



<http://www.chron.com/life/celebrities/article/Acclaimed-author-Zadie-Smith-talks-about-new-10866378.php>

Author Zadie Smith on parenting, politics and the '80s

British writer speaks with Houston novelist Mat Johnson before a sold-out crowd

By **Joy Sewing**, Houston Chronicle Updated 1:48 pm, Tuesday, January 24, 2017



IMAGE 4 OF 5

Mat Johnson, right, talks with international best selling author Zadie Smith at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Friday, Jan. 13, 2017, in Houston.

Zadie Smith, who at age 23 in 2000, stirred the literary world with her debut novel "White Teeth," told the Guardian back then that she felt the world expected her to be some expert on multicultural affairs.

"Whereas it's just a fact of life—like there are people of different races on the planet," she said.

The witty and thoughtful Smith recently spoke to a sold-out audience at St. Paul's United Methodist Church. The event was sponsored by **Brazos Bookstore**, and each ticket holder received a hardback copy of Smith's 2016 novel, "Swing Time."

Smith, who grew up in London with a Jamaican mother and English father, had a candid onstage conversation with Houston writer and University of Houston professor **Mat Johnson**, who penned the stellar 2015 novel, "Loving Day."

They talked about everything from the 1980s and hip hop to parent and politics. Here are some of Smith's comments:

ADVERTISEMENT

On the 1980s:

" 'Back to the Future' had a huge influence on my life. ... My basic knowledge right now seems the wisdom of the 1980s."

On classic hop hop:

ADVERTISEMENT

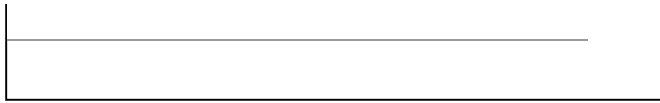
"If you grew up black or of mixed race in the UK it was daily experience."

On reading as young girl:

More Information

"My mother had me reading 19th-century British literature. She believed you have to get to the beauty of reading."

Favorite books:



"The Color Purple" by Alice Walker and
"Magic Finger" by Roald Dahl

On parenting:

"I think I'm a very bad parent. My daughter told me, Next time write a children's book. The are only eight pages long."

On writing about poverty:

"It's very hard to understand poverty when you're not in it."

On President Donald Trump:

"He's an obscenity. ... I'm not willing to write off the people who voted for him as the obscenity. He's someone who has brought so much coarseness to the world."

On life lessons:

"I feel we are each other's shelter if we allow ourselves to be."

Brazos Bookstore hosts Pulitzer Prize-winner ***Siddhartha Mukherjee*** on May 3 at St. Paul's Church. **For tickets, click here.**

© 2017 Hearst Communications, Inc.

H E A R S T