
CHERIE FORTIS '76

WITH MORE THAN 25 YEARS of experience in television, Cherie Fortis has produced projects for PBS, HBO, Showtime, and NBC ranging from specials to multi-part series in drama, music performance, and documentary. She recently completed the film "Twilight: Los Angeles," a multi-year production and outreach project that was developed in collaboration with actress/playwright/teacher Anna Deavere Smith and directed by documentary director Marc Levin. Based on Smith's award-winning play about the aftermath of the Rodney King beating and L.A. riots, the film premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and the Human Rights Watch Film Festival. After a limited theatrical distribution, it was broadcast on PBS as part of Thirteen/WNET's drama series "Stage on Screen." In addition to a Web site, the distribution was supported by a companion multi-year community and educational outreach campaign. Fortis was the executive producer and project director in charge of grant proposals for the multiple nonprofit foundation grants with major funding by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation's Race and Social Justice Initiative and the Levi Strauss Foundation.

Fortis co-produced and developed a pilot on New York food and community based culture adapted from then-*New York Times Magazine* food writer Molly O'Neill's "New York Cookbook" as a pledge special for Thirteen/WNET.

Previously, Fortis produced the award-winning adaptation of Anna Deavere Smith's play "Fires in the Mirror" with Public Theater producer and Tony Award-winning theater director George C. Wolfe (PBS "American Playhouse"). Other theater adaptations for television include George Wolfe's "The Colored Museum" (PBS "Great Performances"), Spalding Gray's "The Terrors of Pleasure" (HBO), and Whoopi Goldberg's first Broadway production (HBO). Music performance/documentaries include Paul Simon's "Graceland: The African Concert" (Showtime), for which she won a CableACE Award for Best Musical; and "Spike and Co: Do It A Capella," hosted by Spike Lee and Debbie Allen (PBS "Great Performances").

In 1988, she formed a production company, Hipster Entertainment, to develop cultural, performance, and documentary programming with a strong focus on American culture. Prior to working as an independent producer, Fortis initiated her career in television at NBC's "Saturday Night Live," later working as V.P. of production for Lorne Michaels' Above Average Productions and Broadway Video.

Currently in production is a documentary on the revitalization of nightlife in New York City's West Chelsea neighborhood in the post-Mayor Giuliani era. Fortis is also producing special live performance events with Woodstock veteran event producer Lee Blumer at NYC nightclub *crobar* that bring high-profile charity and political events to a youth demographic. (Such as a tsunami fundraiser hosted by Nancy Sinatra, Cyndi Lauper, and Sandra Bernhard; a recent fundraiser for Hurricane Katrina relief; a fundraiser for the Chelsea Soup Kitchen funded with proceeds from the presidential debate and presidential election night screenings; and fundraisers for John Kerry, John Edwards, Barak Obama, and Hillary Clinton.) In addition, Fortis is writing and developing an international advertising and marketing strategy for nightlife venues located in NYC, Miami, Chicago, and Buenos Aires, Argentina.
