

THE PROGRESSIVE FORUM

Great Minds, Great Answers

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For Immediate Release

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Acclaimed Playwright, Performing Artist,
Anna Deavere Smith, In Program Called “Snapshots:
Glimpses of American in Change” at Wortham Monday May 21

Acclaimed playwright and performing artist, Anna Deavere Smith, will appear at The Progressive Forum on Monday, May 21, at the Wortham Center, Cullen Theater, at 7:30 in a lecture program called “Snapshots: Glimpses of America In Change,” which includes elements of performance as Smith slips in and out of characters creating many points of view. She will sign books at the end of the evening, books will be on sale.

Newsweek magazine called her “the most exciting individual in American theater.” The MacArthur Foundation awarded her a “genius” grant for creating a “new form of theater.”

Smith is perhaps best known as the author and performer in one-woman plays about racial tensions in American cities, *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and Other Identities* and *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*. For *Fires*, Smith interviewed 100 people affected by the Crown Heights riots of 1991 when a seven year old black child was struck and killed by a car that was part of a motorcycle of Hassidic Jews. Black youths responded by beating to death a 19 year old Hassidic

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student. *Fires* won an Obie-Award and was runner up for the Pulitzer Prize.

For *Twilight*, Smith spent nine months learning Spanish and Korean and interviewed 175 people in that city after rioting erupted when police officers charged with beating motorist Rodney King were acquitted in their first trial. *Twilight* was an Obie-Award winner and Tony Award nominee.

Smith is a tenured professor at New York University in the Tisch School of the Arts. She founded the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue at Harvard (now at NYU), which explores the role of arts in relation to vital social issues. She is the author of *Letters to a Young Artist: Straight-up Advice On Making a Life in the Arts*, as well as *Talk to Me: Travels in Media and Politics*.

On NBC's *The West Wing*, Smith plays national security adviser, Nancy McNally. She co-starred in the CBS drama, *Presidio Med*. Some of the films she has appeared in are *The Human Strain*, *Philadelphia*, *Dave*, *The American President*, and on television, *The Practice*. The film version of *Twilight* premiered at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival.

In the fall, Gloria Steinem will appear Monday September 17 in a program called "The Progression of Feminism: Where are We Going From Here." James Hansen, NASA climatologist, will speak on Wednesday October 24 in a program called "Climate Change: The Latest Science." And Ken Burns will finish the year on Tuesday November 13. His latest PBS documentary about World War II, called "The War," will be broadcast in the fall. The Progressive Forum will celebrate Veterans' Day with Ken Burns.

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The Progressive Forum is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) civic speaker organization presenting seven events a year at The Wortham Center. Its purpose is to enrich our democracy and culture by presenting the great minds who it believes are moving humanity and life towards success, speakers from all the fields of human endeavor, the sciences and humanities, as well as politics and public affairs. Its progressive viewpoint is rooted in the mainstream constitutional, enlightenment, and egalitarian values of America's founding fathers, moderate values that need affirming, now more than ever.

The Progressive Forum has pioneered a new model in Houston in the field of public affairs to deliver a higher quality experience and attract larger audiences than typically attends speaker events. The Forum operates like a performing arts company using the finest theaters, paying speaker fees to present the top cultural and intellectual stars, and providing convenient box office services.

The Progressive Forum premiered in June 2005 with Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and Mayor Bill White, and has since presented Jared Diamond, Seymour Hersh, Molly Ivins, Al Gore, George Soros, Edward O. Wilson, Frank Rich, Garrison Keillor, Tim Flannery, and Joe Klein.

Founder and president, Randall R. Morton, has owned Randall Morton International, Inc., for 31 years, an advertising and public relations agency whose Clients have included leading oil equipment companies in the U.S., Japan, Mexico, and Europe. Morton created and hosted the Oilfield Breakfast Forum which became

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the largest speaker platform in the oil industry whose surplus went to Houston's SEARCH Homeless Project. While earning a degree in government from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., he served as an issue writer for the Democratic National Committee.

Tickets for the Smith event range from \$19 to \$59 discounts at certain price levels for students, seniors over 65, and groups of fifteen or more. Sponsor tickets of \$110 include a private reception with the speaker, autographed book, center-front seats, and a commemorative bookplate. Tickets are available online at www.progressiveforumhouston.org which allows you to print your tickets at your computer. For tickets by phone, call 832-251-0706. Tickets are available at the door. There is no physical box office to purchase tickets in advance. For more information, call The Progressive Forum office at 713-664-0020.