

# Valuing Non-European Aesthetics

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Anti-Racist Working Group

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With presentation content by Emily Craver

# Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that the land which OSU sits upon has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, specifically the Shawnee, Miami, Wyandot and Delaware Nations. We acknowledge them as the past, present, and future caretakers of this land.

(<https://mcc.osu.edu/resources/american-indian-indigenous/>)

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# PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

- Interrogate how racism influences dance
- Consider what dance forms hold value in academia.
- Examine how cultural appropriation strips dance forms from their original context.
- Interrogate the pervasive whitewashing within the worlds of social dance, concert dance, and academia.

# Community Agreements

1. Learned here leaves here, but what is said here stays here
2. One Singer, One Mic
3. Move Forward, Move Back / Share the Air
4. Listen for understanding, not debate
5. Assume nothing, ask questions
6. Address impact regardless of intent
7. Focus on Racism, Live in the discomfort
8. Don't change the conversation because of discomfort
- 9. The liberated zone is wobbly, call out uncertainty
10. Reserve the right to change your mind & permit others to do the same
11. Challenge by Choice
12. Challenge Ideas, not people

# Western concert dance

“How dance forms are named, defined, and categorized reflect the property of Whiteness in the field. The term *Western dance*, (Koepler 2010) comprised of ballet and modern dance, separates these two forms from all other dance traditions, which are variously called ethnic dance, multicultural dance, and world dance (Foster, 2009). This terminology establishes the Whiteness of ballet and modern dance by presenting them as universal entities, without specific cultural and historical origins (Kealiinohomoku, 2001).”

“While some Black dance forms, such as hip-hop and Chicago stepping, fall under these *non-Western* categories, they are created in the United States, in the so-called “Western world.” Western dance forms are the foundations of what is called *concert dance*, creating a hierarchical divide from dances known as *vernacular*, *social*, or *popular* dances (Dodds, 2011). Their exclusion from Western dance maintains its Whiteness...”

- “Tendus and Tenancy: Black Dancers and the White Landscape of Dance Education” by Crystal U. Davis and Jesse Phillips-Fein

# Dance Technique



“...*technique* equates with formal dance training in the requirements of ballet and modern dance...”

# ACADEMIA

“In academia dance programs, dance forms, training models, curricula, aesthetic criteria, pedagogic approaches, faculty hires, and student enrollments all function to ascribe the White body with power over Other bodies, Other dance forms, and Other perspectives. As white property, the white dancing body becomes a means to build and maintain another hierarchical structure in academia.” - Julie Kerr-Berry, “Counterstorytelling in Concert Dance History Pedagogy: Challenging the White Dancing Body”

# “Recognizing Systemic Racism in Dance”

by Alicia Mullikin (excerpts)

Poll Everywhere Activity

<https://PollEv.com/surveys/QSafk2f6WuWQKs2mB5AAF/respond>



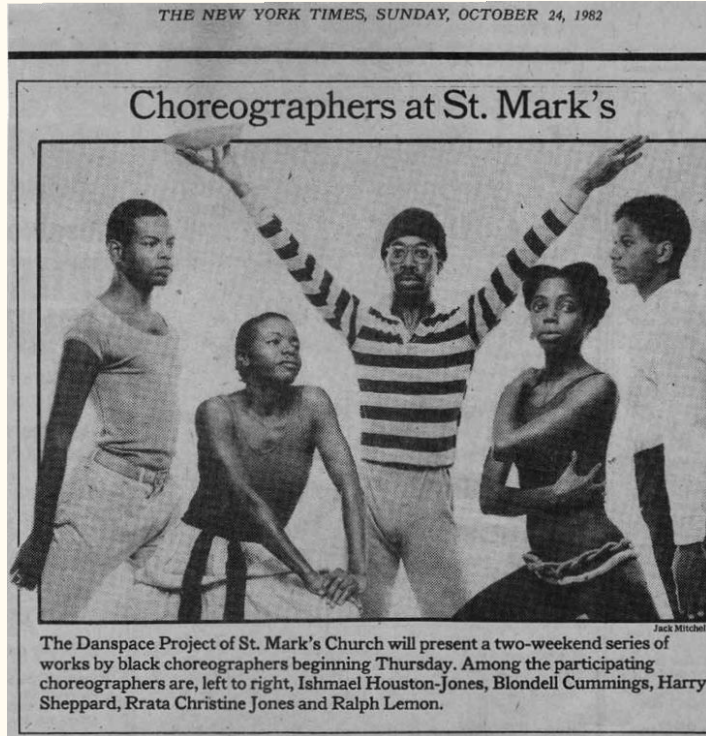
# Moment of Reflection

- What statements resonate with you and why?
- When was the first time you remember thinking about your race inside of the dance studio?

# Artists of Color Working in Abstraction & Futurism



# Black dance



New York Times Preview for Parallels,  
1982 | Photo by Jack Mitchell

“If one wants to “do away” with the term Black dance, one must first dismantle the systemic, politicized racist context that makes such descriptors arise to begin with; the term Black Dance as a descriptor can be abandoned when - and only when - Black people’s experiences and creations are no longer overlooked, disregarded and/or suppressed.”

A Terminology of Difference: Making the Case for Black Dance in the 21st Century and Beyond by Takiyah Nur Amin



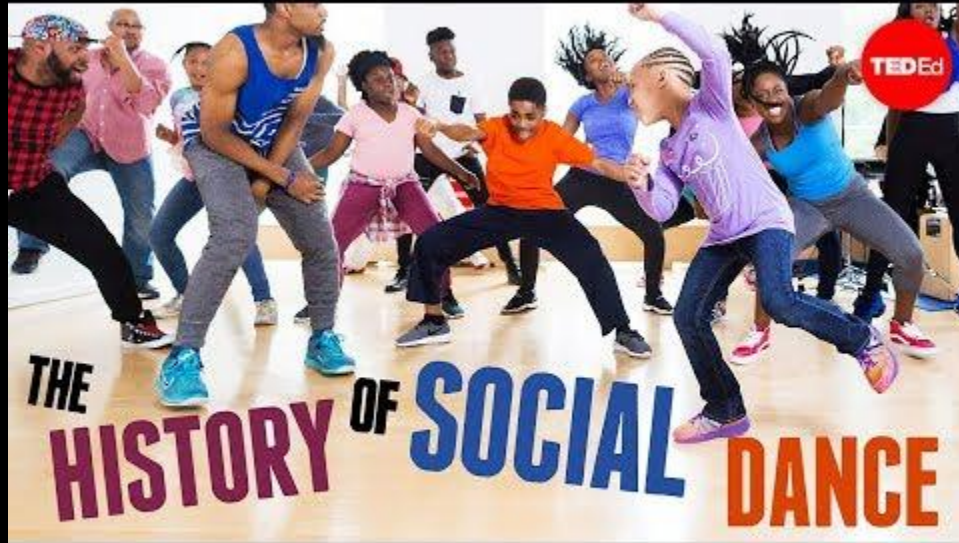
# Africanist Aesthetics



Camille A. Brown & Dance Company in *Black Girl: Linguistic Play* |  
Credit: Christopher Duggan

# Latin Dance Aesthetics





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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpCBMwAweDI>



# Whitewashing



IRENE AND VERNON CASTLE



JoJo Siwa

“At this point one has to look at the beginning of modern dance in America. The early pioneers of this new art could well be called ethnic dancers since they were terribly involved with dances of other countries and cultures- Ruth St. Dennis, Ted Shawn, the early Martha Graham and Lester Horton” (Moore, 1988).





“Global markets allow these social dances to be appropriated and repurposed as intellectual property to generate profit; in millennial terms, black social dance becomes a way to understand presence within global economies” - Tommy F DeFrantz



Neoliberalism and Global Theatres © Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited 2012 Thomas F. DeFrantz



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpko-AiMXw8>



Jalaiah Harmon, 14, performing the Renegade, a dance she created that has blown up on the internet.

Credit: Jill Frank for The New York Times

# Small Group Breakouts

Complete the following sentences and engage in the following discussion questions.  
Designate a recorder to report back in the Zoom chat:

- What was new? What was review?
- Have you had any personal experiences with the polls questions? If yes, can you speak more on them?
- How do you think this information will impact your remaining time at OSU Dance?
- Identify at least one concrete action that can be taken towards the future your group envisions for both the department and field.

# Learning

- “Traditional White Spaces, Why All-Inclusive Representation Matters”, Ayo Walker <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15290824.2020.1795179>
- The Dance Union Town Hall for Collective Action

# Taking Action

- Follow The Dance Union:
  - @TheDanceUnion (podcast in bio)
  - <https://www.thedanceunion.com>