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Pain. Purpose. Art.: The tragedy of silence

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Pain. Purpose. Art.  
The tragedy of silence.

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Theatre and Dance (Acting)

by

Keith A. Wallace

Committee in charge:

Gregory Wallace, Chair  
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Manuel Rotenberg

2016

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The thesis of Keith A. Wallace is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

## DEDICATION

To my mother, who is my #1 cheerleader and greatest support.

To my beautiful sisters, whose encouragement through word and deed is undoubtedly the reason I've achieved this much thus far.

And to my niece who, because of this accomplishment, will too imagine a life for herself filled with dreams and possibilities, hope and potential.

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Deborah Stein.

UCSD Theatre & Dance faculty and staff.

The La Jolla Playhouse.

And a host of family, friends and supporters.

*“... the most urgent, the most disgraceful, the most shameful and the most tragic problem is silence.” – Rabbi Joachim Prinz, March on Washington, 1963*



## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Pain. Purpose. Art.  
The tragedy of silence.

by

Keith A. Wallace

Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Dance (Acting)

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Gregory Wallace, Chair

In August 2014 I lie for hours, motionless and bloodied on the ground in Center City Philadelphia before Robert Indiana's iconic *LOVE* statue, in silent protest of police brutality. It went viral. Overnight I became 'the guy who *always* talks about race.' Soon people wanted my opinion on every aspect of critical race theory imaginable. I had to educate myself, and quick, because what they didn't understand is that my burning desire to react to this pressing issue didn't come from readings in books. It came from a deep fear and disappointment in my lived experience as a Black person in this country, and I

could no longer be silent. It was a long time before I found the beauty and value in my lived, Black experience. In October 2015 I was able to combine that experience with my artistic skill as an actor; writing and performing, *THE BITTER GAME*.

This piece of theater effectively combined all that petrifies me as an actor and human; devised theater, solo performance, semi-autobiographical storytelling and yes... basketball. The sleepless nights and mounting anxiety I daily felt while sitting to put pen to paper, attempting in my own way to address such a polarizing topic as excessive police force, was paralyzing. My heart break daily for the families of the victims whom I used as source material.

However, through it all, I was reminded of these two truths: for the artist, heartbreak is a rite of passage and that the thin line between art and activism must be traversed with courage.