

Cop Watch/Cop Listen/Cop Move: Policing the Police With Performative Methodologies

Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies
2016, Vol. 16(3) 264–270
© 2016 SAGE Publications
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1532708616634772
csc.sagepub.com



Sharrell D. Lockett¹ and Jeb Aram Middlebrook¹

Abstract

In this essay, the authors argue for sound and movement as performative methodologies for studying policing. The proposed performative methodology, “Cop Watch/Cop Listen/Cop Move,” provides a space for (re)seeing, (re)listening, and (re)experiencing policing and, thus, prepares participants to navigate and challenge police surveillance and brutality. The questions that the essay addresses include the following: What theoretical and methodological contributions arise from a space where sounds and experiences of policing are sonically and kinesthetically performed? And how might rehearsal for this performance, and the performance itself, exist as a kind of laboratory for social movements that challenge policing?

Keywords

police, policing, sound, movement, performative methodologies

Act I: Introducing Cop Watch/Cop Listen/Cop Move (CWLM)

The cops are in their heads, but the headquarters of these cops are in the external reality. It is necessary to locate both the cops and their headquarters. (Augusto Boal, 1990, p. 35)

It stops now. (Eric Garner, 2014)

JEB: It was the fall of 2008. I had just parked my car near the Los Angeles River, under the historic 1st Street bridge, and I was walking to a music fund-raiser for the Los Angeles-based organization, Cop Watch. This autonomous organization identified itself as one that “polices the police,” observing law enforcement stops as they occur on the street and providing real-time civilian oversight of the police and legal support for the person being stopped. Cop Watch Los Angeles was comprised of leadership and membership of majority Black and Brown young people and often had a contentious relationship with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). Before I could make it to the warehouse entrance of the small event, from which punk and hip-hop music emanated, several LAPD squad cars and scores of officers, followed by a police helicopter swarmed the area. Arrests began to occur within the warehouse, and I, among others, were detained on the street in handcuffs, as we were searched and questioned. The story emerged that a beer was stolen from a corner market, and the suspect was assumed to have fled to the Cop Watch fund-raiser. Interesting level of police response for a can of beer. Being

detained at this event was my first time in handcuffs, and my first close encounter with the LAPD.

SHARRELL: In the fall of 1994, my aunt, Beverly Harvard, became the first African American woman appointed chief of police of a major metropolitan city (Atlanta). She also lived two houses over from me, which I assumed is why police cars frequently patrolled my neighborhood. A decade later, in 2004, I completed my first year of teaching, a profession that I had sworn off in undergrad, but reconsidered when a friend needed me to cover his high school drama class for one semester. This was my first time in a classroom, encountering the lives of young, urban Black males and females as a teacher/role model. This was also the first time I became aware of the “school-to-prison” pipeline. I felt like I had to make my students hyper-aware of the many systems of oppression, and with that I turned to my power/protest theater traditions I learned in high school while training with Freddie Hendricks, a drama teacher/director who mostly addressed social issues in his art. Thus, began my career trajectory of making theater and performances that not only moved minds, but also challenged the hegemonic status quos of justice and freedom. By 2008, my high school drama teaching career had served me well, and

¹California State University, Dominguez Hills, Carson, USA

Corresponding Author:

Sharrell D. Lockett, Muhlenberg College, 2400 Chew St. Allentown, PA 18104, USA.

Email: mail@sdlockett.com

I applied for my PhD in theater at the University of Missouri, Columbia (MU) and was accepted.

JEB: As a White male, then a PhD student at the University of Southern California (USC), my day-to-day experiences in South (previously South Central) Los Angeles were very different from the Black and Brown young people from the neighborhood, or from Cop Watch, for that matter.

SHARRELL: As a Black female at MU, I experienced cotton balls thrown on the Black Cultural Center and the “n” word written on a wall outside of the dorms, both occurring during Black History Month. The guilty parties were arrested and charged with littering and property damage, respectively.

JEB: I witnessed the precarious relationship the university and the police had with South Los Angeles residents of color, and I walked daily across Vermont Avenue where National Guard tanks patrolled during the Los Angeles Rebellion in 1992. In addition to pursuing my PhD in American studies and ethnicity at USC, I was organizing in South Los Angeles with a chapter of the prison-abolition organization, Critical Resistance. I was also touring as a performing artist in a rap and hip-hop theater group (Middlebrook, 2010), utilizing the techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), created by Augusto Boal. Performance was regularly on my mind, and in my writing, and still is.

SHARRELL: Performance was, and still is, my way of thinking out and living out the joys and challenges of being a Black female in America, and I’ve found myself still serving as a teacher/role model in this work. In the fall of 2013, I accepted a job as an assistant professor of performance at California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), a university birthed in South Los Angeles in the wake of the 1965 Watts Rebellion to serve Black and Brown students from the surrounding area.

JEB: Sharrell and I met during a faculty welcome luncheon at CSUDH. I shared with her that I too was a new hire: an assistant professor of sociology. We discussed my interests in the relationship between the performance of the criminal justice system, and performing the criminal justice system.

SHARRELL: We discussed my interests in the political power of theater and how I believe that all performance engenders social action in some way.

JEB: My exploration of performance as protest and research includes listening to, analyzing, and audio mixing police radio dispatches as a means of understanding the day-to-day operations of the policing mechanism of the criminal justice system, through sound. I am interested in how performance and performative methodologies, in particular, can provide new ways to analyze the criminal justice system, including processes of policing, detention, deportation, incarceration, and execution.

SHARRELL: Influenced by the theatrical social justice work of the Freddie Hendricks Youth Ensemble of Atlanta and TO training in graduate school, I was ready and equipped to empower the students at CSUDH to articulate their often marginalized voices. Thus, upon arrival, I established the Performance Studies & Arts Research Collective, consisting of theater and non-theater students. The Collective provided a space where performance could take on new and experimental meanings within a laboratory and research context. The founding of the Collective was also integral to my success as a professor because I too need a space to be myself, to create, devise, and grapple with what it means to be Black, female, and a part of the system while fighting the system at the same time. As Fred Moten intimated, “to be in but not of—this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university” (Harney & Moten, 2013). Aptly, the title of the section where this quote resides is “The Only Possible Relationship to the University Today Is a Criminal One” (Harney & Moten, 2013).

SHARRELL and JEB: Our interests converged in a co-viewing of *Dreamscape* by Rickerby Hinds at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Hinds, a pioneer of hip-hop theater, loosely based *Dreamscape* on the death of Tyisha Miller, a young Black woman from Riverside, California who was shot 12 times while she sat unconscious in her car in 1998.

JEB: On the heels of the Trayvon Martin verdict, this experience of viewing *Dreamscape* was timely and powerful, and through our mutual interest in hip-hop theater and the arts, Sharrell and I developed a working relationship in the Collective. Sharrell commissioned me as the sound curator and DJ for the Collective’s performance of “Surveillance & Identity: Em(Body)ing STereOtyPes” for the “Hip-Hop in the Age of Mass Incarceration and Deportation Conference,” at California State University, Northridge in 2014. Through an improvisatory rehearsal process, Sharrell and I produced a space for performance . . .

SHARRELL: . . . a laboratory, sanctuary, and emancipatory strategy center to defy and transform dominant ideas and systems. As Baz Kershaw (2004) stated, in controlling systems “there will almost always be a space for resistance, a fissure in which to forge at least a little freedom (p. 68).”

JEB: The space was a laboratory for students to creatively challenge the assault of policing on their bodies and senses and to rehearse (social) movement in relation to the criminal justice system. Here, students could imagine a new relationship with the police, with the state, and with themselves. They could forge at least a little freedom in this performance fissure and attempt to re-purpose the tools of the police (watching, listening, moving) toward their own ends, in an attempt to reconstitute their agency as Black and Brown youth under surveillance. This, for Sharrell and I, was “Cop Watch/Cop Listen/Cop Move,” a performative

methodology where students might deconstruct the power of the police state by performing against it and through it, engaging its visual, sonic, and kinesthetic elements as agents rather than recipients of justice.

Through analyses of the movement and sonic elements improvised, devised, and contributed in the practice of CWLM, this essay explores the theoretical and methodological contributions that arise from a space where sounds and experiences of policing are kinesthetically and sonically performed. We explore how rehearsals and performances involving the sounds of surveillance and embodied performance within and against the dominant criminal justice system may function as a location/laboratory for social movements that challenge policing. Our work echoes Kershaw's (2004) sentiment that

all good theories of drama or theatre as education also account for ways in which they can inculcate essential coping strategies: behavioural modes, thinking . . . transferable skills, that enhance the chances of an individual or group's survival in negotiating the demands of a rough and tumble world (p. 36).

Act II: Policing the Police With Movement

Surveillance moved like death, heavy heart beats gun shots and jerked like laughter. (JEB)

Rehearsals for "Surveillance & Identity: Em(Body)ing STereOtyPes" by the Collective were attended by a Black female professor (Sharrell), a White male professor (Jeb), and five students; one Black male (Sean Cook), three Black females (Rocena Banner, Mia Monk, Megan Stewart), and one Filipina (Krystle Tugadi) over a 3-week time span. The process of CWLM began and continued within Black performative culture: improvisation, call and response, free-styling, remixing, sampling, and expressive embodiment. As Sharrell orchestrated rehearsals, Jeb live-mixed the sound of routine LAPD police dispatches, with hip-hop and soul tracks, including Zulema—"American Fruit, African Roots" (1972); Ice Cube—"Who Got the Camera" (1992); KRS-One—"The Sound of Da Police" (1993); J. Dilla—"Fuck the Police" (2001); and Dead Prez—"Don't Forget What You Came From" (2004). These artists were from the South (Tampa, FL), West (Los Angeles, CA), East (New York City, NY), and Midwest (Detroit, MI) United States, echoing the homes of Tyisha Miller, Rodney King, Trayvon Martin, and Eric Garner, among others killed and brutalized by the police.

During the first sessions of the rehearsal process, the performers focused primarily on creating movement in conversation with the sounds of policing. As the Black and Brown performers gathered onstage, coughing, contorting, and expressing the sound of surveillance with their bodies, they

began to improvise and devise movement in response to what they heard or didn't hear. As sirens wailed and were rewound, the policing that was past became present, and repeated. The disparate contortions and flailing of the performers led to limbs vigorously waving in unison while the performers heard "I've never beaten anyone this bad in a long time," the echo of the police dispatch after the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles in 1992. The statement was pitched down, slowed; the voice thus gained bass, prominence, and sounded commanding. Black and Brown bodies writhed and convulsed onstage, as the LAPD dispatch reported "wrong suspect." It repeated: "wrong suspect." "See if there's a black and white could do a drive-by," an excerpt from Ice Cube's "Who's Got the Camera?" was heard on repeat as well; a reference to a police car, to race, to violence. The performers then began to simulate running from/to something, while going nowhere: running in place. This running was interspersed with the laughter of officers on the dispatch; one officer on the dispatch sang "every now and then I fall apart" from Bonnie Tyler's "Total Eclipse of the Heart." The bodies onstage fell apart. "Shots fired," the dispatch announced. This phrase was a declaration of actual shots fired, as well as hip-hop slang used to indict someone. Bodies moved onstage as if being hit with bullets. This sound and movement was an indictment of the criminal justice system amid the deafening silence of non-indictments of police who have killed. "Shots fired." Running bodies slowing, hurling over one another with heavy breathing, tired and loose, contorting, arms moving in opposite directions, jerking, eyes glazed, and noses wide open. The running ceased.

When reflecting on the bodily contortions developed in rehearsals and utilized in performance via CWLM, we assert that new kinesthetic forms of agency and resistance emerged. There are recent analyses of protest and agency in movement, that is, the concept of movement as a political and social framework. As dance scholar Anusha Kedhar (2014) pointed out, "Choreography, movement, and gesture are not peripheral but central to the politics of protest," and that "an attention to choreography and gesture helps frame the protests so we can see their politics more clearly." In addition, acknowledging the politics inherent in movement, Andrew Lepecki (2013) used the term "choreopolitics" and argued that

choreopolitics requires a redistribution and reinvention of bodies, affects, and senses through which one may learn how to move politically, how to invent, activate, seek, or experiment with a movement whose only sense (meaning and direction) is the experimental exercise of freedom (p. 20).

Thus, by collectively choosing to devise and improvise the movement versus planned choreography, the performers expressed a form of agency in their experiences of

being policed. Furthermore, we assert that when an ensemble of marginalized bodies is physically brought together to address systemic injustice, the simple embodied act of gathering implicitly serves as a recognition and celebration of their existence, survival, and success. This concept of implicit recognition in movement studies is supported by other scholars, such as Thomas DeFrantz, who has argued that celebration is a key signifier of Black dance and performance. He wrote, "Black performance in general, and African American concert dance in particular, seeks to create aesthetic sites that allow black Americans to participate in discourses of recognition and appreciation to include concepts of 'beauty'" (DeFrantz, 2005, 93). Thus, the Collective performers' physical willingness to gather and engage in police surveillance discourse first served as an embodied recognition of existence, success, and beauty. Notably, this embodied celebration avoided universal images of incarceration and injustice in rehearsal and performance, which are currently at the helm of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. That the performers favored personal expressions of existence before expressions of policing, suggest that a situated, intimate performance of being (what we have termed a *live in*), may have as much resonance as a mass protest against the system.

When the performers began working through simulations of policed, distressed, and h(a)unted bodies, their physical forms did not lend themselves to the choreopolitical "Hands up! Don't shoot!" pose or the lifeless "die-in" positions. One would assume these images would be expressed in the Collective's gestural repertoire because of their prevalence in popular culture. The absence of these images in the Collective performance is powerful because of their use on countless occasions in the media and literature to model an appropriate non-combative/surrender/passive position of a living or dead body.

The neglect of the universal sign of surrender ("Hands Up! Don't Shoot!") and the shape of a dead body ("die-in" image) in the performers' choreopolitical aesthetic leads us to ask, Why were poses that ostensibly serve as visual centerpieces in past and present literature and mediated images, including crime scenes, and now in the #BlackLivesMatter movement against police brutality, not performed by Black and Brown bodies performing policing? Furthermore, what is the significance of Black and Brown bodies performing protest secondary to performing the success and survival of Black and Brown people? The frameworks provided by Kedhar (the centrality of movement in protest), Lepecki (choreopolitics), and DeFrantz (celebration/beauty in Black movement), serve as a way to critically engage the efficacy of movement in social movements, such as peaceful "hands up" marches, "die-ins," and sit-ins. However, what we want to add to the conversation in movement methodology are the implications of the absence of the "Hands up! Don't

shoot!" and "die-in" images in the rehearsal and performance process, as it relates to policing the police.

The movement created with, and in response to, sounds of police surveillance in CWLM rejected and challenged the passive "Hands up! Don't shoot!" image, which could be read as "I am innocent . . . I am not a threat," but more disturbingly can be choreographically read as "I come in peace," a pose synonymous with alien, threatening beings. The performers reenacted surviving violence, using their imaginations or even "blood memory" (Manning, 2004) to recall, improvise, and devise the bullets, beatings, and negativity often projected on their bodies, but notably performing "life" at the end. The CWLM performers rehearsed resistance to police brutality that privileged the active, living, surviving body over the trained, passive "Hands up! Don't shoot!" pose that has preceded the deaths of many Black and Brown people at the hands of the police (Kedhar, 2014).

When one is under surveillance, one is asked to surrender their kinesthetic freedom and enact an image that offers a "non-challenging," "non-threatening" encounter with law enforcement. However, the performers rejected and challenged the supposed safe, indomitable "hands up" stance, while conjuring images and movements that celebrated the living, breathing body, such as, forward stances, running, interlocking, and powerful arm and leg extensions. Although the "hands up" pose has surfaced in recent movements as a symbol of protest and agency, could it be that by performing "Hands up! Don't shoot!" and "die-ins" that we are enacting and activating the very places and kinesthetic spaces Black and Brown bodies wish to resist? Could it be that the performers were alternatively staging a "live-in" with their performed movements and sounds?

The literal tiredness and exhaustion exhibited in their performance echoed the #BlackLivesMatter chant of "I can't breathe!" suggesting the enduring struggle for Black and Brown bodies to simply exist in America. Still, Black and Brown bodies "live-in" and live on. By neglecting the "Hands up! Don't shoot!" stance, the performers rejected the subconscious and conscious training of what to do when pulled over by the police, and in return, explored new ways of resistance and survival, rooted in movement. The absence of the "Hands up! Don't shoot!" pose opened a space for agency by Black and Brown people to physically respond to policing in new ways. Their forms of resistance in movement, such as, connecting, running, fleeing, hiding, or fighting, paralleled historical realities of Black and Brown bodies saving themselves from unjust death. Using movement as a tool of action and agency, the CWLM performers explored physical ways to protest and guarantee their safety when encountering law enforcement.

Finally, even though "die-ins" and "Hands up! Don't shoot!" protests are able to occupy large areas and disrupt everyday movement, the embodiment of these images also

act as a visual re-traumatization of the ills of police brutality and racial mobbing. In her book, *Living With Lynching*, Koritha Mitchell (2011) wrote of the mob power invoked in instances of visual re-traumatizations: “. . . when we treat images of mutilated bodies as the ultimate evidence of lynching destruction, we reaffirm the authority of the mob” (p. 6). The fact that the CWLM performers never embodied lifelessness points to a direct rejection of images of ritualized murder, such as images of lynched Black bodies or staged “die-ins.” Thus, their choice to “un-perform” universal images associated with surveillance and policing may have been a subconscious, unspoken usurp of police power and racist acts; powers that are inherently maintained through the perennial use of images of incarceration and lynching of Black and Brown bodies. Also, the universal poses of surveillance, rendered moot in CWLM, were replaced by the recalling/remembering of celebration, survival, and “beauty” inherent in Black movement.

Act III: Policing the Police With Sound

Surveillance sounded like repeated murder on a turn table navigated by a white man. (SHARRELL)

Once the opening of the performance was constructed with movements of solidarity and resistance, the sonic and textual body of the performance emerged. Coupled with instrumental responses to policing from the hip-hop community, female performers echoed, bent, and transformed the sounds of police sirens. The body of the performance surfaced, just as lynching plays did: not just as protest, but as a form of acknowledgment of the success of Black people (Mitchell, 2011). In an effort to honor and display the performers’ writing talents, we chose to have them contribute the spoken and sung text:

SHARRELL: Sean, you Black and young. I know you got a poem about racial profiling.

JEB: Sean nodded, opened his phone, and began to recite his offering: “Who can we run to?” These were the first words spoken in the piece.

SHARRELL: The first words immediately took me back to something so feminine, so romantic, so far removed from that moment, but so needed at the time in the lab: a song titled “Who Can I Run To,” first recorded by the Jones Girls in the 1970s, and then re-recorded by the 1990s R&B girl group, Xscape: “Who can I run to/to fill this empty space with laughter/who can I run to/when I need love.” This chorus was especially relevant to that moment because it highlighted a sort of flirtatious “romance” with safety and justice. We then asked a female performer to intersperse vocal riffs from “Who Can I Run To” with Sean’s poem and Jeb’s mix.

Excerpt: “WHO CAN WE RUN TO?” *This phrase proceeded to narrate the sounds and movements of the performance.*
“PISTOLS ARE POPPING MY PEOPLE MERCILESSLY.”

(Shots fired.) “CUZ IT’S UNCERTAIN FOR US, LIKE GOD.” (Shots fired. Sirens. Static.) “WHAT’S MORE AMAZING IS, HOW HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF.” (Sirens, static, shots fired, repeating themselves.) *Singing echoes the poem:* “WHO CAN I RUN TO, TO FILL THIS EMPTY SPACE?” (Empty space is filled with beeping of the police dispatch, twirling bodies. Another riff is sung.) *Other performers began to speak.* “NEVER AGAIN WILL WE SEE HOME.” (Dispatches remixed, scratched over poetry, singing as voices compete with the (sound) system. The sirens then struggle to play, haltingly, hauntingly, as those onstage testified.) “WHO WILL PROTECT AND SERVE?” “WE MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER.” “THE SADDEST THING ABOUT THE HUMAN RACE IS WE ARE OBSESSED WITH ‘US AND THEM.’” “LOVE ONE ANOTHER.” “BROTHERS AND SISTERS, WE MUST KEEP STRONG.”

CWLM, as a method to study the police, involved the sounds of policing and incarceration. This study allowed one to trace and analyze the sonic shape of the criminal justice system, while performing it. CWLM as a performative methodology, looks/sounds like playing sounds of policing for the performers and audience, and in the case of this performance, mixing and remixing these sounds within a visual and tactile context to produce a re-listening, a re-revolution. Within a staged performance, CWLM participants perform while simultaneously researching the effect of watching, listening, and moving (against, toward, through, and around) the police. Sound is a particularly crucial element of CWLM because of its immersive nature, drawing the audience into a “three-dimensional, interactive and synesthetic” (Dyson, 2009) experience that demands a bodily experience yet suspended in time and space.

Indeed, sound surrounds, as does policing. An increasing hyper-militarization of the police, and immersion of police in our daily lives in public, at work, and at school, makes sound an ideal method with which to ascertain the complete picture of policing of U.S. society. Sound in CWLM immerses the actors, as well as the audience, within conditions of policing that individuals may or may not have navigated before. This element of sound within CWLM enables a space of common struggle across race and class within the performance space that may not be shared within the larger society. For example, political consciousness around policing of different racial and classed communities is just now growing at critical mass, but there are many (even among #BlackLivesMatter protestors) who are at a loss as to why a performance of a “die-in” or “Hands up! Don’t Shoot!” looks, sounds, and means something different from, and for, White people versus Black or Brown people. There must be spaces, in addition to the street, where these personal and political formations, alliances, and movements can be slowed down, broken down, analyzed, practiced, and practiced again. Staged performances developed within CWLM offer such a space.

Performative methodologies of sound and movement have long provided a laboratory for action-research, performance, and social change, such as in Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). Boal's work, influenced by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is a significant precursor to CWLM. Both performance methodologies provide a space where Boal's "Cop in the Head," or "those oppressions that have been internalized," can be identified and literally worked out. These kinds of performance spaces serve as an important contribution to individual and collective agency in regard to individual control over oneself and community control over the police.

"Cop in the Head" is a concept within the larger framework of TO and seeks to identify the internalized cops in people's minds, as well as the "headquarters of these cops in the external reality" (Boal, 2002). The TO techniques, as in CWLM, center collective experiences of those experiencing oppression and seek to provide a performative space to individually and collectively brainstorm potential solutions to this oppression that can be acted out in real life (Boal, 2002). TO seeks to provide a form of theater where all observers are *active spectators*. Where CWLM departs from TO's work is in the triple casting of actors as audience, spect-actor, and spectator. This meta-theatrical effect proceeds with the seated audience listening to the actors onstage, who in turn operate simultaneously as spect-actors, spectators, and audience as they listen to, respond, and engage with the sounds of the police. Furthermore, CWLM, in recognition of the intimate nature of the rehearsal process, does not directly invite its audience to join the multiembodied performers onstage. Although TO seeks participants who move the stage, rather than a stage that moves the audience, CWLM facilitates a moving of both the stage and audience by the performers. Nonetheless, both methodological approaches reflect social movement activism that allows everyday people to be active spectators in transforming their reality. In this regard, the CWLM methodology is particularly tailored to address the reality of policing.

In both TO and CWLM, participants exist in the aesthetic and real world simultaneously (Boal, 2002), allowing the two worlds to influence and inform one another and utilize artistic creativity to produce new realities. Boal (2002) wrote that "the theatre of the oppressed has two fundamental principles: 1) To help the spectator become the protagonist of the dramatic action so that s/he can 2) apply those actions s/he has practiced in the theatre to real life" (p. 36). In addition to these fundamental principles, CWLM also allows a space for the audience, spect-actor, and spectator to simultaneously exist in one body, while kinesthetically and sonically policing the police. In our performative methodology, the initial "scene" is introduced via sounds and images of policing, and participants individually and collectively develop the staged action through their own responses to

the sounds. Within Boal's TO, scenes are presented and worked through by one individual protagonist at a time and usually involves dialogue and a "scripted" scene on which improvisations might take place. Within CWLM, sound and movement responses are privileged, as much as spoken or sung words, extending possibilities of what might occur onstage into the surreal and at times magical.

Like TO, CWLM plays in the fantastic, as much as the real. In our performative methodology, movements such as running and being shot, and sounds such as sirens and police dispatches, take on symbolic as much as real meanings. Performances that reflect a dream, as much as a reality, open up space for visioning possibilities of that which has not yet been seen, heard, or experienced. In this space of creative rehearsal and performance, new scenes, sounds, and movements can be produced, without judgment and with relatively low stakes in the real world. Application of what is learned or practiced within the CWLM space is then up to the participants. Another world is possible.

Act IV: Conclusion

SHARRELL and JEB: Our experience with CWLM was a form of performance, but also served as a form of study.

SHARRELL: By collectively tuning into the sound of the police in research and performance, we explored new approaches to agency and movement for policed communities and sonically and kinesthetically policed the police.

JEB: Where the sounds traced a spatial reality of policing and surveillance, participants moved through, around, and against this space. They redefined their sonic and physical relationship to the police within this rehearsal space, at times controlling the aural-spatial reality with their own bodily expressions. They practiced (social) movements.

SHARRELL: From our rehearsals and performances, CWLM emerged as a performative method that established community control over the police.

In the midst of a national movement against police brutality and murder, CWLM serves as an artistic corollary to the protests occurring in the streets throughout the United States. This rehearsal and performance space was created wherein performers and audience members could aurally and physically interact with the sounds and movements of policing, on their own terms. Performance is a key idea at the center of this theatrical method, as well as at the center of the current movement for justice and fairness in policing. The performance of the police in their day-to-day duties, particularly in their use of deadly force, is currently being questioned, challenged, and reevaluated. Mass demonstrations, large-scale performances of protest in the street, have commanded news headlines. These performances by everyday people have manifested in real effects in society: "shutting down" street traffic, malls, police departments, and in many cities, disrupting "business as usual."

The general public and organizers of these protests are asking if vigils, “die-ins,” speak outs, shut downs, riots, and so on can translate into institutional and systemic change. Can the staged protest produce real effects? Both protests and CWLM exist in this space of performative inquiry. These are spaces of sanctuary, laboratory, and strategy. They are the in-between, indeterminate spaces, where politics are rehearsed, worked out, studied, and from which a (social) script might emerge. Written directives, policies, and laws can be produced from protest, or even from theater. This is our stage; this is our performance.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Boal, A., & Epstein, S. (1990). The cop in the head: Three hypotheses. *The Drama Review*, 34(3), 35-42.
- DeFrantz, T. F. (2005). African American dance: Philosophy, aesthetics, and beauty. *Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy*, 24, 93-102.
- Dyson, F. (2009). *Sounding new media: Immersion and embodiment in the arts and culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Eric Garner: The haunting last words of a dying man. (2014, December 4). *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2014/12/04/us/garner-last-words/>
- Harney, S., & Moten, F. (2013). *The undercommons: Fugitive planning and blacks study*. New York, NY: Minor Compositions.
- Kedhar, A. (2014, December 15). Choreography and gesture play an important role in protests. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/12/15/what-does-the-style-of-a-protest-say-about-a-movement/choreography-and-gesture-play-an-important-role-in-protests>
- Kershaw, B. (1998). Pathologies of hope in drama and theatre. *Research in Drama Education*, 3(1), 67-83.
- Lepecki, A. (2013). Choreopolice and choreopolitics: Or, the task of the dancer. *The Drama Review*, 57(4), 13-27.
- Manning, S. (2004). *Modern dance, Negro dance: Race in motion*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Middlebrook, J. (2010). Rhyme and reason: The making of a White antiracist rap group. In B. Cushing & J. Hitchcock (Eds.), *Accountability and White anti-racist organizing* (pp. 26-43). Roselle, NJ: Crandall, Dostie & Douglass Books.
- Mitchell, K. (2011). *Living with lynching: African American lynching plays, performance, and citizenship, 1890-1930*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Author Biographies

Sharrell D. Luckett, PhD, is an assistant professor of performance in the Assistant Professor of Theatre & Performance Studies at Muhlenberg College. Her embodied and literary scholarship is grounded in performance studies, women’s studies, and Black performance. She has recently published with the *Journal of American Drama and Theatre*; *Continuum: The Journal of African Diaspora Drama, Theatre, and Performance*; *Black Masks*; and *Theatre Topics*. Her upcoming book projects include *YoungGifedandFat: Size, Sexuality, & Privilege* and *Black Acting Methods: Critical Approaches*, an anthology that explores Afrocentric/African American approaches to acting and directing.

Jeb Aram Middlebrook, PhD, is assistant professor of sociology at California State University, Dominguez Hills. His work focuses on race, justice, and sound and has appeared internationally in the form of talks, writing, sound installations, performances, film, and television. He has been published by *American Quarterly* and Greenwood Press, indexed by the *Modern Language Association Bibliography*, and has received recognition from the Ford Foundation, the Council of Editors of Learned Journals, the Harry S. Truman Foundation, the *Journal of Black Studies*, and NBC, ABC, and MTV Networks. He is currently working on two books, *Prison Music: Containment, Escape, and the Sound of America*, as well as *Resounding Race: The Sonics of Multiracial Movement-Making*.