

# 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.)

**A**n 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

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-suiter,  
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,

2 Anna Deavere Smith

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,

Twilight 3

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 *cholos*  
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.)

**V**ery

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

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 even,

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.

# When I Finally Got My Vision/Nightclothes

**Michael Zinzun** Representative,  
Coalition Against Police Abuse

(In his office at Coalition Against Police Abuse. There are very bloody and disturbing photographs of victims of police abuse. The most disturbing one was a man with part of his skull blown off and part of his body in the chest area blown off, so that you can see the organs. There is a large white banner with a black circle and a panther. The black panther is the image from the Black Panther Party. Above the circle is "All Power to the People." At the bottom is "Support Our Youth, Support the Truce.")

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!

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  
shootin' 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



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 police 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  
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

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.

# Where the Water Is

## Sergeant Charles Duke

Special Weapons and Tactics Unit, LAPD Use-of-force expert for the defense witness, Simi Valley and Federal trials

(He is standing with a baton. He is wearing glasses and a uniform and black shoes.)

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.

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,

but not as vivid as that one.

I just had this dream and in my heart felt . . .

and I saw the

men

and it was in the courtroom and I just

had it in my heart . . .

something is happening

and I heard they were acquitted,

because dreams are made of some kind of indelible  
substance.

And my co-worker said, "You shouldn't think like this,"

and I said, "I wasn't thinking

it was a dream."

And that's all,

and it came to pass.

# 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,

70 **Anna Deavere Smith**

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

**Twilight 71**



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!

# Magic

## Gil Garcetti District attorney

(Gil Garcetti came into office as district attorney of Los Angeles in 1992. He followed Ira Reiner, who had been in office during the unrest. He is a very handsome man with prematurely white hair and a lot of energy. He is in very good physical shape. We met one morning in his office. It is a large, brightly lit, immaculately kept office with a good view. The seal of the state of California is behind his desk as well as an American flag and the flag of the state of California. He is wearing a bright-colored tie. The head of public relations, Suzanne Childs, sat in on the interview. She was an elegant, simply dressed attractive blond woman. Both she and Mr. Garcetti were very upbeat, friendly people. We met in the spring of 1993.)

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  
thee [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,

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

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.

# A Weird Common Thread in Our Lives

## Reginald Denny

(In the office of Johnnie Cochran, his lawyer. A conference room. Walls are lined with law books. Denny is wearing a baseball hat and T-shirt. His friend, a man, is there with a little girl. One of Cochran's assistants, a young black woman attorney, sits in on the interview. Denny is upbeat, speaks loudly. Morning, May 1993.)

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 something 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 '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 praising 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,  
seein' 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  
the Grill  
in Beyerly 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



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*.

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.

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,

I like to think, not intentionally,  
but  
maybe so,  
there's just . . .  
it's so  
awful out there,  
it was so *heartbreaking*,  
seeing those . . .  
the devastation that went on  
and people reduced to burning down their own  
neighborhoods.  
Burning down our neighborhoods  
I could see.  
But burning down their own—  
that was more dramatic  
to me.

# The Unheard

**Maxine Waters** Congresswoman,  
35th District

(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.)

**F**irst

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.

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,  
nowhere 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 grandma  
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,

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.

## Washington

**Maxine Waters** Congresswoman,  
35th District

(I am in her office in Los Angeles. It is during a rainstorm. Late afternoon. Winter 1993. We talk for about two hours. Her original office had been burned down during the unrest.)

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,

"I'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.

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,

um, 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 Vaccas  
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, 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*)

it, it, it was beautiful.  
I was a cornerback  
and I ran some track  
and played football,  
everything.  
I been all off into sports since I was five.  
It was . . .  
it was bigger than any . . . any type of win I've been  
involved in.  
I mean, we been National Champions,  
Golden State League.  
I been . . .  
I have so many awards and trophies,  
but, um, it's . . . it's nothing compared to this.  
They lost seven hundred million dollars.  
I mean, basically you puttin' a race of people on notice.  
We didn't get to Beverly Hills but  
that doesn't mean we won't get there,  
you keep it up.  
Um,  
they're talkin' about "You burned down your own  
neighborhoods."  
And I say, "First of all,  
we burned down these Koreans in this neighborhood."  
About ninety-eight percent of the stores that got burned  
down were  
Korean.  
The Koreans was like the Jews in the day  
and we put them in check.  
You know, we got rid of all these Korean stores over here.  
All these little liquor stores.

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 wouldn'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 Deukmejian,

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. . .

**Rev. Tom Choi** Minister, Westwood  
Presbyterian Church

(In a pastor's office in the church, a church with an affluent congregation. Afternoon, during a rain-storm, winter 1993. He is a tall, slender Chinese-American man. He was educated at Yale Divinity School and labors during the interview to be clear and not to overstate.)

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

(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,  
uh, the events of Los Angeles, for example, was, um, the  
following:  
I have a friend,  
an African-American,  
uh, was, uh, uh,  
I think a second-year Harvard Law School student.  
And he was interning  
a summer in the late seventies  
out in LA, 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.

# Twilight #1

Homi Bhabha Literary critic/

Writer/Scholar

(Phone interview. He was in England. I was in L.A.  
He is part Persian, lived in India. Has a beautiful  
British accent.)

This twilight moment  
is an in-between moment.  
It's the moment of dusk.  
It's the moment of ambivalence  
and ambiguity.  
The inclarity,  
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.)

**T**wilight 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,

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.