

# Anna Deavere Smith

## Quotes

*People, Thinking, Art, Reality, Ideas, Country, Way, Artist, Jobs, Kids,  
Discipline, Real, Giving, School, Doctors, Expression, Looks, Distance,  
Listening, Hard Work*

What you are will show, ultimately. Start now, every day, becoming, in your actions, your regular actions, what you would like to become in the bigger scheme of things.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I'm interested when things are upside down - because there are so many possibilities in that one moment. There is a lot that is exposed.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Identity is an assemblage of constellations.

~Anna Deavere Smith

You can't teach talent. You can't teach inspiration. You can teach people critical facilities. You can give them techniques. You can teach discipline. And you can teach them about the business.

~Anna Deavere Smith

We spend so much time bantering about the words when the real open conversations might very well be our actions. I worry about our rhetoric.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Each person has a literature inside them.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Hope is when you look out the window and you go, 'It doesn't look good at all, but I'm going to go beyond what I see to give people visions of what could be.'

~Anna Deavere Smith

Friendship is a wildly underrated medication.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Be more than ready. Be present in your discipline. Remember your gift.

Be grateful for your gift and treat it like a gift. Cherish it, take care of it, and pass it on.

~Anna Deavere Smith

My main concern is theater, and theater does not reflect or mirror society. It has been stingy and selfish, and it has to do better.

~Anna Deavere Smith

You've heard that old expression from Shakespeare, 'Just speak the speech'? The words themselves will take you to the reality of the character. And so this led me to interview people.

~Anna Deavere Smith

You know if we were to look back and how we were in 1955 living in Jim Crow, living in segregation, living in segregated schools, it's hard to believe that it was America, but it really was.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Perhaps art is a quest for the perfect, or even the imperfect. Reality always falls short on both sides.

~Anna Deavere Smith

That artists are called to be more responsible and 'true' is a tip of hat to their power.

~Anna Deavere Smith

You are an explorer. You understand that every time you go into the studio, you are after something that does not yet exist.

~Anna Deavere Smith

My work is about giving voice to the unheard, and reiterating the voice of the heard in such a way that you question, or re-examine, what is the truth.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I happen to be a hopeaholic. I tend to look at problems as an opportunity to do some work.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I think what I am is a "convener"; I like to convene people around ideas.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Your desire to communicate must be bigger than your relationship with the chaotic and unfair realities.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Then everyone leaves, and you are left, each night, to your own devices with a crowd of interesting people - most of whom you don't know - sitting in the dark.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I am lucky: I have fantastic doctors and a fantastic dentist.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Confidence is the mark of a hopeful disposition.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Self-esteem does not come from surrounding yourself with people and things that seem to increase your value. Real self-esteem is an integration of an inner-value with things in the world around you.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Even jealousy is based on fantasies: a fantasy that someone else has what belongs to you.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Listening is not just hearing what someone tells you word for word. You have to listen with a heart. I don't want that to sound touchy-feely; it is

not. It is very hard work.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I see myself as not a typical theater person, but a person who uses the theater as a place to meet people and explore ideas.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I would love to have been a documentary filmmaker; I just didn't have the resources to do that.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I think that art is supposed to be ahead of the times.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Probably the person who said the only color in Los Angeles is green was right.

~Anna Deavere Smith

You know, real artists, we expose our flaws. We long for intimacy.

~Anna Deavere Smith

People in power have to be careful about what comes out of their mouth. They have to find exactly the right word that can't be attacked.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Learning is a tunnel experience that makes us think more broadly.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I don't talk a lot when I interview. My job is to get out of the way.

~Anna Deavere Smith

You hang around actors, or dancers, the minute you sneeze, everybody has a remedy, and we're all on a million different kinds of diets, and different kinds of things that we do for exercise.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Movies, as evidenced by a chorus of protesting and celebrating Americans, influence broader trends.

~Anna Deavere Smith

A lot of acting techniques are very self-oriented.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Poverty makes it very difficult in an already competitive world for kids to get on a straight track where they can actually love learning.

~Anna Deavere Smith

The American idea is as promising, imaginative, and full of the unexpected as the land itself. The land represents freedom - the frontier, the ability to make a new future with your own bare hands.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I went as far away from home as possible in terms of the development of my imagination.

~Anna Deavere Smith

If you say a word often enough it becomes you.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I think it's really important to give yourself a very big question that you're working on that you can come home to.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I think as a kid I always liked to listen to people. I loved hearing stories.

~Anna Deavere Smith

What my work is, is my approach to it. It's the practice. And my work is about the effort that I make to get there. And I think if there's anything

artistic, it's in that middle space.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Art should take what is complex and render it simply. It takes a lot of skill, human understanding, stamina, courage, energy, and heart to do that.

~Anna Deavere Smith

My job in my work is not to acquire power; it's to question power.

~Anna Deavere Smith

In my profession, I'm around a lot of people whose bodies are their instruments in one way or another.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Commit to finding the true nature of art. Go for that thing no one can teach you.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I see myself first and foremost as a student of expression.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I remember from my father's funeral that the minister kept using a metaphor about life of a prism. And I took that away like a cherished image.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I never know when somebody's going to knock on the door of my own unconscious in a way that I wouldn't have anticipated.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I mean, I think that - as an actress, in particular, I'm basically a fool, and I see the world upside down.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I mean, I think a healthy country is a country where people are healthy physically, and a smart country is a country where people are educated.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I love studying how people are. Not just what they're saying, but how they are, what they're doing.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I have never been in a violent movie or television show.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I have a lot of optimism about new doctors because I think it's really clear that it's a lot of hard work and no guarantee of a lot of money.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I feel like my work has been my path to freedom from having grown up in a segregated environment.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I call the language of political figures, pundits and administrators "the haute couture of language."

~Anna Deavere Smith

For me, first of all, I love people, I love ideas.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I think some of our most talented people are not going to pick the arts as a way that they're going to spend their lives.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Making your life is ultimately an extraordinarily creative endeavor.

~Anna Deavere Smith



Use your time to bathe yourself in the gift. Move your hand across the canvas. Go to museums. Make this into an obsession.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Many people are afraid to talk about race because it's so emotionally loaded. We don't have the vocabulary to talk about it. Every day, our vocabulary seems more and more inadequate.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Art simply can't be stopped.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Those in the margins are always trying to get to the center, and those at the center, frequently in the name of tradition, are trying to keep the margins at a distance.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I think we need leadership that helps us remember that part of what we are about is caring about more than the person right next to us, but the folks across the way.

~Anna Deavere Smith

You know, interesting minds usually do hold more than one idea at a time.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Somehow we can't live outside the politics of race. There's something very deep in all of us, that is taught to us when we are very, very little. Which is the disrespect and fear of the other.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Suddenly in high school, I'm in a predominantly Jewish atmosphere. Jewish people were my gate to white America.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I am not myself; I am the potential of myself.

~Anna Deavere Smith

People who are sick, or who have been sick, or have come close to death have a lot to say - and they want you to hear it.

~Anna Deavere Smith

I am interested in personal stories because that's when people become expressive, spontaneous and heartfelt.

~Anna Deavere Smith

If you think about what acting is supposed to be, my job is to disappear.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Some people study a text very deeply. The people are my text. I study their words and what their words sound like, over and over again.

~Anna Deavere Smith

Discipline â€” both mental and physical â€” is crucial.

~Anna Deavere Smith

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