

TEACHING AND TRUTH

“All You Needed Was Godzilla behind Them”

Situating (Racial) Knowledge and Teaching

Anna Deavere Smith’s Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992

Jake Mattox

Driving from the airport on the west side of South Bend, Indiana, fans on their way to a Notre Dame football game will pass a sign—gaining irony with each passing year—that declares, “South Bend: Building a Twenty-First Century City.” They will proceed on Lincoln Way West, an artery affording quick glimpses of racial minority and working-class/working-poor parts of town. They can then easily bypass a downtown that is struggling to attract precisely such visitors on their way to the campus, which is well ensconced with its own zip code, security force and fire department, post office, and power plant. To shop or dine, such visitors might simply walk across campus to the new Eddy Street Commons, a residential/retail development on the campus’s southern border. Or they might drive several minutes east to a busy retail corridor on Grape Road, a street that leads toward the “suburb” of Granger, where household income levels are more than double those of South Bend and more than 90 percent of residents are white.

South Bend, a postindustrial town and formerly the vibrant manufacturing home of such enterprises as Singer Sewing Machines, Oliver Chilled Plow Works, Bendix, and Studebaker, is like many others in the Midwest in its geographic mapping of economic and racial/ethnic disparity. The knowledge that many visitors have of it—and indeed, the familiarity of many residents—is limited to very specific geographic spaces demarcated by economic means and racial/ethnic background. For those Notre Dame visitors, that brief taxi ride along Lincoln Way will likely be all they see of the parts of the city with large percentages of working-poor, working-class, African American, and Latino/a residents.

South Bend is rich with universities, including a regional campus of the Indiana University system, where I teach in the English department. Located near the city’s eastern boundary with neighboring Mishawaka, IU South Bend

Jake Mattox is an associate professor of English at Indiana University, South Bend. His teaching and research interests include critical pedagogy, multiethnic US literature and culture, and the history of the US education system.

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serves approximately 7,700 undergraduates and 650 master's-level students. The university in some ways contributes to the racial geography of the city; recent data indicate that the racial and ethnic diversity of the student body is less than half—and perhaps even as low as one-third—that of the surrounding community.¹ With my predominantly white students, many of whom are part-time or “non-traditional,” one challenge is finding ways to help them think about the cultural, social, and political significance of race in US society and in the classroom, and in particular to get beyond the liberal “tolerance” model that limits itself to facile appreciation of other cultures and opposition to overt discrimination. In addition, building upon the work of scholars and activists such as Tim Wise, I try to help my students become aware of the often hidden prerogatives and assumptions behind white privilege, which can be difficult with working-class students who acutely feel not privilege but economic disadvantage.² Both of these goals, however, can be greatly facilitated through an overt and sustained consideration of knowledge itself: whether it is a product or a process, and whether we see it as static and unidirectional or as situationally determined, relationally formed, and emanating from multiple social locations, physical geographies, and groups.³

For an English professor, the cultural functioning of narrative and representation are crucial to the production of knowledge. Clearly, the main choices to consider in building a sense that knowledge emanates from multiple spheres are which texts to read and how to teach them. In what follows, I describe the choices I made on both counts in working with twenty-four undergraduates in a lower-division English course I designed on the topic of “literatures of protest” and taught in Spring 2011. The course, ENG-L 207, is not actually structured around the literatures of well-defined and discrete political or social movements; rather, I work from a combination of Ralph Ellison’s observation that *all* novels enact protest in one way or another and Terry Eagleton’s sense of literature as ideology. In other words, I ask students to think about how texts from different historical moments and within different genres—such as Harriet Beecher Stowe’s sentimental novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), Miné Okubo’s graphic protest account *Citizen 13660* (1946), and Claudia Rankine’s hybrid poetic narrative *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely* (2004)—engage with and make arguments of protest against specific institutional structures, racial assumptions, and cultural practices. This course thus poses the severe challenge of needing to newly historicize each text, but it fosters, through repetition, students’ recognition of and facility with that crucial move of locating a text within its specific historical, cultural, and political moment and allows them to work with a variety of genres, contexts, and voices.

Anna Deavere Smith’s stunning performance piece *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* was a key text, chosen for its immensely rewarding representational complexities rooted in issues of racial and ethnic identity and justice. In this play, Smith embodies many of the voices associated with the Los Angeles Rebellion

of 1992, such as Rodney King’s aunt, Police Chief Daryl Gates, and Korean immigrant and market owner June Park. In the months following the verdicts and unrest, Smith interviewed more than two hundred people who had been involved in some way with the spectrum of events associated with the beating of King.⁴ She then used roughly twenty-five of these as the basis for a one-woman theatre production—first in Los Angeles in 1993, and then in New York and New Jersey—and performed each individual identity through costume, makeup, set changes, and delivery of words taken from the interviews. The “texts” I assigned were both the book collection of selected transcribed interviews and a 2001 PBS video of her performance.⁵ Collectively, the stories tell about a decidedly non-“post-racial” moment and illustrate both appalling instances of race- and class-based institutional neglect and oppression and great opportunities for recognizing class intersectionality, interethnic alliances, and deeper organic and local knowledges.

Yet reading, watching, and hearing Smith’s powerful representations of multiple and varying voices still remains just that, an examination of a *representation*. My apprehension, in light of the other intense and moving stories that we encountered during the semester, was that these texts—dealing with issues that are not merely residual in the contemporary world, but still operate actively to influence economic organization and access to social power—would simply become another reading without requiring my students to step outside their familiar locales or ways of thinking. Their studies would continue to be located on the campus itself, in the privileged and intensely intellectual yet insular site of institutional academia. If we believe in a university education based on the liberal arts model—one devoted not solely to information gathering, data processing, and practical training but rather to a life-shaping and transformational process—then we need to challenge our habits of designating certain locations as the privileged sites of learning and create mobile and meaningful experiences outside of the classroom.⁶ Meaningful community engagement becomes central.

I was able to develop such an opportunity in partnership with a local social-service agency, La Casa de Amistad, which serves mostly low-income and Latino/a families and youth. The Youth Coordinator at La Casa and director of its ¡Adelante! America after-school program, which provides homework assistance and preparatory lessons on college, college literacy, and social awareness, offered particular help.⁷ I had initially become aware of this agency as a first-year faculty member through colleagues’ descriptions of their own experiences increasing the community engagement of their classes, and for several years I had been personally invested in issues of social justice pertaining to immigrant and Latino communities.⁸ Over the course of several meetings, the coordinator and I developed a plan that would help address some of her goals of bringing in more community members to work with her students, helping deliver a curriculum that focuses on racial history and social awareness, and, above all,

exposing the students to college courses, college students, and college campuses. Given that many program participants reside in households in which neither parent has attended college, it is crucial that these students become as familiar as possible with all aspects of getting to and succeeding in college. Thus Adelante strives to demystify the experience and enable students to envision themselves as not just belonging but thriving in higher education. Our plan also allowed me to meet my goals for my students, as outlined above. By going to La Casa's west-side location, they could learn from the Adelante students, who might not be that different economically from my working-class students but experience South Bend, Indiana, in ways differently shaped by geography, neighborhood, language, ethnicity, and race—precisely the kinds of experiences Smith depicts in her work. This collaborative project between the Adelante students and the students in my ENG-L 207 class—nearly one-third of whom would identify or be identified by others as Black or Latino/a, a higher percentage than in the university as a whole and certainly than most English classes—suggested the commonalities of working-class groups across race and ethnicity even as it demonstrated important differences in lived experience and ways of knowing.

Over the course of two weeks, my ENG-L 207 students met three times with approximately twelve students, grades 7 through 12, participating in the Adelante program. First, a small group of volunteers from my class went with me to the La Casa space about four miles east of campus. We met with the Adelante students, introduced ourselves, learned who they were, and discussed the basics: Smith's text and film, the Rodney King video and verdict, and the subsequent unrest. Both groups and I discussed early on the stakes involved in nomenclature: "riot," "rebellion," or something else? My students and I also offered an introduction into the kinds of questions and analyses we practice in the university-level study of literature, especially in terms of how texts, including documentaries that might appear to be ideologically neutral, present information in specific ways that dramatically shape the meanings they deliver. Our second meeting was also at La Casa, and for this my entire class attended. This was not a simple task, since some students have back-to-back classes on campus and thus arrived early and/or left late from our meeting at La Casa, and given the otherwise difficult schedules our working-class students negotiate with the competing obligations of families, jobs, and school. For our third meeting, we invited the Adelante students to our university classroom and then, after class, several of my students ate lunch with the Adelante participants at the campus dining hall. In our second and third meetings, the discussions included a brief introductory lecture, a large-group discussion, and small-group work that paired two or three of my students with one or two students from the Adelante program.

From my conversations with the Adelante coordinator, I knew that my curricular goals overlapped importantly with the goals of her program. This was especially true in terms of addressing gaps in student knowledge of US history—

particularly pertaining to race. The Adelante curriculum before our visit was designed in part to address this, as the students had also briefly studied South Bend Civil Rights and African American history. Smith’s text demands or at least rewards such knowledge; as Kamran Afary has noted, the text “focused on the events of April–May 1992, [yet] it encompassed a complex history of intersecting racial and ethnic conflicts in modern American history.”⁹ Furthermore, the text demonstrably connects individuals’ stories to past events, thus personalizing an abstracted history and making it immediate and contemporary. For example, a chapter whose importance stems in part from its position as the prologue to the collection features Mexican American Rudy Salas, whose words suggest both a pervasive anti-white hatred and a sense of intense frustration and regret at that anger. He tells of his experience being beaten by police in what is likely the “Zoot-Suit Riots” of 1943.¹⁰ Devastating to Salas, as he relates, is the fact that his own son Stephen, a Stanford student, has experienced the 1990s version of profiling and abuse at the hands of Los Angeles police. Salas also speaks of his grandfather, who “had rode with Villa and those people and remembers / when he / fought the gringos when they went into Chihuahua” (*TLA* 2). The text, through selecting these words from Salas and foregrounding them, thus invites inquiries and rewards knowledge about the 1940s and the 1916–1917 “Mexican Expedition” of US forces pursuing Pancho Villa for his border raids during the Mexican Revolution. Although neither group of students were deeply versed in either of these contexts, my university students were able to learn from the Adelante participants, some of whom cited older family members who had related stories of Mexican history and specifically the revolution. Their localized family knowledges thus generated alternate insights into the text and the arguments it makes in its representations of 1990s racial conflict.

Collaboratively studying Smith’s text thus demands and fosters the reconceptualization of what we think we know, or what we have forgotten, about history. *Twilight: Los Angeles*’s choice and presentation of this story, which links violence that might seem inaccessibly in the past (the Zoot-Suit Riots) to the present (via Salas’s son), takes on additional resonance when different groups of students draw upon distinct sets of family histories and current experiences. Furthermore, the text’s juxtaposition of multiple geographies, histories, and experiences serves, as Michael Omi and Howard Winant have argued in a 1993 analysis of the rebellion itself, to challenge many of the basic assumptions governing hegemonic “common sense” about race in the United States. They wrote that “a situation in which blacks, Latino/as, and whites were the rioters and blacks, Latino/as, whites, and Asians the *victims* of the violence generated a certain amount of explanatory difficulty.”¹¹ Multiple other examples throughout Smith’s text dwell in precisely this difficult spot of challenging simple and accepted narratives, such as the chapter using the words of former Black Panther leader Elaine Brown. Her references to US armed involvement in Iraq, Vietnam,

Nicaragua, and El Salvador suggest important connections between “domestic” and “foreign” instances of US injustices, while also linking the experiences of different groups and nationalities.

Both the text and the learning environment, connecting community sites, enact the formation of knowledge and interpretation whose insights stem from a juxtaposition of experiences, viewpoints, and histories. Students can thus explore key moments in US racial history and relate them importantly to personal stories, taking them out of the abstract or vague world of the history textbook. This is not to be underestimated: it stems from, and often prompts, continued student curiosity and desire to know and research, to fill gaps in their historical knowledge and in the public memory. *Twilight: Los Angeles*’s intense juxtaposition of the personal with the historical fosters and rewards just this kind of curiosity and diligence; it also allows groups of students with different racial and ethnic backgrounds to explore, discuss, interpret, and learn from others’ interpretations of specific historical moments. As one of my students noted in a survey response, “I think [*Twilight: Los Angeles*] was a good choice because I didn’t learn about any of this in my earlier education. People need to know about the issues raised in the book because they still matter today.”

Those historical moments—from the 1910s, the 1940s, and especially 1992—connect importantly to the present, and it is this immediacy of knowledge that can be discovered through taking students out of their classrooms.¹² Why is this geographic displacement so important? Students and residents of largely white working-class and upper-class neighborhoods can learn little beyond what they see; physically meeting Adelante students on the west side, away from campus and outside of my students’ own residential neighborhoods, can begin to crack the expectations about lived experience in a racialized culture. One reaction from a student illustrates both the success of our experiences in collaborative and off-campus learning and the limits of that success in many areas. In an informal and anonymous survey that I administered to my students after the meetings, this student answered the question of “What did YOU get out of this project?” in a way that revealed some persistent assumptions. The student wrote,

I learned a little about how to talk to the young students by watching or explaining words or concepts to them. Also, I learned that the students cared about the events in the movie. Therefore, they do not seem completely desensitized to violent treatment of minorities. Essentially I learned that I can learn from young people and they are willing to learn and discuss things that I did not think they would.

One immediate interpretation of this response would suggest the student’s sense that, due to a culture saturated with explicit imagery through film, video

games, etc., youths in general in the United States are little disturbed when exposed to incidents of actual violence. However, another possibility is the cultural expectation, established through decades of media narrative, that in the United States, the “minority” parts of town are dominated and menaced constantly by violence and gangs. By extension, this expectation presumes that the west side of South Bend contains precisely that ubiquitous and constant violence that would lead residents to shrug at the images of a Black man beaten with fifty-six baton blows by white police or a white trucker assaulted by several young Black men in South Central Los Angeles. If this interpretation is accurate, what would make my student assume that Latino/a youths on the west side of South Bend in particular would be desensitized to violence? While some neighborhoods in US cities do have high levels of gang activity, stories of that violence circulate in ways that preclude other narratives: of families, of working people, of students meeting to work on their college aspirations.

Thus, it is crucial for my students to interact with *Adelante* students and learn from how they reacted to *Twilight: Los Angeles*. I can—and do—offer my students readings and handouts, and opportunities for discussion, regarding the role of racial and class positioning in the modern United States. But for many, I sense that such learning in the classroom *stays* in the classroom, where its relevance seems limited. A white student at a regional midwestern university reading about the racial and class-based effects of legacy admissions at Harvard, for instance, learns about that in the company of mostly working- and middle-class white students, while the information is generally delivered by white faculty. Does this atmosphere affect the value and import of that information, perhaps by suggesting to students that it is their hard work and energy that take them to the IUSB classroom and implying that the absent racial and ethnic minorities have not done what is necessary to be there too? In other words, the context of the learning seems just as important as the questions and discussions themselves.

Another chapter of *Twilight: Los Angeles* that we discussed raises a similar point. Smith interviewed “Anonymous Man #2,” whom the text identifies as a “Hollywood Agent” at “a chic office in an agency in Beverly Hills” (TLA 134). The man describes what started as “business as usual” the first day of the unrest, which then turned to closing the office, and then offers some reflections on a degree of internalized guilt as he acknowledges that “the / system / plays unequally, / and the people who were / the, they / who were burning down the Beverly Center / had been victims of the system” (TLA 140). Yet equally notable is his description of the fear that developed at both a restaurant in Beverly Hills and then in his office, a fear based on a disconnection and separation from the people and racialized geographies that frame Los Angeles. He relates, “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” (TLA 137). In this exchange, the man presents his thought process when hearing someone’s exaggerated proclamation of fear based on a vague, generalized, unnamed and unnamable threat. The agent shows awareness of the problems with this fear, as he states, “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” (TLA 138). By evoking the image of the preternatural and oversized monster of Japanese horror films, the speaker exposes the absurdity of the reactions of those (presumably white and upper-class) residents of more affluent areas of the city. For them, knowledge of certain geographies and of people living about ten miles away rested upon exaggerated abstractions of fear.

This episode demonstrates the problematic knowledges that can take root when different classes and racial groups are separated geographically. For my students, this concept was especially notable in our discussion not just of Rudy Salas and “Anonymous Man #2” but also other aspects of *Twilight: Los Angeles* that combat the standard narrative of the Rodney King verdict and demonstrations held thereafter. That is, the text refuses the binary Black/white, criminal/victim narrative that had been constructed in media reports. For example, the beating of white trucker Reginald Denny by Black youths at the corner of Florence and Normandie had been well publicized live via helicopter news cameras.¹³ Yet the film version of *Twilight: Los Angeles* includes a brief news report on the four African Americans who risked their own lives to drive the unconscious Denny to the hospital after seeing live news reports of his beating.¹⁴ The text itself challenges this easy binary as well with its focus on Korean immigrant and Korean American voices, in addition to its attention to the Latino/a community. Indeed, as journalist Ruben Martinez asserts in the film version, one untold story of the rebellion was the fact that Latino/a residents made up of half of the population of South Central Los Angeles at the time. For those of viewing age in the early 1990s, it might have been easy to miss this multiracial aspect of the neighborhoods and of the rebellion.

Probably the most notable moment for our collaboration occurred in the context of precisely these multiracial complexities as the Adelante students saw them through the lens of present-day South Bend, Indiana. All of the secondary readings on loan practices, housing discrimination, mandatory sentencing, and university admissions—while absolutely crucial information—might rest in the vague and abstract realms for my students. But this is not the case when discussing the story of Rudy Salas, other Latino/as, and other racialized minorities as presented in *Twilight: Los Angeles*. When our discussion turned to considering ways that issues of racial justice manifest themselves in the contemporary United States, several Adelante students immediately called to mind Indiana SB 590. This legislation drew upon Arizona’s notorious SB 1070, which, among other provisions encouraging racial profiling and discrimination, charges local police

with verifying citizenship status if there is “reasonable suspicion” that a person they have otherwise approached is undocumented. Offering similar provisions, including “English-only” regulations and employment crackdowns, Indiana SB 590 was introduced in early 2011, exactly when our meetings were taking place, and a version of the bill went into effect in July of that year.

Most of my students were unaware of this proposed legislation; a few had heard the phrase “SB 590” but could not offer specifics. Thus, the students from grades 7–12 from the west side of South Bend were the immediate experts, both through their work in the Adelante program and their own experiences in their schools and communities discussing, debating, and fearing the new law. Although in our three brief meetings (seventy-five minutes each), many of the Adelante students were shy or reluctant to engage pointedly with my students, a few articulated directly and clearly what the legislation would mean to them: a sense that justice and opportunity in the United States are in fact mediated through skin color, nationality, home language, and neighborhood. It was this bridge that opened up further our discussion of *Twilight: Los Angeles*, a text whose narratives of conflict foreground the geography of race and the tension between representation and knowledge. The Adelante students’ descriptions of the bill and our collaborative reading of both it and Smith’s text helped demonstrate, in ways that cannot occur to the same degree in the separated classroom of the university, how unjust practices and legacies do not necessarily depend upon overtly racist beliefs and rhetoric. *Twilight: Los Angeles* makes this point repeatedly, even as it promotes alliances that transcend racial/ethnic and geographical boundaries. To varying degrees, this moment in the discussion also demonstrated to my students that while they, as members of the working class, have much in common with their working-class counterparts on the west side of town, some practices and narratives in the United States affect groups in vitally different ways. My hope (and my challenge) is to help them move their outlooks away from the safe and comfortable “tolerance” model through this kind of realization: lived experience and knowledges diverge importantly, in ways that unsettle common understandings of racial difference.

Postscript

Approximately six months after our collaboration, I saw further how relevant and destructive is this law—and wish my students could have similarly been present—when working with La Casa students on their college application essays. These included Pedro,¹⁵ a high-school senior who had taken part in our collaboration several months before. La Casa serves a largely (though not exclusively) Latino/a clientele, both documented and undocumented. Three of the students I was working with, all of whom had been in the United States for the

majority of their lives, were working on their applications and essays and exploring university options. For these students, however, my university and the entire IU system are now more or less impossible for them to attend. Because of SB 590, they are ineligible for the usual financial aid routes. And even when admitted, they are allowed to enroll only as “non-resident” students, meaning that a full-time load of courses would cost \$6,600 per semester in tuition as opposed to \$2,395. Thus Pedro, one of the more outspoken and engaged students who took part in our collaboration in April, finds himself in an impossible situation: likely to be admitted yet unable to pay outright or borrow for his education in a state where he has lived almost his entire life. Due to this law, many students in this situation will now be shut off even further from privileged sites of academic production. This exclusion deprives individuals, students of all backgrounds, and society as a whole of immensely valuable situated knowledges.

NOTES

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1. Fewer than 16 percent of IU South Bend students identify as members of racially/ethnically defined minority groups, whereas 2010 census data indicate that 26.6 percent of the larger South Bend community identified as “Black or African American” and 13 percent as “Hispanic or Latino (of any race).” These numbers are telling, even though figures from the university and census can be somewhat difficult to compare directly. Although the former asks students responding as “Hispanic” to further specify a “racial” category, it reports all such students under the category of “Hispanic,” comparable and equivalent to other “racial” categories. The census, on the other hand, treats “Hispanic or Latino” as not equivalent to a “racial” category. In other words, someone responding as “Hispanic” and “Black” at IU would be counted and publicly reported as “Hispanic”; someone responding similarly on the census would be listed in a “race” table under “Black or African American” as well as in an entirely separate reporting section titled “Hispanic or Latino.” IU South Bend information taken from the university’s “Common Data Set 2010–11,” available at <http://www.iu.edu/~uirr/reports/compliance/common/index.shtml>. Census data reported from the 2010 American Fact Finder, available at http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_DP_DPDP1&prodType=table.

2. Tim Wise, *White like Me* (New York: Soft Skull, 2005).

3. I draw from Hellen Lee’s arguments about knowledge as *process* rather than *product*; see “Scholarship Automatically Reminds Me of Grant Money”: Reconsidering and Revaluing Undergraduate Students and Scholarship,” in *Reading, Writing, and Research: The Undergraduate Student as Scholar in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Laura Behling (Washington, DC: Council on Undergraduate Research, 2009), 11–28. Also crucial here are George Lipsitz’s recent arguments building upon Donna Haraway’s and Teresa De Lauretis’s work on “situated knowledges”; see George Lipsitz, “Affinities, Affiliations, and Alliances: Why Asian American Studies Matters Now,” talk, Notre Dame University, South Bend, IN, September 8, 2011. Much of my post-collaboration reflection, and many ideas in this article, have been shaped by Lipsitz’s arguments in this lecture.

4. Kamran Afary, “Performing *Twilight Los Angeles*: Walking in the Words of a Sad and Beautiful Poem,” in *Performance and Activism: Grassroots Discourse after the Los Angeles Re-*

bellion of 1992 (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009), 173. This chapter is an excellent introduction to Smith and her work, especially *Twilight: Los Angeles*.

5. Anna Deavere Smith, *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* (New York: Anchor, 1994), xvii. Future references from this work will be made parenthetically in the text of this article as *TLA*. The book’s introduction provides an account from Smith about her performance, the text, and her goals.

6. The literature on the role of the university is enormous, but I’m thinking in particular here of the Boyer Commission’s attention to undergraduate *creation*, rather than simply *reception*, of new knowledge; see Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America’s Research Universities* (Stony Brook: State University of New York, 1998).

7. For more on this organization, see <http://www.lacasadeamistad.org>.

8. Prior to moving to South Bend, I had volunteered for four years as the Operations Manager for a start-up charter school serving low-income, largely Latino/a middle-school students from the Barrio Logan and Logan Heights neighborhoods of San Diego. Since my arrival in South Bend, I have sought out opportunities to continue working with middle- and high-school students.

9. Afary, “Performing *Twilight Los Angeles*,” 173.

10. *Ibid.*, 174–176.

11. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, “The Los Angeles ‘Race Riot’ and Contemporary U.S. Politics,” in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993), 111. Omi and Winant’s piece offers many interesting insights, such as considering the rebellion in context of a “new convergence in mainstream racial politics” in which Democratic leaders’ attempts to deemphasize race in order to appeal to white suburban voters corresponded in important ways with neoconservative efforts to remove race from public policy and discourse (100–104). Their essay also contained some optimistic conclusions that, from the perspective of the present day, seem unfortunately unwarranted; for instance, they stated that “the Los Angeles riot marks an end to the rightward drift in U.S. racial politics in general” (99).

12. My university has begun to explore other avenues for this through the preservation and redevelopment of the Natatorium, a vital part of South Bend’s racial history located on the near west side of town, roughly three miles from campus. The Natatorium was built in 1922 as a public swimming pool, but remained closed to African Americans until 1936, and even then was open to them only one day a week. After sitting idle for decades, the Natatorium building was restored in 2010 by the university and the community and now houses the Civil Rights Heritage Center. The Center serves not only its local community but is further exploring ways, as am I, to propel IUSB students into unfamiliar parts of the community; in other words, it stands as an opportunity to reposition sites of knowledge production through interactions with local and national history.

13. See also Sandra Kumamoto Stanley, “Teaching the Politics of Identity in a Post-identity Age: Anna Deavere Smith’s *Twilight*,” *MELUS* 30, no. 2 (2005), 191–208; through a consideration of the performative nature of Smith’s project, Stanley discusses how Smith engages with binary understandings of race.

14. Afary, “Performing *Twilight Los Angeles*,” 166 and 179–180. Afary references the work of media theorist John Fiske, whose *Media Matters: Race and Gender in U.S. Politics* includes an analysis of the Denny and King videos; see Afary’s note on Fiske and other media sources, 198n7. See also George Sánchez, “Reading Reginald Denny: The Politics of Whiteness in the Late Twentieth Century,” *American Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (1995): 388–394.

15. This is a pseudonym.