

Toni Press-Coffman on Her Work

I'm inspired to write plays by the infinite variations of the cadences, content, ramifications and relative truth of what we say to one another; what those who admire, revile or have power over us say to and about us; and the ways our actions belie, affirm or undermine that dialogue.

I love to imagine the conversations of historic figures (like Richard III) or popular icons (like Dean Martin) or participants in significant cultural events (like the 1992 Los Angeles riots). I invent characters, but I'm equally inclined to invent interactions among real people whose lives continue to influence ours, often in subtle but devastating, illuminating, transforming and uplifting ways.

My plays take place wherever I can imagine life's pulse: across space, separated by continents or centuries; in a character's mind, a radio station, a high school locker room, 19th century London, the White House or the inexplicably mysterious Midwest. They're populated by politicians, *santeras*, teenage musicians, serial killers, heartbroken snakes, scientists, poets, truck drivers, noisy dogs, wheelchair-bound guys who charm the pants off everyone they meet, graffiti artists, and kings of England.

My work demonstrates my conviction that without humor the human race would have self-destructed long ago. I believe the most salient fact about life is the surprising number of connections that exist among us, and with all the people who preceded us.

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