AMY STOLLER worked with Anna Deavere Smith on the premiere of Notes from the Field at Berkeley Rep this past summer. Previous projects with Ms. Smith include Let Me Down Easy (Second Stage, NYC, national tour; PBS Great Performances), Talking About Race (the Public Theater, Aspen Ideas Festival); Watching Wilson and Watson (World Science Festival); On Grace (Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, Harris Theater, Chicago), and Master Class (hbo). On Broadway, Amy coached Jesse Mueller (Tony Award) as Carole King in Beautiful. The Carole King Musical. As resident dialect designer at off-Broadway’s Mint Theater Company she has designed and coached over 25 shows since 1996; her next Mint production will be The New Normal, starting performances in August. Film includes coaching Carmen Ejogo (NAACP Image Award) as Coretta Scott King in Selma. Television includes Nurse Jackie (Showtime) and London Wall on Theater Close-Up (PBS). Visit stollsystem.com.

CHRISTOPHER FORTIER served as head of audio for 2014’s Letter From a Birmingham Jail performance at San Francisco’s Grace Cathedral, and returns this year as sound designer for Anna’s performances at Stanford. He is an accomplished studio- and live-engineer, a multi-instrumentalist, composer, and performer. He lives in Oakland, CA, and is currently working on his first solo recording project.

JORDAN MILLER-SURRATT, from Oakland, CA, is a fourth-year student at the University of Chicago, majoring in Romance Languages and Literatures. She started working on the Pipeline Project this past summer, and is excited to continue working on social justice projects in the future.

NOEMI BERKOWITZ is a senior studying Theater and Psychology. At Stanford, she has acted, directed, and produced through the Theater and Performance Studies Department, Stanford Repertory Theater, and Stanford Theater Laboratory, among others.

Prior to the performance, there will be a conversation with Julie Baldaur (stage manager), Christopher Fortier (audio consultant), and Jordan Miller-Surratt (stage assistant) moderated by Leah C. Gardiner.

The Pipeline Project is presented by the Division of Undergraduate Education.

The Pipeline Project
Friday, October 30 / 7:30 PM
Bing Concert Hall

CAST
Anna Deavere Smith, creator writer and performer
Marcus Shelby, composer and bassist

ARTISTIC STAFF
Ann Hould-Ward, costume designer
Michael Ramsaur, lighting designer
Dan Schreier, sound designer
Alexander Nichols, projection designer
Alisa Solomon, dramaturg
Amy Stoller, dialect coach
Noemi Berkowitz, assistant to the director

PRODUCTION STAFF
Julie Baldaur, stage manager
Christopher Fortier, audio consultant
Daniel Rattner, stage assistant
Jordan Miller-Surratt, stage assistant
Kimber Riddle, assistant to Anna Deavere Smith
Stephanie Schneider, office of Anna Deavere Smith

Anna Deavere Smith’s residency is cosponsored by Stanford Live, the Office for Religious Life, and the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education.
A conference room in New York City, Fall 2010. Several social-justice experts were discussing the “School-to-Prison Pipeline.” I was there just to listen. Tale after tale centered on alarming levels of punishment placed on youths who misbehaved in school: handcuffs on 5-year-olds having tantrums, arrests of teenagers doing things that were not anything to be proud of, but not violent (likely pranks in their minds). The next morning, I was in hair and makeup for the TV show Nurse Jackie next to fellow actress Eve Best. A bit that has with it words. I shared an anecdote or two. “Well, whatever happened to mischief?” she asked. “That’s right!” I agreed. “Privileged kids get mischief. Poor kids get criminalized.”

I hit the road in 2013 and started recording people as they discussed how poverty was affecting their schools and the disciplinary practices in them: Northern California, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. It did not take long to have my lens open onto a much bigger picture of poverty and its consequences on the emotional, physical, and intellectual development of youths, both inside and outside of school. There are in fact many pipelines to prison. I have seen—especially in my hometown of Baltimore—how the punitive aggression young people experience lines up with a relationship to policing in their communities. This is something, due to current technologies, that you the public have witnessed frequently this year, starting with events in Ferguson.

Yet school discipline and policing are really only a part of this picture. I have come to feel that it is unfair to put all the blame on schools, teachers, judiciary, administrators, students to a celebrated neuro-endocrinologist at Rockefeller University in New York—all applying imagination and compassion to this problem. Indeed the President of the United States, the White House, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education have all stepped forward to call out the problem and work towards solutions.

With this play, I seek to have a nontraditional relationship with you. I bring the work to the stage at a midway point—not quite finished. I don’t want the bells and whistles of theatre to cover this problem with aesthetics. I want to sound an alarm. I see the theatre as a convening place, where you, for the most part strangers to one another, can come together to exchange ideas, suggest solutions, and possibly, when I’m gone, mobilize around what should be done.

We have an urgent economic, moral, security problem in front of us as Americans: Racial and economic inequality. Tackling it requires nothing less than a robust, re-invigorated public will. The change starts with you.

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

She is a playwright and actress, a renowned dramaturg and social justice activist, and recipient of the 2013 Tony Award for Best Actress in a Play. Smith’s work has earned her a wide array of awards and nominations, including two Pulitzer Prizes, two Tony Awards, and one Emmy Award.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

LEAH C. GARDNER

She is a Professor of Lighting Design at the Yale School of Drama. Gardner has taught at the Yale School of Drama and the University of Pennsylvania. She has worked on countless productions, both on and off Broadway, including the 2013 revival of “The Normal Heart.”

MARCUS SHELBY

He is a bandleader, composer, arranger, bassist, and educator who has been active in the United States and abroad. Shelby has worked with numerous ensembles, including the Marcus Shelby Orchestra, which has performed at venues such as the Kennedy Center and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

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FROM MARCUS SHELBY

Over the past year, I have had the greatest honor of my life working with Anna Deavere Smith on her School-to-Prison Pipeline Project. I have learned a great deal from her about communication and empathy. Both are central to the blues form given to us by our ancestors, who found a creative way to express hope, determination and identity in the face of overwhelming oppression. The musical score for my work is born out of this blues tradition, which includes call and response, improvisation, inflection, and tension and release. I have found the power of the blues in all of Anna Deavere Smith’s past work, so this is a natural form for us to work with. Each of the individuals whom Anna Deavere Smith interviewed has a personal and succinct musicality that embodies the very essence of the blues—triumph over tragedy. The music aims to provide a soulful addition to Anna’s words. The subject material for the School-to-Prison Pipeline Project has personally inspired me to fight for reform using my creative tools. I am eternally grateful to Anna Deavere Smith for this opportunity. Thank you to the entire production team for your love and talents.