in law enforcement for a while, I
been in the
army for six years,
I been doin' a lot of things.
So I just decided I'm not gonna let my brother, my one and
only
brother, go down like that, my one and only brother,
my younger brother; so I decided to take this on full-time
and I was voted in as being chairperson of the Free the LA
Four
Plus Defense Committee
and I been workin' for all the brothers ever since.
Because Denny is white,
that's the bottom line.
If Denny was Latino,
Indian, or black,
they wouldn't give a damn,
they would not give a damn.
Because
many people got beat,
but you didn't hear about the Lopezes or the Vargas
or the, uh, Quintanas
or the, uh,
Tarvins.

You didn't hear about them,
but you heard about the Reginald Denny beating,
the Reginald Denny beating,
the Reginald Denny beating.
This one white boy
paraded all around
this nation
to go do every talk show there is,
get paid left and right.
Oh, Reginald Denny,
this innocent white man.
But you didn't hear nothin' about all these other victims
until the day of the trial came.

(***mimicking dorky voice***)
"Well, this is more than about Reginald Denny. This is
about several
people. Many people got beat up on the corner."
So the bottom line is it, it's
a white victim, you know, beaten down by some blacks.
"Innocent."
I don't see it on the innocent tip,
because if that's the case,
then we supposed to have some empathy
or some sympathy toward this one white man?
It's like well, how 'bout the empathy and the sympathy
toward blacks?
You know, like I said before, we innocent. Like I said,
you kidnapped us,
you raped our women,
you pull us over daily,
have us get out of our cars, sit down on the curb,
you go through our cars,
you say all right,
take all our papers out, go through our trunk,
all right,
and drive off,
don't even give us a ticket.
You know we innocent,
you know where's our justice,
where's our self-respect,
but, hey, you want us to feel something toward
this white man, this white boy.

I'm like please,
it ain't happenin' here,
not from the real brothers and sisters.

That white man,
some feel that white boy just better be glad he's alive,
'cause a lot of us didn't make it.

They caught it on video.
Some brothers beatin' the shit out of a white man.
And they were going to do everything in their power to
convict these
brothers.

We spoke out on April 29.
Hoo (real pleasure),
it was flavorful,
it was juicy.
It was, uh,

it was good for the soul,
it was rejuven . . .
it was . . .
(count four, he sighs)
You know, we got rid of all that.
We did more in three days than all these
politicians been doin’ for years.
We just spoke out.
We didn’t have a plan.
We just acted and we acted in a way that was just.
Now we got some weapons, we got our pride.
We holdin’ our heads up and our chest out.
We like yeah, brother, we did this!
We got the gang truce jumpin’ off.
Basically it’s
that you as black people ain’t takin’ this shit no more.
Even back in slavery.
’Cause I saw Roots when I was young.
My dad made sure. He sat us down
in front of that TV
when Roots came on,
so it’s embedded in me
since then.
And just to see that aye aye.
This is for Kunta.
This is for Kizzy.
This is for Chicken George.
I mean,
it was that type of thing,
it was some victory.
I mean, it was burnin’ everywhere.
It was takin’ things and nobody was tellin’ nobody.
It wasn’t callin’ 911.
“Aww they are takin’.”
Unh-unh, it was like “Baby, go get me some too.”

“I’m a little bit too old to move but get me somethin’,”
You know, I mean, it was the spirit. I mean, actually today
they don’t know who . . . who . . . who . . .
You know, they only got these . . .
What?
Eight people.
Eight people
out of several thousand?
Um (real mock disappointment).
Um, um,
they lost.
Oh.
Big time.
No Justice No Peace.
That’s just more or less, I guess you could say, motto.
When I finally get my house I’m gonna have just one room
set aside.
It’s gonna be my No Justice No Peace room.
Gonna have up on the wall No Justice,
over here No Peace,
and have all my articles
and clippings and, um,
everything else.
I guess so my son can see,
my children can grow up with it.
Know what Daddy did.
You know, if I still happen to be here,
God willin’,
they can just see what it takes
to be a strong black man,
what you gotta do for your people,
you know.
When God calls you, this is what you gotta do.
You either stand
or you fall.
You either be black
or you die
and (exhale),
you know, with No Justice No Peace
it . . . it's,
you know, um,
I guess you might say it's fairly simple,
but to me it's pretty, um,
not complex,
but then again it's deep,
it's nothin' shallow.
It basically just means if there's no justice here
then we not gonna give them any peace.
You know, we don't have any peace.
They not gonna have no peace,
a peace of mind,
you know,
a physical peace,
you know, body.
You might have a dent . . . a dent in your head from now
on in life.
It might not be you
but it may be your daughter.
You know, somewhere
in your family
you won't have no peace.
You know, it . . . it's that type of thing.

Without doing, say, justice,
if I don't do what I'm doing,
when I do
happen to die,
pass away,
I won't be able to really rest,
I won't have no peace,
'cause I didn't do something in terms of justice.
I'm one brother
doing the work of
one brother
and
I just do that,
the best that I can do.
It's educational.
It's a blessing.
It's a gift from God.
It’s Awful Hard to Break Away

Daryl Gates  Former chief of Los Angeles Police Department and current talk show host

(In a lounge at the radio station where he does a talk show. He is in great physical shape and is wearing a tight-fitting golf shirt and jeans. There is the sound of a Xerox machine. This is my second interview with him.)

First of all, I . . . I don’t think it was a fund-raiser.
I don’t think it was a fund-raiser at all.
It was a group of people
who were in opposition
to Proposition F.
We’re talking about long-term support.
We’re talking about people who came out and supported me right from the beginning of this controversy,
when people were trying to get me to retire and everything.
Real strong supporters of mine
and they were supporting a no against Prop . . . Proposition F.
And they begged me to be there
and I said I would and this is before we knew the . . . the,

uh, verdicts were coming in
and I didn’t wanna go.
I didn’t like those things, I don’t like them at all, but
strong supporters and I said I’ll drop by for a little while, I’ll drop by,
and, um, so I had a commitment and I’m a person who tries very hard to keep commitments
and somewhere along the way better sense should have prevailed.
Not because it would have changed the course of . . . of events in any way, shape, or form, it would ’t have.
I was in constant contact with my office.
I have radio beepers, telephones, uh, a portable telephone . . . telephone in my car, just about everything you’d need to communicate anywhere within our power.
But somewhere along the line I should have said my commitment to them is not as important as my overall commitment to the . . . to the city.
When I . . . when I thought things were getting to the point that I had . . . we were having some serious problems,
I was almost there.
My intent was to drop in, say, "Hey, I think we got a . . . a, uh, riot blossoming. I can't stay. I gotta get out of here." And that's basically what I did. The problem was I was further away. I thought it was in Bel Air. It turned out to be Pacific Palisades.

And my driver kept saying, "We're almost there, we're almost there." You know, he was kinda . . . he wasn't sure of the distance either. "We're almost there, Chief, we're almost there."

My intent was to say, "Hey, I . . . I gotta get outta here," say hi, and that's what I intended to do, and it's awful hard to break away. I kept walking toward the door, walking toward the door. People want a picture. Shake your hand. And it took longer than I thought it was and I've criticized myself from the very beginning. I've never, uh, I've never, uh, justified that in any way, shape, or form. I said it was wrong. I shouldn't have . . . I should have turned around.

I know better. Would it have made any difference if I had closeted myself in . . . in my office and did nothing? I never would have been criticized. But the very fact that it gave that . . . that perception of a fund-raiser, and I know in the minds of some that's a big cocktail party and it wasn't that at all, eh, but, eh, in somebody's home and there weren't that many people there at all and anyway . . . But I shouldn't have gone! If for no other reason than it's given so many people who wanted it an opportunity to carp and to criticize, for . . . for I should have been smarter. I'm usually smart enough to realize hey, I know I'll be criticized for that, and I'm not going to give them the opportunity. But for some reason I didn't and, uh . . . I think a lot of people who have . . . have looked at me as being, uh,
stubborn and
obstinate
because I wouldn't compromise
and I was not going to be forced out of the department
and I believed it would be overall harmful to the
department to be
forced out
and I think
the department was demoralized anyway
and I think it would just have absolutely
totally demoralized 'em.
And when I stood up,
they said, “Hey,
by golly, uh,
uh,
he's saying a lot of things that
I'd like to say.”
And some of them were just shaking with anger because
they were
being accused of things
that
they wouldn't think of doing and
didn't do
and they know the people around them,
their partners, wouldn't have done those types of things.
I don't think there's anyone who doesn't feel and isn't
sensitive to
what is being said about them:
day in and day out.
All you gotta do is pick up a newspaper and see what's
being said
about you in the Los Angeles Times
and the . . . and, and the . . . and in the electronic media.
I mean, it was day in and day out.
Editorials
and all kinds of things.
I mean, the community activists
and most of them were really nasty
politicians,
nasty. I mean, they weren't so . . .
Nobody likes to read those types of things and more
importantly
no one wants their friends and family
to read those kinds of things and I mean, uh, uh, it's a
terribly difficult
thing to endure
and when people hear it over and over and over again.
And I make speeches
on college campuses all across the country
and I swear
I have a group,
mostly African-Americans,
and I swear
I am the symbol
of police oppression
in the United States,
if not the world.
I am,
Me!
And I ask them:
Who told you this?
What gave you this idea?
You don’t know me.
You don’t have any idea
what I’ve done.
Forty-three years in law enforcement,
no one has said that about me,
no one.
And suddenly
I am the symbol
of police oppression
and it’s a tough thing to deal with,
a very tough thing.
You know,
just prior
to this,
in a poll
taken by a legitimate pollster,
the individual
with the greatest credibility
in the state of California—
I can’t say the state
of California,
but the southern
part of the state of California—
was me.
The most popular Republican in Los Angeles
and Los Angeles County
was me.
I got more support
than
Ronald Reagan,
George Denicmejian,
what other Republicans,
Pete Wilson.
I got more support,
and suddenly!
suddenly!
I am the symbol.
And, you know,
on the day
that the Rodney thing [sic],
thing
happened,
the
President of the United States
was declaring me a national hero
for the work that I had done
in drugs
and narcotics
and the work that I had done with kids
and a lot of those kids were black kids.
And suddenly,
suddenly,
I am the symbol
of police oppression.
Just because some officers
whacked Rodney King
out in Foothill Division
while I was in Washington, D.C.
I remember going out
finally on Saturday to, um, do some cleanup work.
And I remember
very distinctly
going down there and choosing to wear my clerical collar.
And I haven't worn my clerical collar for about seven or eight years,
you know,
because, you know, people call me "Father,"
all this kind of stuff,
and I didn't like that identification.
But I remember doing that specifically
because I was afraid that somebody
would mistake me for a Korean shop owner
and ... and, um, either berate me physically or beat me up.
So I remember hiding behind this collar
for protection.
The reason why a minister should wear a collar
is to proclaim ...
to let everybody know who he is and what he is,
but I'm using it for protection,
which I, I knew about that
and I said, "Gee."
But I didn't take it off.
Anyway, I went down
and we were asked to go
and pick up
stuff from the Price Club
and so I had to go down to the bank
and get money
and I went to the area.
Also I remember some people complaining
that Korean-Americans didn't patronize black businesses.
So I made sure that I went to black businesses for lunch
and whatnot, wearing my collar and waiting around for food.
And I remember just going to people and people just
looking at me.
And . . . and I usually kind of slump over when I walk, but
in this case I
kind of stood straight and I had my neck high
and I made sure that everyone saw my collar.

(Laughs)
And . . . and I, I just went to somebody and, um, who was standing
next in line and I said,
"How are you doing?"
Every . . . every place I went
I got the same answer:
"Oh, I'm doing all right. How are you?"

And I said, "Oh, I'm just trying to make it."
And there'd be a chuckle.
And . . . and agreement.
And then we just started having this conversation.
And in every instance, you know,
of these people that quote unquote
were supposed to be hostile on TV and whatnot,
there was nothing but warmth,
nothing but a sense of . . . of
"Yeah, we should stick together" and nothing but friendliness
that I have felt,
and this was, um, a discovery
that I had been out of touch with this part of the city.
After a couple of days
I stopped wearing the collar
and I realize that if there's any protection I needed
it was just whatever love I had in my heart to share with
people that
proved to be enough,
the love that God has taught me to share.
That is what came out in the end for me.
Application of the Laws

Bill Bradley  Senator, D-New Jersey  
(210) 267-2441  
(His office in the Senate Building, A Sunday in February 1993. A well-lit office with wonderful art on the wall. He is dressed in jeans but is wearing very elegant English shoes. His daughter is in the other part of the empty office doing her homework. They are on their way to a basketball practice for her.)

I mean, you know, it’s still . . .
there are people who are, uh,
who the law treats in different ways.
I mean, you know, one of the things that strike me about,
the events of Los Angeles, for example, was, um, the following:
I have a friend,
an African American,
I think a second-year Harvard Law School student.
And he was interning
a summer in the late seventies
out in L.A., at a big law firm,
and every Sunday
the . . . the different partners would . . .
would invite the interns to their home
for tea or brunch or whatever.
And this was a particular Sunday and he was on his way
driving
to one of the partners’ homes.

There’s a white woman in the car with him.
I think she was an intern.
I’m not positive of that.
They were driving and they were in the very . . .
just about the neighborhood of the,
uh, partner, obviously well-to-do neighborhood in Los Angeles.

Suddenly he looks in the rearview mirror.
There is a, uh, police car,
red light.
He pulls over.

Police car pulls in front of him,
pull . . . police car pulls behind him,
police car pulls beside of him.
Police jump out,
guns, pull him out of the car,
throw him to the floor,
put a handcuff on him behind his back.
All the while pointing a gun at him.
Run around to the woman on the other side. “You’re being held
against your will, aren’t you, being held against your will.”
She gets hysterical
and they keep their guns pointed.
Takes them fifteen or twenty minutes to convince them.
“No, no, I’m not, uh, I’m not, uh, I’m, I’m, I’m, I’m an intern, law firm,
I’m on my way to a meeting, partner’s brunch.”
And after that, he convinces them of that, while his head is down in
the ground, right?
They take the handcuff off.
They say, "Okay, go ahead."
They put their hats on, flip their sunglasses down, get in
their police
cars, and drive away, as if nothing happened.
So my first reaction
to that is, um ...  
The events of April aren't new
or the Rodney King
episode isn't news in Los Angeles
or in many other places.
My second thought is: What did the partner of that law firm
do on
Monday?
Did the partner call the police commissioner?
Did the partner call anybody?
The answer is no.
And it gets to, well,
who's got responsibility here?
I mean, all of us have responsibility
to try to improve the circumstances
among the races of this country.
I mean, you know, uh, a teenage mother's got a
responsibility
to realize that if she has more children the life chances of
those
children are gonna be less;
the gang member's gotta be held accountable for his finger
on a gun.
Right?

The corporate executive has gotta be responsible for hiring
and
promoting diverse talent
and the head of the law firms gotta be responsible for that
as well,
but
both the corporate executive and the law firm have to use
their moral power.
It's not a total contradiction.
I don't think it is. The moral power of the law firm
or corporation when
moments arise such as my friend's face in the ground with
the gun
pointed at his head because he was in the wrong
neighborhood and
black
and the moral power of those institutions have to be brought
to bear
in the public institutions, which in many places are not
fair.
To put it mildly.
Right? And the application of the law
before which we are all in theory equal.
This twilight moment
is an in-between moment.
It's the moment of dusk.
It's the moment of ambivalence
and ambiguity.
The incalculability,
the enigma,
the ambivalences,
in what happened in the L.A.
uprisings
are precisely what we want to get hold of.
It's exactly the moment
when the L.A. uprisings could be something
else
than it was
seen to be,
or maybe something
other than it was seen to be.
I think when we look at it in twilight
we learn
to...
we learn three things:

one, we learn that the hard outlines of what we see in
daylight
that make it easy for us to order
daylight
disappear.
So we begin to see its boundaries in a much more faded
way.
That fuzziness of twilight
allows us to see the intersections
of the event with a number of other things that daylight
obscures for
us,
to use a paradox.
We have to interpret more in
twilight,
we have to make ourselves
part of the act,
we have to interpret,
we have to project more.
But also the thing itself
in twilight
challenges us
to
be aware
of how we are projecting onto the event itself.
We are part of
producing the event,
whereas, to use the daylight
metaphor,
there we somehow think
the event and its clarity
as it is presented to us,
and we have to just react to it.
Not that we're participating in its clarity:
it's more interpretive,
it's more creative.
Limbo/Twilight #2
Twilight Bey Organizer of gang truce

(In a Denny’s restaurant in a shopping center. Saturday morning, February 1993. He is a gang member. He is short, graceful, very dark skinned. He is soft-spoken and even in his delivery. He is very confident.)

Twilight Bey,
that’s my name.
When I was
twelve and thirteen,
I stayed out until, they say,
until the sun come up.
Every night, you know,
and that was my thing.
I was a watchdog.
You know, I stayed up in the neighborhood,
make sure we wasn’t being rolled on and everything,
and when people
came into light
a what I knew,
a lot a people said,
“Well, Twilight, you know,
you a lot smarter and you have a lot more wisdom than those
twice your age.”
And what I did, you know.

Twilight 253
I was
at home writing one night
and I was writing my name
and I just looked at it and it came ta me:
“twi,”
abbreviation
of the word “twice.”
You take a way the “ce.”
You have the last word,
“light.”
“Light” is a word that symbolizes knowledge, knowing,
wisdom,
within the Koran and the Holy Bible.
Twilight.
I have twice the knowledge of those my age,
twice the understanding of those my age.
So twilight
is
that time
between day and night.
Limbo,
I call it limbo.
So a lot of times when I've brought up ideas to my
homeboys,
they say,
“Twilight,
that's before your time,
that's something you can't do now.”
When I talked about the truce back in 1988,
that was something they considered before its time,
yet

in 1992
we made it
realistic.
So to me it's like I'm stuck in limbo,
like the sun is stuck between night and day
in the twilight hours.
You know,
I'm in an area not many people exist.
Nighttime to me
is like a lack of sun,
and I don't affiliate
darkness with anything negative.
I affiliate
darkness with what was first,
because it was first,
and then relative to my complexion.
I am a dark individual,
and with me stuck in limbo,
I see darkness as myself.
I see the light as knowledge and the wisdom of the world
and
understanding others,
and in order for me to be a, to be a true human being,
I can't forever dwell in darkness,
I can't forever dwell in the idea,
of just identifying with people like me and understanding me
and mine.
So I'm up twenty-four hours, it feels like,
and, you know,
what I see at nighttime
is,
like,
little kids
between the ages of
eight and eleven
out at three in the morning.
They beatin' up a old man on the bus stop,
a homeless old man.
You know,
I see these things.
I tell 'em, "Hey, man, what ya all doin'?
Whyn't ya go on home?
What ya doin' out this time of night?"
You know,
and then when I'm in my own neighborhood, I'm driving
through and I
see the living dead, as we call them,
the base heads,
the people who are so addicted on crack,
if they need a hit they be up all night doin' whatever they
have to do
to make the money to get the hit.
It's like gettin' a total dose
of what goes on in the daytime creates at night.