

DIVERSITY & ETHICS STATEMENT

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Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is inseparable from my teaching philosophy and my teaching practices.

I believe it is imperative that the demographics of students, staff, and scholars at a university represent a global spectrum and that people of all racial, religious, and gender identities, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, professional and economic backgrounds, philosophies, and ages are represented substantially and meaningfully, so that we may all have the opportunity to learn together and from one another. We need to question the status quo and investigate possibilities for change. A diverse, mindful, non-violent, and equitable learning environment contributes profoundly and indispensably to longer-lasting and more sophisticated learning outcomes, more flexible and creative minds that exhibit greater eloquence in both verbal and non-verbal expression, to more empathy and altruism, to personal growth and emotional wellbeing, to better overall health, to vibrant, thriving, and caring communities, and ultimately to a more peaceful world. Nobody truly thrives under conditions of oppression, and the proof lies openly in the symptoms we can observe in the world today, from wars, to environmental disasters and rising depression and suicide rates. I see violence as a symptom of a broken system, a way of thinking which shapes our political and social organization and inevitably reverberates into and is passed on through our systems of education.

I feel encouraged by the growing awareness among individuals, institutions, and organizations and their desire to undo the pervasive injustices embedded within our systems.

In the United States, we confront significant challenges related to the persistent enactment of racist, misogynist, capitalist, and classist social, political, and institutional injustices and their structurally inscribed mechanisms. Ignorance persists and outright aggression and violence are asserted daily. We significantly suffer from the trauma of slavery, and the genocide against native populations and culture, domestic violence and rape, acts of territorialism, and the assault on the autonomy and authority over ones own bodies. All of these issues can find expression, as well as fuel, inside the classroom and on campuses in a multitude of ways. The mechanisms are too complex to attempt to discuss in this short statement but I believe that educators hold a pivotal position to either perpetuate or disrupt this cycle.

I wish to address here some of the ways in which I support equity, diversity, and inclusion practices within my realm of influence as an educator.

LANGUAGE

It is evident that many aspects of our traditional educational framework were built upon coercion and, on what Marshall Rosenberg articulates as systems of oppression that are deeply rooted in our language and communication with one another; which is where I can begin a liberation process in my classroom: in the ways that we communicate with one another. In our choices of words. I am not talking about censorship. I am talking about demonstrating to students that communication is complex and requires practice, patience, introspection, and an open mind to really hearing one

another. We need to learn to assess what our needs and emotions are around a given situation. It is then helpful to find ways of expression that are honest, and clear, and not accusatory or aggressive, which will only build resistance in our interlocutors. We practice communication not in order to cut out “bad” ways of interacting, but to improve our chances at being heard and at hearing each other. In short, I find Non-Violent Communication (NVC) to be a meaningful foundation for all class endeavors and as a general practice of communication in my life.

CRITICAL PRACTICES & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Dance practices are physical, emotional, psychological, and intellectual. We think about how we will be moving and what that means. We discuss history, pedagogical methodologies, and training techniques and we discuss each others' dance research. Verbally or not, we judge, compare, and assess one another. Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process and other similar methods for describing and analyzing dance and performance are helpful tools that improve introspection, critical thinking, articulateness, and empathy.

I make all effort to diversify my classroom by creating syllabi and inviting guests that represent a diversity of viewpoints. I openly discuss issues around EDI in class and I invite questions, concerns and feedback from students on a regular basis with the option to submit feedback anonymously. I see myself as a guide and facilitator for learning, discussion, and discovery. I am a white European person and I am aware that I have more blind-spots than I would like. I educate myself, and I listen, and I open my eyes to the experiences and needs of others to the best of my ability. .

What follows is an excerpt list of critical thinkers and educators whose work will find their way into my syllabi as reading assignments and for discussion in class. They also inform the physical manifestation of class exercises, details of which I address in my teaching philosophy and class descriptions. In short, we might explore prompts such as moving with concepts around kinship, or moving with the concept of living land. As we learn we move, and as we move, we learn. Those two are deeply interconnected.

My teaching is inspired by

- Kim Tallbear and her work around de-colonizing relationships through a critique on the predominant notions of ownership in colonial ways of relating,
- by Paulo Freire and his work on critical pedagogy and the empowerment of the student in their own learning content and process ,
- by Michel Foucault and his work on biopolitics and the role that the individual plays in the larger social mechanisms of power and oppression,
- by the Axis Syllabus© and it's core researchers Frey Faust, Kira Kirsch, Francesca Pedulla, Antoine Ragot among others, and their profound work on redefining alignment and neutral position (which puts the starting point for studying human movement at a living moving upright being and off the dissection table and away from the corpse upon which anatomical position is founded), and the important ideas that movement education needs to start from the premise of the individuality of each body (which requires and offers the possibility for an active authority and autonomy of the dancer), and for the realization that a body is a collective with a decentralized power structure, as well as for defining the inherent parameters and limitations of the human body that deserve to be respected and celebrated.
- I am inspired by Robin Wall Kimmerer and her work on kinship and helping western educated

minds find new words for relating to our more-than-human kin instead of owning or dominating them,

- by feminist theory and constantly reassessing the ways in which I engage with my students,
- by Vanessa Whatts and her work around living place and origin stories,
- by Gender studies and how we tend to categorize identities,
- by Judith Butler and her work around performativity,
- by Simone de Beauvoir and her foundational ideas around embodied identity formation and the 'making of a woman',
- and by Daoism, the age old inquiry into wisdom, empathy, and patience.
- Jill Green in dance scholarship and Sunaura Taylor with her work around the linkages between animal exploitation and disability policies have significantly affected my research and teaching in dance class, raising pervasive issues around the intersectionality of disability and dance training: in many minds the creation of disability in dance is still an accepted outcome: expecting short professional careers (much like athletes in other fields), bodies that always hurt or are expected to work through injury, the impending hip replacement in later age, perpetuating a "mind over matter" attitude, and diligently practicing for the undoing of natural alignment to enhance aesthetic goals of long lines and hyperflexibility. Another way of training, and long and active careers are possible.

I have also become sensitized around questionable dance recruiting practices that exclude certain bodies from the world of concert dance, which has inherently racist, ableist, capitalist, and misogynist underpinnings.

MOVEMENT TECHNIQUE THAT IS EQUITABLE, DIVERSE, AND INCLUSIVE

You can begin to see from the text above how I might be linking embodiment and ways of thinking. I am sensibly aware of how injustices and oppressive structures affect the ways in which we treat our bodies and the bodies of others. In class we are moving thinking individuals with a myriad of experiences and histories. I need to be aware of the potential impact that my words, actions, choices of class material, exercises, casting decisions, and recruiting practices might have on my students and on potential students. Through my 'BII – The Body's Intrinsic Intelligence' classes and my work around notions of 'effortlessness' I strive to offer tools for developing movement skills that are embodiments of just, equitable, diverse, authentic, autonomous, and individuated ways of articulating. My approach promotes a way of moving that is literally for everyone. It respects everyone's unique physiological reality, injuries, joint parameters, goals, fears, histories, trauma, and level of prior knowledge of dance. This way of moving works to preserve and nourish the body's integrity, it's joint function, response-ability, resilience, physical and psychological needs, and physiological individualities. BII is not a technique that seeks to make everyone look alike and move alike or even move in any particularly definable manner other than within healthy joint parameters and with good coordination and response skill. BII is the study of joint function and tissue inter-relatedness. It is an experiential kinesiology approach that will afford the practitioner substantially improved control and potential for athleticism, endurance, and an eloquent, fluid, and intelligent virtuosity. I reference the Axis Syllabus©, a list of physical, biomechanical, and anatomical principles that underlie human movement. These principles apply to everyone, we all have to deal with gravity, for example, but the ways in which each body navigates these fields is unique and requires the dancer's independent inquiry and improvisational investigation. I make students aware of the scientific nature of BII, which evolved from western ways of knowing, and that this is but one possible

way of approaching dance. No one approach is “the right” approach. I seek to inspire an investigation into the possibilities for embodied freedom and free embodiment.

The guiding principle of BII is that of effortlessness, as opposed to that of struggle. The less struggle the mover feels, and this is challenging to many students that come from traditional western training methods, the closer the mover is getting to an ideal movement pathways with more effective collaboration among all participating structures of the body. BII is a paradigm shift. I wish to point out again the parallel I drew earlier between how the ability of all parts of the structure to articulate freely is paramount to achieving proper function of the entire system. The body can move well if all parts are able to move, and contribute to and support the movement of all other parts. If some parts are inhibited we cause injury because we can not distribute stresses evenly throughout the system and we place excessive burden on some. When they fail it threatens the efficiency and eventually the survival of the entire system. The body and we are a community.

Through this work and my own daily practice, I have not only become a stronger dancer and a more compassionate, just, respectful, and articulate educator, but my ability to recognize oppressive structures and methodologies has improved significantly.

EDI IN CREATIVE WORK AND IMPROVISATIONAL PRACTICES

I have spent my creative career as a choreographer criticizing society's injustices and through my works and the topics I engage with I encourage discussion and awareness around social and political inequalities. It is a contribution toward the better functioning of our living together. The beauty and the power of dance is that through embodiment we can experientially work toward a more just world. Through collaborative exercises as well as through performing our creative works for one another, through the multitude of *practices of relating* we will find trust and support, we discover mechanisms for negotiation, we develop our strengths both physically and emotionally, and we refine our respect, and awe for one another. By sensitizing our own proprioception and interoception we simultaneously open up our thinking in regards to how our actions and beliefs affect us and others and how the ways in which we dance is a symptom of our systems of social and political coordination and how we might go about changing them.

We think, move, investigate, play and connect with one another in ways that is not possible outside this very special classroom. And we will carry what we have learned here out into the world.

RESPONSIBILITY

I need to start with refining my own awareness. There are so many injustices that need identifying and addressing. With great enthusiasm and curiosity I continue to attend workshops and conferences that address decolonization and EDI in general. I carry a profound responsibility for the safety and well-being of my students and I am committed to an ongoing journey of learning, self-education, self assessment, and an actively practiced ally-ship. I am committed to participating in the ongoing efforts to decolonize and diversify our systems, methodologies, classrooms, and minds because I believe in the exponential benefits from these practices for everyone. I plan on organizing outreach programming and conferences that specifically thematize equity, diversity, and inclusion in the dance context.