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"Dreamscape" a police shooting Brought to life in Beats

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Performance of Dreamscape by Rhaechyl I. Walker as Myeisha and John "Faahz" Merchant as Coroner/ 911 operator/ Officer Garland/ Guy at Club
Laura Ann Tull 2014

"Dreamscape" playing at LACE in Hollywood this past weekend, and this Friday and Saturday August 15th and 16th, is a story based on the police shooting of 19 year old Myeisha Mills on December 28, 1998.

Writer/director Rickerby Hinds was aware of the incident in 1998 as his in-laws own a paper that covered the events. Hinds used the actual coroner reports and 911 calls as part of the script; however he decided to create the events of Myeisha's life by imagining what a 19 year old living in Riverside, California shot by the police at the time might have experienced. He "purposefully did not make the story about Myeisha."

The play opens with Myeisha, played by Rhaechyl I. Walker sitting in a chair facing the audience, and the only other performer in the piece, John "Faahz" Merchant in a chair at her back. Merchant plays the Coroner, 911 Operator, Officer Garland, and a Guy at the club. Through dance and movement Rhaechyl recreates what Myeisha lost with each shot to the body or what might have gone through her head as she was shot if she had been conscious. Rhaechyl admitted being told that she was not black growing up and her first thoughts were how to play a black girl. But then Carrie Mikuls the choreographer told her to "stop acting," because it was not about a black girl, it was not about being black but being a young girl.

Merchant explained post performance that he had grown up having experienced [police brutality](#), but through the course of creating his characters he came to realize he needed to remove his own personal biases and realized that the cop was young and probably scared. Merchant created his own rap beats for the entire production by going through and listening to music the real Myeisha might have listened to adding his own input to the tone of the piece and characters he played. He also searched for music involving the theme of shootings that were playing at the time. Through the course of the play even when his back is turned to the audience, Merchant is adding to the story with his deep voice, and live sound samples. His objective, and it works, was to use the samples to enhance the story.

After each performance at LACE the cast and director will be giving an enlightened conversation on the show. The play though about a shooting, is not overly graphic and actually contains moments of humor and beautiful moments of human understanding. Over all, if a theater lover, advocates, or concerned citizen, the performance is worth it. This piece is an example how one can use very limited space and talented actors to help tell a story and encourage a discourse on relevant topics today.

"Dreamscape" is running again this Friday and Saturday at 7 pm at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), 6522 Hollywood Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90028. \$5 suggested Donation on Eventbrite.com

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