

cover (a play about trafficking)
THE POWER OF CREATING PERFORMATIVE
AUTO/ETHNOGRAPHIES IN A THEATRE COMMUNITY

Joy Ann Powell

Dr. M. Heather Carver, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist. This idea that the devil (or depravity) is sly enough to make us believe it doesn't exist comes rushing forward up to this moment. I connect this idea to the epidemic of domestic trafficking and sexual exploitation of minors and the misconception that it is not happening in the United States. In this dissertation through an auto/ethnography lens of the work of The Covering House (TCH), I explore the issue of domestic trafficking in St. Louis, Missouri. This play is based upon the narratives gathered from TCH staff and volunteers including my own experiences. I also explore the unique framework of creating a theatre community in the middle of a performed auto/ethnography. I chronicle the community created with the actors and the production team, as well as the audience and the staff and clients at TCH. Identity is who we are and who we are becoming. Performance is calling upon that identity in a public setting to tell a story through our bodies, minds and voices to an audience.