

AFTERLIFE: An Archive of Violence
Project Proposal

Purpose & Goals

The purpose of this project is to document how anti-black violence impacts the everyday rituals of communities and individuals, while also considering the dimensions and dynamics of cultural geographies of violence. The primary goal is to collect ethnographic data, to more responsibly represent “scenes of collective grief” in performance. As a researcher, such distillations of violence and its effects can only be achieved through sustained and focused participation and presence within communities of interest. I am requesting funding to support my efforts to travel to actual spaces of anti-black violence, to gain a larger sense of the climate and culture after the tragic events.

The goal is to develop a full-length play, *AFTERLIFE: An Archive of Violence*, which explores how every day life is impacted by anti-black violence in major cities of the US, including but not limited to: Ferguson, MO (Michael Brown); Detroit, MI (Renisha McBride); Columbia, SC (9 congregants, Emanuel AME Church); Cleveland & Dayton, OH (Tamir Rice & John Crawford); Houston, TX (Sandra Bland).

Narrative:

October 2014, while teaching my Black Masculinities course, I discovered that several of my students had been engaged in "Ferguson October," an international collective meeting in the St. Louis, demanding justice for Michael Brown's death in Ferguson, Missouri. In the middle of this week, I would begin to teach my class—exhausted from being in the trenches of protest and police gassing the night before. Reading a passage from James Baldwin's *Fire Next time*, where he states “you can only be destroyed by believing that you are what the white world calls a nigger.” As I read this line, I began to recollect the feeling of being blinded by tear gas, when we were only in the street demanding, begging, and asking for right to fair trial and deliberation. After a long pause, I completely lost myself; tears rolled down like easy rain and my class for this minute saw my humanity.

This is one case example of a narrative that may be chronicled in the one-person performance, *AFTERLIFE: An Archive of Violence*, which takes Ferguson as a centerpiece, offering a broader conversation for how the “reproduction of misery” within black life forms, manifests, and erodes life energy and spirit in the lives of black people. Indeed, such anecdotes are made more vivid in embodied performance, where one can reenact the scene of violence, while also capturing in body and essence the feelings of angst, anger, and anxiety that arises in these moments of anti-black violence. While *AFTERLIFE* intends to recapitulate such moments, it also wishes to understand how communities and individuals survive and make do; thus, giving room for all the comedy and love which emerges in scenes of tragedy.

The style of this performance work is in conversation with scholar-performers such as Anna Deveare Smith, E. Patrick Johnson, and Sharon Bridgforth. These artists largely draw upon unique events and stories, crafting them for the stage and for public engagement. Unlike the aforementioned scholar-performers, my use of performance ethnography is not confined by interviews, but informed more significantly by passerby experiences, mundane moments in space, fleeting conversations, and locally-written editorials and documentation of anti-black violence. Thus, *AFTERLIFE* is as much a product of radical, robust engagement in communities of grief, as it is a compilation of imagined truths and informed fantasy.

Procedure, Timeline, & Budget

In order to complete this performative work, I will spend a few months in the thick of spaces. During my stay in these spaces, I will visit the actual sites of violence, remain in the community surrounding the area, have fleeting conversations with individuals who may/may not be aware of anti-black violence, as well as visit the local archives for newspapers and magazines which may have covered these events.

Upon completion of travel to these spaces, in September & October 2016, I will use my fieldnotes, visual images and memory, chronicled conversations, and archival materials to begin developing the first full draft of *AFTERLIFE*. By November 2016, I hope to have a draft to circulate to artistic friends who can provide helpful feedback. Then, in December 2016, I hope to have the first public reading of the play.

Budget for Travel

May 2016, Trip to Columbia, SC

Airfare	\$340
Hotel \$100/night , 6 nights w/tax	\$675
Rental Car	\$200
Per diem	<u>\$236</u>
Total	\$1351

June & August 2016, Trips to Houston, TX (less familiar)

Airfare	\$380
Hotel \$100/night 5 nights w/tax	\$600
Rental Car	\$350
Per Diem	<u>\$255</u>
Total	\$1585 X 2= \$3170

July 2016, Trip to Cleveland & Dayton, OH

Airfare	\$430
Hotel \$100/night, 7 nights w/tax	\$800
Rental Car	\$350
Per Diem	<u>\$ 295</u>
Total	\$1875

August 2016, Trip to Detroit, MI

Airfare	\$325
Hotel \$100/night, 5 nights w/tax	\$575
Rental Car	\$250
Per Diem	<u>\$216</u>
Total	\$1366

Requested Estimated Total: \$7768

Ferguson Academic Seed Fund

Grant Application Project Member & Invited Scholar Bio Sketch Form

Please complete an electronic copy of this for each member of your project team and for each invited scholar. You will be required to upload completed bio sketch forms on the grant application page. You may collate forms into a single document for ease of submission.

Invited Scholar: _____ Team Member: _____ Both: _____

Team Member count: _____ of _____

TITLE:

FIRST NAME:

LAST NAME:

E-MAIL ADDRESS:

WEBPAGE:

AFFILIATE INSTITUTION (S):

SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH (200 WORDS OR LESS):