



## CURRICULUM VITAE

# SHAMELL BELL

CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE, DOCTORAL STUDENT  
WORLD ARTS AND CULTURES/DANCE  
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## EDUCATION

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**2018**

**University of California, Los Angeles**

Doctoral Student, Culture and Performance (2014-2018)

Tentative Dissertation Title:

*“Performing Resistance to Perceived Weaponized Blackness: Street Dance Activism in Los Angeles from Krumping to the Black Lives Matter Movement”*

**Committee:**

Professor of World Arts Cultures, UC Los Angeles, Peter Sellers

Professor of World Arts Cultures, UC Los Angeles, Allen F. Roberts

Chair and Professor of History, UC Los Angeles, Robin D.G. Kelley

Associate Professor of Chicana/o Studies & Afro-American Studies, UC Los Angeles, Gaye Theresa Johnson

Chair and Professor of Pan African Studies, Cal State LA/Founder Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, Melina Abdullah

**2012**

**University of California, San Diego**

M.A. Ethnic Studies (2012-2014)

**2011**

**University of Southern California**

B.A. American Studies and Ethnicity (African-American Studies)

Honors Thesis:

*“Jerkin’: Aesthetics, Identity, and Movement”*

Committee: Lanita Jacobs, Robin D.G. Kelley, Shana L. Redmond

- USC Discovery Scholar
- Valedictorian, 2010 USC African American Cultural Celebration (*formerly Black Grad*)

## RESEARCH FIELDS

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Black youth street dance  
Ethnographic surrealism  
Cultural studies  
African American Diaspora

Theories of corporeality  
Ethnographic collaboration  
Critical race theory  
Social Movements

Art-activism  
Documentary  
Pedagogy  
Afro-Futurism

## TEACHING/RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

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- **Teaching Associate for Rennie Harris, Dance 145: Hip Hop Dance History (Spring 2017)**
  - Assisted hip hop dance legend and Professor with counseling undergraduate students for original research papers and grading. Taught a lecture/studio session on urban street dance and its application to the Black Lives Matter movement
- **Teaching Associate for Allen F. Roberts, WAC 142: Myth & Ritual (Winter 2017, UCLA)**
  - Assisted Professor Roberts with counseling undergraduate students for original research papers and grading.
- **Guest Teacher for Vic Marks and David Gere, Dance 1/WAC1 (Fall 2016, UCLA)**
  - Taught a lecture/studio session on urban street dance and its application to the Black Lives Matter movement
- **Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Program (Summer 2016, UCLA)**
  - Worked closely with Allen F. Roberts to develop a paper for presentation at an academic conference and for publication.
- **Teaching Associate for Rennie Harris, Dance 145: Street Dance History (Spring 2016)**
  - Assisted hip hop dance legend and Professor with counseling undergraduate students for original research papers and grading. Taught a lecture/studio session on urban street dance and its application to the Black Lives Matter movement
- **Teaching Associate for Peter Sellars, Art and Moral Action (Spring 2016, UCLA)**
  - Taught 400 students the background and vision of the Black Lives Matter movement
- **Teaching Assistantship Arts Ed 102: Introduction to Arts Education for Multiple Publics (Fall 2015, UCLA)**
  - Will be assisting Professor Kevin Kane with training undergraduates to teach arts education in high schools.
- **Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Program (Summer 2015, UCLA)**
  - Worked closely with Robin DG Kelley to develop a paper for presentation at an academic conference and for publication.
- **Guest Lecturer for Peter Sellars, Art and Moral Action (Spring 2015, UCLA)**
  - Taught 400 students the background and vision of the Black Lives Matter movement and provided a radical dialogue with my collaborators and special guests Patrisse Cullors (co-founder of #blacklivesmatter, Hank Jones (Black Panther Party, San Francisco 8, and SNCC). Also taught street dance activism featuring well-known Krump dancer, Krucial: The Liberator, and Jerk dancer Dashawn “Day Day” Blanks.
- **Teaching Assistant for Allen F. Roberts, WAC 142: Myth & Ritual (Spring 2015, UCLA)**
  - Assisted Professor Roberts with counseling undergraduate students for original research papers and grading.
- **Graduate Student Researcher for Robin DG Kelley, (Spring 2015, UCLA)**
  - Assisted Robin DG Kelley with forthcoming book.
- **Teaching Assistant for Dance 44: Dance World Histories (Winter 2015, UCLA)**
  - Assisted Doran George’s discussion section and taught a lecture/studio session on urban street dance featuring well-known krumper “Krucial: The Liberator”.
- **Guest Teacher for Vic Marks, Dance 1 (Fall 2014, UCLA)**
  - Taught a lecture/studio session on urban street dance featuring “jerking” with popular street performer, Day Day of the Ranger\$.
- **Research Assistant, (Spring 2009, USC)**

- Assisted Laura Pulido, PhD with “A People’s Guide to Los Angeles,” UC Press (April 2012)

## CONFERENCES

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- **2017 ATHE Conference at the Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino in Las Vegas, NV on August 3-6, 2017.**  
Panel: “Spectacular Life: Performance, Resistance, and the Paradox of Black Agency.” “Protest as Performance: Political Bodies in Action
- **2017 Mellon School of Theater and Performance Research at Harvard University.** “Research, Pedagogy, Activism.”
- **2016 ATHE Conference at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago. August 11 - 14, 2016**  
Panel: “Protest as Performance: Political Bodies in Action
- **Black Girl Genius Week. The University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign, October 25, 2016.**  
Presentation: “Dance In: Blackness +Freedom with Shamell Bell and Dr. Dominique C. Hill.”
- **The 2015 ASTR/TLA Conference, Debating the Stakes in Theatre and Performance Scholarship, Portland, OR. November 5, 2015.**  
Presentation: “Living Is Resisting: Street Dance Activism in the Black Lives Matter Movement.”
- **Possessive Investments: Systems of Power, Possibilities of Dissent, UCLA. March 7, 2015.**  
Presentation: “Street Dance Activism: Aesthetically and Culturally Driven Political Engagements in the Black Lives Matter Movement.”
- **1<sup>st</sup> Annual International Hip Hop Activism Conference, Minneapolis, MN. February 18, 2015.**  
Presentation: “The Battle: Fighting/Moving to Be Heard in the Movement”
- **Dancing the African Diaspora: Theories of Black Performance 2014, Duke University February 7, 2014.**  
Presentation: “Corporeal Pedagogy: Urban Street Dance and Diasporic Tradition, Transhistorical Memory, and Desires for Freedom.”
- **The ASTR/TLA Conference 2013: “The Post-Thematic Conference”, The Fairmont Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas. November 7, 2013.** Presentation: “Corporeal Pedagogy: Haunting and Resisting Public Imagination.” (Paper solicited for submission by The Drama Review)
- **1<sup>st</sup> Annual Claremont Graduate University Southern California McNair Scholars Symposium, Claremont Graduate University, October 1-2, 2010.**  
Presentation: “The Jerk “Movement’: Aesthetics and Identity in an Emergent Youth Dance Form.”
- **The Leadership Alliance National Symposium (LANS) 2010, East Brunswick Hilton, East Brunswick, New Jersey, July 31, 2010.** Presentation: “Jerkin’: The Viral Construction of Aesthetics, Identity, and Movement in an Emergent Youth Dance Form.”
- **Yale Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship Presentation, Yale University, July 30, 2010.**  
Presentation: “The Jerk “Movement’: Aesthetics and Identity in an Emergent Youth Dance Form.”
- **USC Writing in the Community Presentations, USC Ron Howard Theater of the Robert Zemeckis Center, April 27, 2010.** Documentary Presentation: “We Jerk.”
- **American Studies and Ethnicity Honors Thesis Presentations 2009-2010, University of Southern California, April 5, 2010.** Presentation: “Jerkin’: Aesthetics, Identity, and Movement.”
- **14<sup>TH</sup> Annual USC McNair Scholars Symposium, University of Southern California, July 28, 2009.**  
Presentation: “Krumping and Jerking: The Politics of Black Youth.”

## INVITED TALKS/EVENTS (SELECTED)

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- “Operation Get Home Alive”- Sankofa.org and Revolt TV, May 12, 2017.
- Resist: Speaking Truth to Power- April 15, 2017
- #BLACKGIRLSMATTER - California African American Museum, March 16, 2017. Panel
- TBWA\CHHIAT\DAY LA Advertising Company, “From a Moment to a Movement: A panel discussion on what advertisers can learn from #BlackLivesMatter”, February 24, 2017
- 59th Grammy Awards- A Tribe Called Quest feat Busta Rhymes “We are the People” performance. Black Lives Matter organizer and consultant.
- Skirball Cultural Center Performance Lab: “The Bitter Game” by Keith Wallance. Panelist.
- Social Movement Consultant to 3-time grammy Award winner, Lalah Hathaway
- #MLKNow, The Riverside Church, Blackout For Human Rights January 20, 2017
- Pieter Conversation Series Session #3. Los Angeles, CA December 12 Presentation and Workshop: “Street Dance Activism: Living, Performing and Remembering 'in the break' of Black Lives Mattering”
- #Justice4Flint. Blackout For Human Rights. Benefit concert with Stevie Wonder, Janelle Monae, etc to raise money for Flint water crisis. February 28, 2016
- Justice or Else! Million Man March 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary featured with speaker Melina Abdullah, BLMLA
- #BlackLivesMatter, the Movement for Black Liberation, and the Role of Black Studies, Westin Los Angeles Airport Hotel, Saturday, March 14, 2015
- Black Lives Matter: It’s Origin, Reaching Back, the Present, and Future Possibilities Plenary Session/Radical Dialogue, UCLA, Saturday March 7, 2015
- Modern Day Lynching: Black Lives Still Matter Panel Discussion, UCLA School of Law Wednesday, February 25, 2015
- Black Lives Matter Panel Discussion, Cal State University-Los Angeles, Thursday, February 5, 2015

## HONORS & AWARDS

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- World Arts & Cultures/Dance Chair’s Discretionary Fund Award 2015-2016, 2016-2017
- Jean Irwin Scholarship 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018
- Graduate Summer Research Mentorship Program 2015, 2016
- UCLA Extension Transforming Your Community Certificate March 2015
- UCLA Regents Stipend 2014-2015
- San Diego Fellowship 2012-2014
- UCSD Competitive Edge Fellowship Summer 2012
- Ford Fellowship Honorable Mention 2012, 2013
- Yale Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship, Summer 2010
- Leadership Alliance Mellon Initiative Summer 2010
- USC Dornsife College Honors Program
- Valedictorian, USC African American Cultural Celebration
- McNair Research Program Scholar, 2008-2009 Cohort
- USC’s Provost Undergraduate Research Fellowship, Summer 2009 and Fall 2009
- Dean Joan Research Scholarship, Spring 2009
- Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, 2009 Cohort
- Norman Topping Scholar, 2006-2007 Cohort
- SCholars Program Scholar, 2006-2007 Cohort
- Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society
- Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
- Mortar Board Senior Honor Society
- Blackstonians Pre-Law Honors Society

- Dr. Thomas Kilgore Honor Society
- USC Phi Alpha Delta Pre-Law Professional Fraternity, 2006-2010 (*Eboard*)
- Certificate of Recognition from Senator Curren D. Price, Jr
- Certificate of Recognition from Assemblymember Mike Davis

## PERFORMANCE EXPERIENCE

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### *Choreographer*

- 2009-2010, Choreographer for the #1 Jerkin' group and YouTube Phenomenon (now 'Ncredible record label recording artists), The Ranger\$. The Ranger\$ have performed in Justin Beiber's "Baby" video, Snoop Dogg's "I Wanna Rock" video and "So You Think You Can Dance" performance.
- Choreographed for the lead female Jerkin' group "Go Go Girl\$", latest video hit 2 million views. Also choreographed their performance in Fly Guys' "Penny, Nickel, Dime" video
- Assisted with choreography for the female rap group, "Pink Dollaz".

### *Dancer*

- Training: Bancroft Performing Arts Middle School- Advanced dance: modern dance, jazz, ballet, salsa, lyrical, hip-hop, drill team). Bravo Medical Magnet High School- Competitive cheerleading squad, song leading and dance team. "Dances of the World"- Traditional Cultural Dances: African, American, Russian, Persian, Hawaiian, Latin American, Indian, and Thai. Moreo Landis Millennium dance classes
- Worked with Choreographers: Rich and Tone (Rize/Christina Aguilera), Hi Hat and Sho'Nique
- Performed in Music videos for Will Smith, Christina Aguilera, Marques Houston, and Ludacris.
- Award Show performances with Ludacris and Chingy.
- World Tour: Hard 'N Da Paint Clowns: China
- Principle dancer in the documentary on Clowning and Krumping, "Rize" directed by David LaChapelle.

## ORGANIZING EXPERIENCE

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### *Community Organizer/Mentor/Casting Director*

Title: Founder, Teens With No Color Lines

- Mentoring to disadvantaged youth in inner-city Los Angeles through the use of performing arts. A requirement of the organization focused on excellent academic performance.
- Provided academic planning and mentoring. Promoting academic achievement preparation for college for inner city students.
- Traveled to France, Mexico, China, Korea performing and mentoring abroad.
- Interned at Anissa Williams Casting Agency to provide opportunities for the inner-city teens to perform in TV, commercials, and music videos. It was my requirement that all performers have a strong commitment to higher education, mentoring, and social transformation. Many students went on to colleges such as Stanford, USC, UCLA, and UC Berkeley, while others are now signed to major record labels or doing well in the Entertainment Industry.
- Black Lives Matters LA (#BLMLA)- Core organizer, community organizing against anti-black racism and state sanctioned violence. Currently leading Art & Culture committee, with a focus on teaching "street dance activism" at demonstrations. Spokesperson for discussions featuring Black Lives Matters Los Angeles. Contributing to bridging academia and activism with political education materials and discussions on the original formations of Justice 4 Trayvon Martin LA/BLMLA.
- Co-founder, Black Infinity Complex/Undercommons at UCLA- Inspired by the boundlessness and sustainability of Black creativity and imagination, is a collective of organizers coming together as a liaison to create a united front of existing structures of grassroots organizations and community institutions. The Undercommons created a Freedom school at the Janss steps.
- Founder, Balanc(e)- Black Artists Loving and Networking Creating (Equilibrium, Equity...)

- Highlighting the need to not only create BALANCE and equilibrium in our own lives, but also in the world, we create performances, conduct workshops such as "Healing and Love," "Dance as Activism and Movement building"; coordinate conferences on eating and exercise habits, self-care/self-love, interconnectedness, and social justice issues. Using our various personal missions and life purposes, we balance ourselves in order to help others balance in the world. Through our networking and partnering with each other and organizations we raise the collective consciousness and vibrations of creativity and love.

### ***Special Speaking***

- Black Lives Matter Los Angeles spokesperson for numerous panel discussions, academic institutions, press conferences and news/media outlets. (list provided upon request)
- Assembly member Mike Davis' 48th District Academic Achievement Awards Breakfast 2010
- African American Cultural Celebration Reception 2010
- McNair Senior Luncheon 2010
- Locke High School Guest speaker 2010
- Scholars Program Senior Recognition Banquet 2010

### ***Documentary***

- “#OccupyLAMayor BLMLA Street Dance Activism”. Over 23, 000 views of street dance activism demonstration in front of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti’s Hancock Park home. Teaching Black Lives Matter: Los Angeles Occupiers who camped outside for 48 hours dance crazes “the whip” and “nae nae” while protesting the killing of Ezell Ford.  
<https://www.facebook.com/shamellb/videos/10103304091590795/>
- Directed and produced short 17min short-documentary: “LIVING IS RESISTING: STREET DANCE ACTIVISM IN BLACK LIVES MATTER”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDeFXrzDyu8>
- Directed and produced student documentary: “We Jerk” (Please click on links for 2-part short documentary below). Also directed several mini-documentaries as an ethnographic method, available upon request.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rm1wDhDRpFg>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdVeZxVITVQ>

## **GRADUATE COMMITTEES**

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- ASTR Graduate Student Caucus Founder & Co-Chair Peer Networking Committee 2015-2016
- ASTR Graduate Student Caucus Co-Chair Faculty and Peer Mentorship 2014-2015 Committee 2014-2015
- WAC/D Graduate Student org rep 2014-2015
- WAC/D Graduate Student org rep 2015-2016
- WAC/D Graduate Student org rep 2016-2017
- Student liaison to Ben J. Refuerzo, Professor AUD Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion School of the Arts & Architecture

## **SELECTED FEATURED ARTICLES**

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- <http://www.latimes.com/la-et-cm-street-dance-activism-20170420-story.html>

- <http://www.laweekly.com/news/these-savvy-women-have-made-black-lives-matter-the-most-crucial-left-wing-movement-today-6252489>
- <http://dailybruin.com/2015/05/15/ucla-graduate-student-incorporates-dance-background-into-activism/>
- <http://www.uscannenbergmedia.com/2016/01/19/black-lives-matter-runs-on-girl-power/>  
<http://bostonreview.net/forum/robin-d-g-kelley-black-study-black-struggle>

## BIOGRAPHY

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Bell received her M.A. in Ethnic Studies from UC San Diego and B.A. with Honors in American Studies and Ethnicity specializing in African American Studies at the University of Southern California. Involved in the original formations of the #blacklivesmatter movement, she is a core organizer with Black Lives Matter Los Angeles alongside prominent organizers Patrisse Cullors and Professor Melina Abdullah. She is also a co-founder of the Black Infinity Complex, a liaison organization building coalitions and creating a united front between those fighting against Black premature death and state-sanctioned violence. Shamell's work on what she refers to as "street dance activism" situates dance as political action from her perspectives as a dance and performance scholar, a dancer, and an active member and choreographer for the Black Lives Matter movement. Shamell has a long history and experience with street dance movements and as a dancer in David LaChapelle's documentary "Rize," in addition to featured roles in various music videos, award shows, and tours. She also conducted original research with the Ranger\$, a well-known dance crew in the Jerkin' movement, for her undergraduate senior thesis. Shamell's doctoral research currently extends this work with a performance studies lens and historio geographical analysis of street dance movements in South Central Los Angeles. Her passion is to create a dialogue between the street dance community, activist community, and the academy that includes the street dancer's actual presence at academic institutions in the form of dancing, speaking, teaching, and writing. When she is not occupying the police station or leading chants at demonstrations with BLMLA, she can be found playing with her 6 year old son, Seijani aka "Johnnie", and even including him in peaceful demonstrations.

Shamell was on the ground and in the field using her life experiences to research the intersections of art and activism in the Black Lives Matter movement. She organized many well-received street dance activism actions with Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, including Occupy LA Mayor, and for the felony lynching sentencing for Jasmine Abdullah that has been written about and shared widely on blogs and social media. As the choreographer for Black Lives Matter, Shamell taught a *Street Dance Activism* workshop and helped with the coordinating committee of the Arts and Culture of the Movement for Black Lives Convening in Cleveland, Ohio. Her Street Dance Activism workshops provide foundational tools for the use of street dance in demonstrations as a form of self-care, resistance, and team building. The workshops encourage the possibility for performance to disrupt social, economic, and historical paradigms and present street dance as an alternative strategy for radical social change. She was also an invited special guest for "Race, Art, & Survival" - Michelada Think Tank and Chats About Change, an event that took place at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE). She was an invited speaker at both the California State University Dominguez Hills, Department of Africana Studies, and California State University Long Beach, for several events that highlight organizations and activities that are happening locally, nationally and internationally to improve the lives of Black people.

Shamell was also an invited guest lecturer presenting on "Street Dance Activism in the Black Lives Matter movement" at Otis College of Art & Design. She was also awarded this year's American Society for Theatre Research's Selma Jeanne Cohen Presentation Award for her presentation "Living is Resisting: Street Dance Activism in the Black Lives Matter Movement", which was the product of research done under the advisement of Robin DG Kelley for the GSRM fellowship. Bell's paper, which has been chosen for a curated

panel, speaks about dance as political action from her perspectives as a dance and performance scholar, a dancer, and an active member of the Black Lives Matter movement. The committee expressed they were impressed by Bell's call, in her words, "to create dialogue between activism and the street dance community, theatre/performance, and the academic world". Shamell also will be presenting a paper and teaching a street dance activism workshop at UC Riverside's Show and Prove Hip Hop Studies and Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) panel entitled, "Protest as Performance: Political Bodies in Action".

Shamell continues to make monthly presentations of her academic work for Black Lives Matter and universities nationwide to highlight the role of cultural production in community organizing. In January 2016, the Black Infinity Complex, an organization she co-founded, began a freedom school called "the Undercommons" located at the Janss steps on the campus of UCLA. This organizing effort, praised by Historian Robin DG Kelley in his recent article, "Black Study/Black Struggle," in the March 2014 issue of the Boston Review. Shamell's dedication to the intersections of art and activism seeps through all of her activities, The night of the Oscars 2016, Shamell traveled to Flint, Michigan to help organize a #JusticeForFlint event addressing the poisoning of their water with film directors Ava Duvernay (Selma) and Ryan Coogler (Creed); and actor Jesse Williams (Grey's Anatomy) among other artists and organizers. She strives to create a united front with her work as what she calls "a Culture and Performance liaison" with the Black Lives Matter network, Movement 4 Black Lives, and Blackout 4 Human Rights. She is currently establishing relationships between the Black Lives Matter network, Blackout for Human Rights, Motown records, Sankofa.org to provide opportunities for genuine relationships between artists, activists, and the families of those we lost. With these relationships she plans to establish unconditional love, but also provide political education that includes the artists being more informed on the movement's platform, and what is going on the ground, in order to create a more united front in the streets and in the media.

Most recently Shamell could be seen amongst the performers on the stage for A Tribe Called Quest Grammy Performance "We Are The People". She has helped TBWA\CHIAT\DAY develop strategies, advertising and creative content for some of the world's most iconic brands. As well as consulting artists and filmmakers on their important significance in the Black Lives Matter movement such as 3-time Grammy award winning singer/songwriter Lalah Hathaway and filmmaker George Tillman, Jr. (award winning American film producer, screenwriter, and director).