ANNA DEAVERE SMITH PARTICIPATES IN WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE TO RETHINK SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

Superintendents, principals, and teachers gather to discuss solutions to school-to-prison pipeline

July 22, 2015 — After an exuberant reception from critics and audiences alike for her performance in Notes from the Field: Doing Time in Education, The California Chapter, playwright, actor, and educator Anna Deavere Smith today takes a break from her one-woman show currently playing at Berkeley Rep to participate in “Rethink Discipline,” a conference at the White House hosted by the U.S Departments of Education and Justice. Smith joins teams of superintendents, principals, and teachers from across the country (including Oakland Unified School District) for a day-long conference to discuss ways to create positive school climates and ways to implement effective discipline practices.

Directed by Obie Award winner Leah C. Gardiner, performances for Notes from the Field resumes Thursday, July 23 and runs through Sunday, August 2 in the Roda Theatre. Individual tickets start at $50 and are currently on sale to the general public. Tickets can be purchased by phone at (510) 647-2949 or online at berkeleyrep.org.

In Notes from the Field, Smith puts the issue of racial inequities in the nation’s school system front and center. Created, written, and performed by Smith, this theatrical event reveals the school-to-prison pipeline, which, by pushing children out of the classroom into the criminal justice system, has created a lost generation of youth from poor communities. In act one, Smith performs striking portraits culled from interviews she conducted with nearly 150 individuals in Northern California and elsewhere in the nation affected by the pipeline’s devastating policies — capturing the dynamics of a rapidly shifting social issue through her trademark performance technique. In act two, Smith invites the audience to engage in facilitated reflections and be active agents to help dissolve the school-to-prison pipeline and inequities in the education system.

Of Smith’s critically lauded performance in Notes from the Field, the San Francisco Chronicle writes, “Transforming herself into many different people, remarkably re-created from her extensive interviews, [Anna Deavere Smith] draws indelible connections between the high rates of incarceration of marginalized youth and other national problems in a manner as eye-opening and provocative as it is sure-handed and emotionally moving.” Adds Bay Area News Group/San Jose Mercury News, “In the theater [Smith] is famed as an innovator who has striven to take documentary theater to new heights. Here she is experimenting at the crossroads of art and public policy…. Unforgettable characters.”


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