

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you safe and well. Dr. Mary E. Weems and I would like to introduce you to our newest book, *Collaborative Spirit-Writing and Performance in Everyday Black Lives* (Routledge, 2021). The book is a powerful exploration of performance in everyday Black (African American) lives through the performative writing of poetry, prose, drama, and dialogical engagement.

This new book serves as compliment and companion to our preceding book, *Still Hanging: Using Performance Texts to Deconstructive Racism* (Brill | Sense, 2021).

In each book we take hold the social and racial politics of our times to address the lived experiences and observations of two Black teacher-artists-scholars practicing voice and putting their bodies on the line.

We ask for your full consideration in both engaging and utilizing the work in your academic and activist efforts.

Respectfully,
Bryant Keith Alexander, PhD
Professor and Dean, College of Communication and Fine Arts
Interim Dean, School of Film and Television
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Summary: “Collaborative-Writing: Performance in Everyday Black Lives

Collaborative Spirit-Writing and Performance in Everyday Black Lives is about the interconnectedness between collaboration, spirit, and writing. It is also about a dialogic engagement that draws upon shared lived experiences, hopes, and fears of two Black persons: male/female, straight/gay.

This book is structured around a series of textual performances, poems, plays, dialogues, calls and responses, and mediations that serve as claim, ground, warrant, qualifier, rebuttal, and backing in an argument about collaborative spirit-writing for social justice. Each entry provides evidence of encounters of possibility, collated between the authors, for ourselves, for readers, and society from a standpoint of individual and collective struggle. The entries in this Black performance diary are at times independent and interdependent, interspliced and interrogative, interanimating and interstitial. They build arguments about collaboration but always emanate from a place of discontent in a caste system, designed through slavery and maintained until today, that positions Black people in relation to white superiority, terror, and perpetual struggle.

With particular emphasis on the confluence of Race, Racism, Antiracism, Black Lives Matter, the Trump administration, and the Coronavirus pandemic, this book will appeal to students and scholars in Race studies, performance studies, and those who practice qualitative methods as a new way of seeking Black social justice.

Pertinent Courses for the Text:

“Collaborative Spiriting” is designed to be used in a wide range of undergraduate and graduate classes in Qualitative Inquiry, Social Justice, Anti-Racism, Performance Studies, Theatre Studies, Drama Analysis, Communication Studies, Critical Race Studies, Cultural Studies, Intercultural and Interracial Studies, Race and Ethnic Studies, Black Studies, African American Literature, American Studies, Cultural Anthropology. Creative Writing Courses, Performative Writing Courses, Research Methodologies, as well as community-based organizations dedicated to grassroots theorizing and activism.

Book Excerpt:

From: “Freedom” by Mary E. Weems

“Education is freedom. Educators are like the guides through the Underground Railroad. We help to build communities of learners using mutual respect, reciprocal learning, caring, and sharing as the code words of the song we sing over and over; our mantra; an ongoing, always-learning labor of love that uses everything we know to inspire others to think using their imagination and intellect. To learn all they can, about all they can, whenever they can. To pass it on like my ancestors moved from secret place to secret place, risking everything.”

From: “Oh Freedom” by Bryant Keith Alexander

“I have a PhD and my father only completed the fourth grade.
My father had common sense.

A garbage man by trade, my father taught me lessons;
lessons for living and navigating the world that both transcended
my fancy education and taught me how to think.
How to think through the sometime morass of higher education
and how to ritually return to the front porch theorizing of my childhood
sitting at his knee. My father taught me how to engage in
deep theorizing from grassroots perspective as a man, as a Black man.

Endorsements:

"When I finished reading this book, I did not want it to end. It is a passionate book of artistry and politics in the service of merciful and thriving Black futures. It is a book that is evidence of the inseparability of justice and beauty. The poetics and authenticity of the personal make it a captivating read where deep, complex learning is transformed into clarity, intimacy, and pleasure. The reader enters a potpourri of spiritualities, both secular and sacred, both subaltern and soaring. The reader enters the alchemy and divinity of collaboration as a heartfelt offering toward the common good." -- *D. Soyini Madison, Professor Emeritus, Department of Performance Studies, Northwestern University, USA*

"Powerful and poetic, this major new work by two of the leading performance scholars in the field engages in a performative praxis of doing collaborative spirit-writing. Situated within and against the rhythms of everyday Black life in the United States, Alexander and Weems offer the act of spirit-writing as a means through which to experience, resist, and reimagine the historical present. Their writing emotionally grabs the reader and takes them on a journey of discovery through family histories, cultural milestones, and generational change. This is a must-read text for anyone looking to write their way into and out of our fractured -- though perhaps still hopeful -- social, cultural, and political futures." -- *Michael D. Giardina, Professor of Physical Culture & Qualitative Inquiry, Florida State University; Director, International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry, USA*

Co-Author Bios:

Bryant Keith Alexander, Ph.D. is Professor and Dean, College of Communications and Fine Arts, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles and currently serves as the Interim Dean, School of Film and Television at LMU. He is the co-editor of *Performance Theories in Education: Power, Pedagogy, and the Politics of Identity* (Erlbaum, 2005); author of *Performing Black Masculinity: Race, Culture and Queer Identity* (Alta Mira, 2006), and *The Performative Sustainability of Race: Reflections on Black Culture and the Politics of Identity* (Peter Lang, 2012); and co-editor of the *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Communication* (Routledge, 2021). Formal faculty in the Department of Communication Studies at LMU, he is also Affiliate Faculty of Educational Leadership for Social Justice, Doctoral Program at LMU's School of Education.

Mary E. Weems, M.A., Ph.D. is an Independent Scholar, imagination-intellect theorist, poet, playwright, performer, and author of thirteen books, two of them collections of poetry, and five chapbooks. Recent books include "Blackeyed: Plays and Monologues" (Sense, 2015), *Writings of Healing and Resistance: Empathy and the Imagination-Intellect* (Peter Lang, 2013) and Weems' new book "Still Hanging: Using Performance Texts to De-Construct Racism" (Brill/Sense Publishing, 2021) which she co-authored with Bryant Keith Alexander, Ph.D. and numerous poems, articles and book chapters. Mary Weems may be reached via her website at www.maryeweems.org

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