

The Network for Peace through Dialogue
in cooperation with **Marymount Manhattan College**

Presents

Dialogue In/As Action

The Arts and Civic Dialogue
Anna Deavere Smith's Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and
Other Identities



Rosalie Uyola

This session, given by Rosalie Uyola, included a riveting video of Anna Deavere Smith's one woman show entitled *Fires in the Mirror*. This piece depicts several characters speaking about the Crown Heights riots in 1991, all played by Anna Deavere Smith. A discussion followed about the multi-ethnic, racially divided neighborhood of Crown Heights and the need for cultural empathy and a non-static community. Rosalie also told our group about her own very interesting background. Her mother is a white Russian Jew and her father, a Haitian. She was born and raised in Russia, where religion could not be practiced or documented. When she and her family moved to the United States, several synagogues refused to admit them, and many African Americans were unaccepting of them as well. It was noted that African Americans and Jews too often view the world through the lens of slavery and the Holocaust, respectively, and that dialogue must be initiated to promote understanding and harmony. Race is more socially constructed than biological, so cultural empathy through dialogue and community involvement is imperative.