

# A CALLALOO CALL FOR PAPERS: Misperformance

## Staging Law and Justice in the African Diaspora

*Callaloo* invites papers for a special issue on “Misperformance: Staging Law and Justice in the African Diaspora” guest edited by Jason Allen-Paisant (University of Leeds, United Kingdom).

### Project description:

This special issue of *Callaloo: Journal of African Diaspora Arts and Letters* wishes to consider forms of performance in the African diaspora that engage the law and its apparatuses as a site for critical thought and intervention in the political present. We wish to harness the enabling potential of the concept of “failing yet performing acts” (Blazevic and Cale Feldman, 2014) for providing new understandings of performative interventions that confront histories of racial violence and imperial crimes despite disavowal, lack of official recognition, and absence of memorialization.

The *mis-* in *misperforming* evokes two central and interrelated ideas. It evokes the failures of colonial justice to close and redress the social breaches left by colonial crimes. However, beyond the idea of failure, it speaks to the critical creative forms of agency that arise from such failure. It suggests notions of defiance, of a breaking of the rules, of resistance – in sum, a refusal to comply, a *misbehaviour*. Indeed, misperformance points to an unwillingness to consider Empire’s crimes as closed or archived. It speaks to an opening *up* and an opening *out* of disavowed histories and of the modes of memory and remembering that such moves engage in the current moment. This interplay and interrelation between failure and its productive potentials can, we believe, animate a series of questions around justice, imperialism and performance in the present.

Notable examples of current performative interventions in the field of colonial law include *The Trial of Governor Eyre* (Jamaica), which uses law and theatre together to confront a colonial atrocity during the British Empire; *Action Zoo Humain*, a project by Belgian theatre maker Chokri Ben Chikha that sets up mock truth commissions in several Belgian cities around the colonial tradition of human zoos at the many world exhibitions and fairs that Belgium has hosted; and *A Trial of the Code Noir*, by German public art exhibition association Documenta.

What new questions are such performances asking of colonialism for the current time? What new understandings do they provide with respect to the triangulation of trauma, memory and performance? How are modes of performance (ritual, theatrical, etc.) being enlisted within movements for reparations for slavery and colonialism (*e.g.* in the US South, the Caribbean, Britain, France)? Are there benefits, insights or philosophical understandings that accrue from the theatricalized performance of justice and the law within histories of colonial violence?

We are ever mindful of the power of the law as a historiographically determined site of production of knowledge, which, in Western societies, implies a fraught yet organic relationship to the Western humanist tradition and its correlative of imperialism. As such, to explore, as we do, the myriad ways in which the stage in a broad sense (theatre, performing arts, activism, the museum, and so on) is brokering new relationships between the field of Justice and imagined Black social futures, is also to consider the challenges that such interventions bring to racist paradigms of Black human Being.

This special issue invites poetry and visual art, essays and critical articles on misperformance and the law in the Black Atlantic. Submissions that consider any or a series of the following points are welcomed, but contributions may address other relevant points:

1. Tragedy and the law
2. Law and memory
3. (Mis)performing the law
4. Justice and time
5. Justice and art
6. Justice and the stage
7. Blackness and the representation of justice
8. Forms, genres, media and justice
9. New approaches to justice in Black popular music
10. Performance and the reparations movement
11. Satire
12. #BlackLivesMatter and the 'stage' of justice
13. Performance-trials
14. Art and The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)
15. "The Trial of the 'Code Noir'"
16. Chokri Ben Chikha's 'Truth Commission'

**Callaloo Submission Guidelines:**

Manuscripts must be submitted online through the *Callaloo* manuscript submission system by **November 23, 2018**. Please see the submission guidelines here:

<http://callaloo.expressacademic.org/login.php>. In order to submit a manuscript, you must register with the online system. The registration process will only take a few minutes. All manuscripts will follow the usual review process for submissions, and the *Callaloo* editor makes all final editorial decisions. Please note all manuscripts must follow the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) and include in-text citations, a works cited, and endnotes for any commentary.

Please direct questions or other correspondence to the Guest Editor for this issue:  
Jason Allen-Paisant ([J.Allen1@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:J.Allen1@leeds.ac.uk))

**Guest Editor:**

Dr. Jason Allen-Paisant is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies at the University of Leeds (UK). He holds a DPhil (Doctor of Philosophy) degree in Medieval and Modern Languages from the University of Oxford, where he was a Commonwealth Scholar, and an MPhil in French from the University of the West Indies. His research focuses mainly on theatre and performance and on poetics in the Caribbean. He is the author of *Théâtre dialectique postcolonial: Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott* and is currently at work on a second monograph that involves studies of contemporary Haitian theatre. Dr. Allen-Paisant has a number of published and forthcoming articles in scholarly peer-reviewed journals, including *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, *The Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, and *Law, Culture, and the Humanities*. He is a 2015 *Callaloo* poetry fellow.