

Affirmative Action in the 21st Century?



Barack Obama, Harvard Protest, 1991.

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This past Saturday FLUX Harlem hosted a panel discussion at Art Speaks! Gallery. The talk covered the controversial topic of a post-racial society. Positing the question: how does the idea of a “post racial” America impact how we currently view the world? Can America ever look past race? With election day ahead, this theme has resurfaced. With Barack Obama as President and a wider acceptance of interracial marriage many Americans feel we have entered this state, while others believe that groups such as the Tea Party movement prove it has not. Though if statistics mean anything, 39% of persons of African-American descent felt they were in a better position than they had been five years ago, an increase of 19% from the previous poll taken in 2008.

The talk was moderated by Bridgit Antoinette Evans. Evans is an award-winning actor, producer and founder of Fuel | We Power Change

(www.FuelChange.net), a culture change lab that produces artistic collaborations that promote human rights around the world. Bridgit's recent op-ed on Judy's play and the role of artists in defending human rights appears on The Huffington Post. And featured panelists including Frank Roberts, Herb Boyd and Michele Shay.



Left to Right: Michele Shay, Herb Boyd, Frank Roberts, Bridgit Antoinette Evans.

Frank Roberts is a writer, educator, and critic based in New York City. He is currently a lecturer professor in the Gallatin School at NYU (where he teaches "Race, Ethnicity, and Popular Culture"), the English department at Hunter College (where he teaches "Black Women Writers" and "20th Century African American Literature") and the African American Studies department at John Jay/CUNY (where he teaches "Race and Ethnicity in America").

His writings on black popular culture and politics have appeared in The Village Voice, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Root.Com, The Daily Voice, and The Huffington Post, among many others.

Herb Boyd is a journalist, activist, teacher, and has authored or edited 23 books, including his most recent one, By Any Means Necessary: Malcolm X—Real, Not Reinvented, co-edited with Ron Daniels, Maulana Karenga, and Haki Madhubuti. Other recent books include Civil Rights: Yesterday & Today and Baldwin's Harlem, a biography of James Baldwin, which was a finalist for a 2009 NAACP Image Award. His articles can be found in such publications as The Black Scholar, The Final Call, the Amsterdam News, Cineaste, Downbeat, and The Network Journal, among others.

Michele Shay is best known as an actress for her Tony-nominated performance in August Wilson's Seven Guitars for which she also won a NAACP and outer Critics Circle Award. A veteran performer, she has appeared on TV and film; on and off-Broadway in Home (Negro Ensemble Company), for colored girls by Ntozake Shange, Coriolanus with Morgan Freeman, Titania in Midsummer Night's Dream opposite William Hurt in Central Park (NYSF), Meetings by Mustapha Matura (Obie) ; She has directed 14 plays including most recently Blues for An Alabama Sky with Robert Gossett at the Lorraine Hansberry Theater, San Francisco, and Da Kink in my Hair by tre anthony (National Black theater Festival 2011, NYU, Tronto) with music by Carol Mailliard (Sweet Honey) and Michael McElroy. She is currently an Acting Professor in the New Studio on Broadway at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.