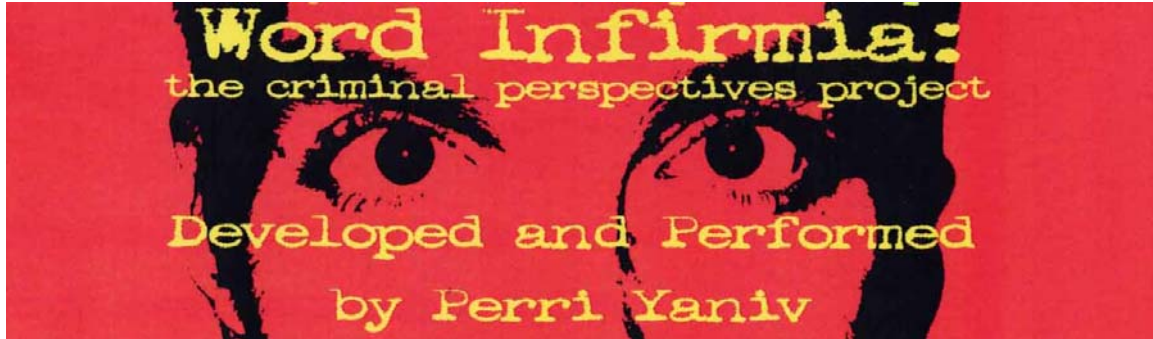


## THE BLACK CAT GROUP

presents



**Directed by Glynis Rigsby and Claudia Tatinge Nascimento**

**January 20 – 22, 2005**

**63 Greene Street #506, New York, NY 10001**

*The Criminal Perspectives Project* is based on the idea that perceptions and definitions of crime vary from one person to another. How we differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behavior should be of interest; the ways in which local communities, friends, families and other social systems define crime and implement punishment differ from the legal system's, and even the government's perception of what is acceptable or not.

The research for *The Criminal Perspectives Project* was carried out at several sites in Missouri and New York during the summer of 2003. The Missouri Eastern Correctional Center, the St. Louis County Jail, Aide for Victims of Crime, and the University City Police Station were completed as a result of my involvement with Prison Performing Arts and the leadership of artistic director Agnes Wilcox. The Fortune Society, the main site in New York, is a social service program that focuses on relapse prevention, alternatives to prison, and a multitude of treatment service programs for people newly released from New York State penitentiaries. A total of 25 people were interviewed, with four individuals unaffiliated to any organization or institution. I used open-ended interview questions that focused on criminal experiences, perceptions, and definitions of crime.

From a criminal's perspective, betrayal may be considered more of a crime than drug-dealing. By talking to the variety of inmates, prison administrators, ex-offenders, mandates, police officers and victims involved with the project, it became clear to me that our perceptions of criminality are related to our personal experiences. What we are taught by our parents, schools, peers and law enforcement is only a part of how we perceive the law and crime. What we see, do and believe for ourselves will dictate how we justify our wrong-doings; those moments of deviant actions that could be reprimanded if we were caught. But we're not.

*Word Infirmia* follows the path of Anna Deavere Smith's and Marc Wolf's documentary solo performances. While I have taken few liberties in the presentation of the interview transcripts, *Word Infirmia* attempts to display the multi-faceted issue of addressing criminals' perspectives. The issue of criminal perspectives addresses the need for a broader definition of crime, if counseling and rehabilitation do not begin taking account for the contexts in which crimes are committed. By addressing criminals as people instead of statistics or stereotypes, we can immediately see the reflections of behavior, logic and compassion present within all of us.

--Perri Yaniv