



ADTA 2019 Plenary Panel-Honoring Multiplicity: An Embodied Keynote Experience ADTA 54th Annual Conference Miami, FL

Michelle Wan Lok Chan¹ · Dugan Coburn² · Selena Coburn³ ·
Angela M. Grayson⁴ · Pamela Faith Lerman⁵ · Hang Yin Candy Lo⁶ ·
Carmen Marshall⁷ · Ebony T. Nichols⁸ · Megz Roberts⁹ · Paul Sevett¹⁰ ·
Michelle Quintus¹¹ · Si Banyan Wang¹² · Amanda Williams¹³ ·
Akiko N. Yokokawa¹⁴ · Melody Gamba¹⁵

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The ADTA continues its efforts on the journey to transform our community into one where all members feel free and safe to be their true selves. Toward this vital effort, the 2019 Keynote highlighted embodied presentations by four Affinity Groups of the Multicultural and Diversity Committee; Asian & Asian-American Affinity Group, LGBTQIA Affinity Group, Native American Affinity Group, Spirituality and Religion Affinity Group. Each Affinity Group provided a needed and significant

✉ Melody Gamba
melodygamba@gmail.com

¹ Hong Kong, Hong Kong

² Great Falls, MT, USA

³ Austin, TX, USA

⁴ Good Fruit Expressive Arts Counseling & Psychotherapy LLC, Wilmington, DE, USA

⁵ Russell Sage College, Ellis Medicine PROS, Albany, NY, USA

⁶ Piece of Sky-Creative Arts Therapy and Counseling, Hong Kong, Hong Kong

⁷ Maryland Nonprofits, Silver Spring, MD, USA

⁸ AYA Creative Wellness, Brooklyn, NY, USA

⁹ Practical Audacity, Chicago, IL, USA

¹⁰ Private Practice, St. Paul, MN, USA

¹¹ Lakeville, MN, USA

¹² Inspirees Institute, Zhuhai, China

¹³ Idabel, OK, USA

¹⁴ Private Practice, Millbrae, CA, USA

¹⁵ Butler Hospital, Providence, RI, USA

contribution to this transformational effort through their unique voice and perspective as members of ADTA.

The 2019 plenary experience described within this article was birthed out of the keynote presented at the national conference in 2018. That keynote panel presentation entitled “Power and Privilege within the ADTA” by Grayson et al. (2019) reflected the truth and spurred the ADTA to bring a laser focus to the impact of systemic oppression on the historically underrepresented membership. ADTA’s leadership eyes were opened to harmful practices. A conscious choice was made to purposefully engage in a process to make long overdue changes to evolve our organization into one that is equitable and just to our members and those we hope to serve.

One way we answered that call to action was by revisioning how the 2019 keynote plenary could build upon the 2018 keynote panel presentation. Ebony Nichols and Paul Sevett, co-facilitators of the plenary, explored the questions of how the ADTA could build bridges and move away from an “Us vs. Them” paradigm to one of equity and trust. Exploring these questions was necessary as a foundation for the difficult conversations to come. The idea of a cultural exchange grew out of these conversations. Stephan Reynolds joined the facilitation team as the Creative Director and a structure emerged—a cultural exchange that shifted the lens to appreciation and understanding as opposed to appropriation and performance. The Multicultural and Diversity Committee’s Affinity Group leaders were invited into the conversation and the process unfolded into the creation of the powerful keynote presentation at the 2019 conference in Miami: *Honoring Multiplicity: An Embodied Keynote Experience*.

In the weeks following the national conference the larger question arose of how we could document it for historical context and record keeping. Thus, mirroring the larger question of this practice; how to conceptualize and document the human process that lives beyond written word and our own consciousness. As a collective, the group agreed it was imperative to find a way to honor and capture what had occurred during the plenary experience as a means to continue to learn and grow while also acknowledging and documenting the communal shift that occurred. The post plenary process mirrored the planning process where the collective gathered and discussed how best to take on this documentation endeavor that honored the participants lived experience and the work. The group agreed to another experiment which allowed individuals from the plenary planning collective to, by choice, verbalize their experience and share it with the larger ADTA body in a written document. The written expressions were gathered and then placed together by the editor, Melody Gamba. This written account hopes to share how that day unfolded and offer the opportunity to either re-visit or experience the plenary for the first time. Now, we invite you to open your arms, bring your hands to heart, and pause in between each written passage to breath, to move, to write as a means to process the thoughts, body sensations and feelings that come up for you during this plenary experience document.

The voices included below are a piece of the plenary planning collective and do not reflect every voice nor every experience. The plenary was a journey that requested participants and witnesses to enter into the space with a willingness to trust, to be vulnerable, to lean into the discomfort and to bravely reflect. This article

explores the possibility of verbally capturing the visceral shift and communal metamorphosis of the plenary experience and hopes to inform the necessary equitable and restorative shifts within the ADTA still to come.

Part One: We've Only Just Begun

The beauty of a journey is the journey itself. -C.C.M.

Charné Furcron, Multicultural and Diversity Committee Chair, introduced the plenary panel. In her remarks she focused on how the ADTA continues to evolve into a more culturally conscious and ethnically diverse organization and that we must celebrate and respect our differences by envisioning how our organization can evolve to embrace these changes. She also included highlights of the planning process and noted that the collective was aware there were other voices in our membership that were not represented in this Keynote. The collective chose for this plenary to reflect the official Affinity Groups currently within the ADTA.

Moderating the Keynote was Carmen C. Marshall, Director of Consulting at Maryland Nonprofits. Carmen has been working with the ADTA Board of Directors as a consultant and coach on all diversity efforts. She has over 25 years of experience working with nonprofit organizations creating actionable systems and supporting them to step into their power, calling and responsibility.

The Voice of Carmen Marshall

I have discovered three truths: One, an organization is only as great as its ability to live out its highest purpose. Two, an organization can only flourish in its highest purpose with and through people. And, three, in order to advance its mission with excellence and integrity, that highest purpose must include equity and inclusion.

I was deeply honored to be invited to moderate the Plenary Keynote at the 2019 American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) Conference. To say it exceeded my expectations puts it mildly. It literally took my breath away. Its success, however, did not occur in isolation. I gratefully acknowledge that it represented the culmination of months of deep work by board, staff, affinity group members, allies/supporters and other members, around diversity, equity and inclusion.

In many ways an organization is like a family and each one is as unique as the people in them. It may vary in size, structure and demography. It may possess many familial characteristics, hierarchical traits and bear societal labels and identities. Yet, what is true in both families and organizations, is that *unattended* ruptures, harm and breaches can create conflicts that reverberate continuously and throughout yielding waves and waves of disastrous results.

So, the group's charge became (and still is) to attend to and heal the harm—embrace accountability and truth-telling.

When asked to work with the ADTA, I wondered if this would be an opportunity to do some “real” work with an organization who had made a “real” commitment to equity and inclusion? Would they commit for the long haul or did they simply want

to get past the current trouble? Would they be up for the task of taking a hard look at themselves? Problems, particularly on this journey, don't exist in a vacuum. The work would begin with the leaders. It always does, it has to, to be effective, the commitment to equity and inclusion has to live at the top.

Next, we looked at the most pressing concerns and past incidents that had resulted in a lot of hurt, anger and confusion. One by one, we began to attend to issues taking great care that members and those most immediately affected felt seen, heard and understood. The leadership committed to taking as long as necessary.

For months, we held conversations that allowed us to dive deep to uncover the elements that cause a break down. Why were they so glaring to some and yet invisible to others?

Then came the planning of the Plenary Keynote. How would all the lessons, learnings and conversations inform this programming? What would make the hearts of 400+ super bright, deeply passionate, highly credentialed professionals, sing at the same time? I was certain of one thing; we were all going to have to trust each other.

If we had learned anything from each other over the last several months, the Plenary Keynote would show it. It was my hope that attendees would experience the presentation deeply; be open-hearted and willing to engage in the embodied experience.

I offered a few simple instructions and made a couple of requests of the attendees based on four shared agreements to set the tone for how we would hold the space during the Plenary Keynote Session:

- Compassion (for self and others)
- Every voice has value
- Be curious
- Allow room for change, growth, mistakes

Presentations by participating affinity group members were delivered with such power, passion and authenticity that it rocked the house! The attendees received the presenters with open hearts. We honored one another. We connected with each other. We received one another. We held one another with love, appreciation and respect. We held the moment as sacred and attendees shared that it was stirring, healing and transformative. And yet, it was not the end, it was only the beginning.

The Voice of Paul Sevett

I was privileged to work with a group of extraordinary people who continually created and entered a brave space for planning just what this presentation was going to BE. To give space to different Affinity Groups of the Multicultural and Diversity Committee of ADTA. To have the membership at the conference see, hear, and experience what needed to be seen, heard and experienced and then have an opportunity, for anyone who wanted it, to express their witnessed experience in movement.

Terror with no end

What if I am just not me?
Terrified to know

I was in so many ways terrified to embark on this project. Will my Beingness be rejected, accepted, tolerated, embraced...? I entered the “not knowing” space with trepidation and hope knowing I’d give what I had to support all the voices needing to be heard.

Heart, head, must stand up
Vulnerable, genuine
Loving care for all

What an eye opening, joyful, gratifying, difficult time, this planning process. But what a meaningful and impactful morning, the day of the presentation. I am so proud of all of us. This mattered. So important. So valuable. So necessary. So genuine. So full of what it needed to be full of. I will remember this step in the journey toward real equity and inclusion, so all feel they belong and are embraced in our community.

Struggling for truth
With joy, fear, honesty, love
Coming to find us

Part Two: Affinity Group Expressions and Reflections

The lights slowly dim and a video of “My Brother’s Keeper”, choreographed by Stephan Reynolds, illuminates the space. “My Brother’s Keeper” explores the concepts of non-binary gender identity, invisibility, inclusion and intersecting identities. As the video comes to an end, the LGBTQIA + Affinity Group, the Native American Affinity Group, the Asian & Asian-American Affinity Group, and the Spirituality and Religion Affinity Group each step into the space to share their personal and embodied expressions. Embodiment in the title also refers to the Keynote attendees. As dance/movement therapists, the plenary’s attendees were asked to witness and experience the Affinity Group presentations in and through the body and to let the voices resonate within them. After each Affinity Group shared, ADTA members were given time to pause, to reflect, and to process the witnessing in silence with movement, writing or drawing.

LGBTQIA + Affinity Group

The Voice of Michelle Quintus

Beyond Invisibility or Violence

As a 50-yr old queer mother and dance/movement psychotherapist, what I wanted to communicate to the ADTA during the conference plenary was the importance

of being seen and safe. Coming out to be seen as LGBTQIA + is often still unsafe, while invisibility is its own kind of oppression.

I've been coming out for almost 30 years....
to myself, my family, and my communities.
It feels like a perpetual process, and yet, I still
only feel partially seen.” (author)

On the day of the conference plenary, I not only felt wholly seen, I felt held for all of who I am. *As therapists, I don't know that we can do this work without the ability to truly see each other as all of who we are.*

At the plenary, I spoke to the circle of my professional peers who filled the room, and I recounted just one example from my experience:

“I was marching in the streets against police brutality after another transgender Person of Color had been killed. An officer pulled me aside and said: ‘Let me help you, sweetie. Those people could hurt you.’ As I rejoined the crowd I turned back to the officer and shouted: “Racism and transphobia are hurting us, and those people are me!” (author).

“As a queer dance/movement therapist and LGBTQIA + activist, I believe I can share a useful perspective about how heterosexual assumptions can get in the way.... in hopes that others (our LGBTQIA + clients?) may leave all of our DMT sessions knowing there are more options than invisibility or violence.”

I remember trembling during our presentation, specifically after making a fierce downward slash on my final word, “violence.” I wondered if I had gone too far or appeared too dramatic. I felt chills as I realized I had moved between victim, ally and oppressor in that dance—which happened spontaneously, authentically. Later, I understood it is important to embody the complexities of how we are all, in some ways, both the oppressor and oppressed.

In preparing our piece for the presentation at the plenary, we acknowledged all of the many people who remain unacknowledged, and therefore, unseen. This is why we chose to invite anyone in the audience to join us in any way they felt comfortable. Since being seen can also mean violence for LGBTQIA + people, we wanted to hold space for self-determination around how safe it would be to choose this moment to be more visible by coming out in front of others who may or may not understand. We wanted to acknowledge that “safe space” may sometimes mean maintaining privacy. *As therapists, I don't know that we can do this work without creating safe spaces for ourselves and others.*

As a witness to the other presenters, I felt honored to stand in solidarity with so many that were brave enough to share themselves and their stories in their own ways. And I noticed the absence of those from whom we haven't yet earned trust. In this way, the individuals who organized and presented on that day were leaders, and the many witnesses who made up the audience were doing the important work of building trust. *As an organization, I don't know that we can do this work without all of us joining together. I expect us to grow strong together with more efforts like the plenary of 2019.*

I felt incredibly proud of our organization because the process of increasing cultural competence is often long, arduous and ugly, while this plenary felt both

authentic and respectful. This is a change from how I've experienced ADTA conferences in the past in terms of cultural competence in general, but also specifically in terms of the LGBTQIA+ community. When our group concluded our presentation, I watched all the arms open toward us, undefensive and quietly taking us into collective hearts. That moment gave me hope that we are an organization that can continue to expand our diversity, make it our dance, and be transformed by it.

The Voice of Si Banyan Wang

I wrote my piece in China and a friend in the LGBTQIA+ committee had presented it for me at the plenary. Recently, I was chatting with outsider artist Haiping Guo, who was invited to present his amazing work with mentally ill artists at Harvard in 2019. We agreed that there was a natural way to use art in working with mentally ill people that transcended the dualistic view of illness and wellness. It is so natural that when there is a way for things to divide, there is a way for them to come together and be whole. For Haiping and me, this way is art and creativity. And this is Tao (Way). The Chinese culture has things to share with creative arts therapists from around the world. In this plenary, I shared my Tao (Way) to be whole as a queer woman from China. In order to be whole, each part is needed. I had hoped to contribute mine.

The Voice of Megz Roberts

Initially, I was very excited to be part of a group that I could identify with as a new member of the dance/movement therapy community. It was almost effortless to be involved and that brought me great comfort. I did not attend the plenary. I provided a statement to be read anonymously instead.

In part, I felt reserved in being present to share something vulnerable about myself as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community to a room of people I felt very unfamiliar with. This was new for me, accepting my full identity as a black, non-binary queer person. Though we had the option of remaining anonymous, there was still fear for me in attending such a powerful movement within the ADTA. Also... the plenary took place in the early morning, and my body chose not to rise from bed that morning. I honored its decision.

Given the responses I received from peers who did attend the plenary, I understand it to be an eye-opening event—one that was long overdue. The longer we wait to make space for events such as the plenary, the more space we give to ignorance, neglect, fear, marginalization, and sadness. I should not feel like I've missed a once in a lifetime opportunity. Even though I am sure that more events of the like will take place in the future, why do I still feel this way? The plenary has definitely impacted the ADTA in such a way that they will know our voices shall be heard as often, as frequent, and as loud as any one heterosexual, cisgender voice. And that's beautiful.

Native American Affinity Group

The Voice of Selena Coburn

I enjoyed participating in the organizing and planning stages of this process. To meet every other week together and share space for difficult conversations was beautiful. We were able to take time to be intentional and deliberate throughout the decision-making process. Personally, I felt fortunate to form bonds with new colleagues. Their friendships have been the greatest gift in this process.

Leading up to our presentation, I was uncertain about my responsibility toward attendees. I didn't want to hold space for their guilt or have to be the one to soothe them and tell them they are 'good'. To be exposed and vulnerable in this presentation felt like enough work—and I felt justified, that I shouldn't have to hold the weight of the observer, as well. This is where Carmen interceded beautifully. She challenged me to confront my resistance—and to battle through it. This helped me grow.

During the presentation I felt a deep sadness in not being free to share, openly in my everyday life, my native identity. It reminded me of the price of 'passing'—not being recognized as a native person.

This plenary meant a lot. Native peoples aren't always the subject of diversity and cultural competency discussions—and to be erased in those settings can be disheartening. It felt gratifying to be seen and represented in this way. We chose to start our presentation in our traditional regalia—and to end in our street clothes—to show that we are present even when the public doesn't recognize us.

In witnessing the other groups, I felt a plethora of emotions. Pride for the work they were sharing, and the space that took up to share their stories. It was very moving to witness such incredible acts of sharing within a space that hasn't always been opened to hearing those voices. It felt like a great step toward inclusion.

May we continue on this journey together.

The Voice of Dugan Coburn

I was moved by the display of multiple issues in minority groups. The approach of sharing the issue is important. The overall presentation was powerful. Letting each group focus on their own personal way in life that they experience prejudice so that it can be exposed, and the observer can see, hear, and then explore that in their own body. I work with people that say they don't see prejudice in our town, and of course they are Euro-Americans (White). I hope that the observer of these presentations takes away the knowledge that will help them understand that minorities have and still encounter prejudice daily. We have started on the path together, let's not veer from the path.

The Voice of Amanda Williams

My experience was one of mixed emotions. I am exceedingly grateful for the opportunity to join in the plenary presentation. It was a deeply moving experience for me.

As a Native person I have felt invisible in numerous situations so to feel visible was empowering. I felt vulnerable taking up space. It is a risk to be open in this vulnerable position when you cannot dictate how it will be perceived. When this risk is taken and those on the receiving side do not actively engage in dialogue and self-reflection it can be jarring. The absence of genuine inclusion and action can result in feeling like a museum exhibit for others to view. Viewing the other affinity groups performances felt like a beautiful privilege and honor. I am abundantly grateful to have been able to witness their creative expressions of self.

Asian & Asian-American Affinity Group (AAAAG)

The Voice of Akiko N. Yokokawa

I feel that the word inclusion and diversity can look and feel differently depending upon where the conversation is taking place. For me, I learned many different layers of this conversation by participating in this plenary as a Japanese/bicultural DMT.

I acted as one of the liaisons for AAAAG. I was able to participate in some of the whole plenary group calls and co-lead the AAAAG group calls to create our portion of the plenary.

I witnessed myself wondering where I stand in the discussion of diversity and inclusion. Especially in the whole plenary group calls, I often had to pause to see if I was actually feeling a certain emotion or if I was just taking on the energy that was being expressed. There appears to be the experience of the collective and the unique experiences of the individual. Both are valid and important.

Some of the themes that came up in our initial AAAAG calls for this year's plenary were: visibility vs invisibility, indirect/flexibility, stereotypes, spoken but not heard, and authentic self. Although the four of us that participated on behalf of AAAAG came from different backgrounds/countries, these were the themes that felt very close to all of us in different ways.

The AAAAG group often talked about how we (as Asians) are taught and encouraged to adapt to the environment around us. I believe that because of this I felt very protective of our group's process and at times felt hesitant to share it with the whole plenary group. How do we preserve ourselves? How do we stay authentic in the presence of others?

Our group decided that language guides us into our authenticity, at least to an extent, as we were all once international students and have a different country of origin. The way that our bodies and being-ness responded when we heard ourselves talk in our mother tongue was a momentous moment. It was amazing to feel that shift together as both (English-speaking and mother-tongue speaking) selves are authentic to all of us.

My body shook and tears came flowing as I heard myself say my name in Japanese. The invitation to be seen as this self in the ADTA community was new and moving. I feel that the complexity of our being is sometimes beyond intellectual comprehension and can only be felt, embodied, etc. I was honored to be given space and encouraged to be this self in a holding space.

In my experience during the plenary preparation, I felt that everyone in the group attempted to come to a common ground in our thoughts, emotions, and to an extent, our experiences. The presentations made our unique struggles explicit. I was struck with the depth and rawness of everyone there. It was a rare moment where one can visceral experience a truth without having to explain or question. It just was. It allowed for a bodily felt experience.

Standing there and witnessing the other groups', I wondered if this bodily felt experience can give us the grounds on which we can start to have a fruitful dialogue about diversity and inclusion. I believe that this was what made this plenary so powerful. I don't know if I had a specific exception to come out of this plenary. I feel that it was a step forward for further explorations in the future. For myself individually this entire process made me aware of the role I take on to make myself visible and invisible as an Asian DMT within this association. What is the role I intentionally and unintentionally play to be seen and disguised in this community?

All of this illuminated the fact that AAAAG has much work to do in the future. The participants of this year's plenary did not have any Asian American members and many of the other Asian countries. We are all so different, unique, and complex. So, what is inclusion and diversity within AAAAG? How do we share that with the ADTA?

The Voice of Michelle Wan Lok Chan

In my DMT journey in the US, I am trying really hard to learn how to better fit into the White culture as a Chinese woman from Hong Kong. Throughout the preparation and presentation in the plenary presentation, I am so grateful that I find a space where I don't need to try very hard, but I can fully express myself with my affinity peers. In the discussion, we shared lots of our experiences as Asian women in this White culture like cultural bias and expectation. I feel fully supported by my teammates to be myself.

From my own experience as a Chinese woman, I was used to being invisible and people might not be willing to pay lots of attention and ask about my culture. Sometimes it is hard for me to find the space for speaking up in order to find my own voice. Before the presentation, I felt overwhelmed, so I needed to remind myself to breathe because there were lots of eyes on us. Once I stepped on to the stage and felt the support from my affinity members, I was empowered and felt courageous to use my most comfortable languages (Cantonese and dance) to express my DMT journey. When I looked into the witness's eyes, I felt so warm and moved because I could express myself so freely in front of others from different racial/ethnic/cultural backgrounds. From the response phrase of the witnesses, I received tons of hugs and made me feel seen and heard. I will never forget their genuine responses in my body.

I was happy and excited when I witnessed other groups' presentations. Because I was learning something that I didn't know, it made me more curious what their experiences were. Meanwhile, I felt so proud of the people from other affinity groups because they represented their affinity groups and brought their voice into the space and made the whole DMT field more diverse.

Because I had been to the panel session in 2018, I can feel the committees put lots of effort, willingness and time to repair the wounds from the previous year. I really appreciate that the plenary was not only about the dynamics between Black and White but also included other affinity groups which are always easy to overlook. I hope this embodied experience can raise the awareness of the people who are with privilege that we need to be open to listen to the voices from different groups proactively and be curious about what people are experiencing. I hope our DMT field can embrace the diversity and make it grow. I hope everybody can feel welcomed and included in the conference regardless of race, gender, age and religious preference because it is the only way that we can learn from each other and push our field forward.

The Voice of Hang Yin Candy Lo

My experience in participating in the plenary was a really pleasant one, it was heartwarming, and I felt that I got to know my peers both in my own and other affinity groups a lot better through this process. Yet it was not always a smooth or easy process. As one of the liaisons for AAAAG in this plenary, I joined most of the calls among the plenary committee and all affinity groups. At the beginning of these calls, there were times I felt unheard, pressured, dumb or worst of all, that I felt like I was asked to 'be myself' by not being myself. I was put on the spot and asked to express my opinion on situations that I had no previous knowledge of or asked to express in certain specific ways that was not 'me'. Just because I might not be expressing in a way that was 'expected'; a more 'aggressive' or 'assertive' way, it appeared that I was not expressing or that I was not participating, when I tried to push myself and expressed, people tended to pause for a second and then moved on and ignored what I said, I felt... unheard or misunderstood ...It is easy to blame it on the language, however, it appears to be more like people were not sure of how to contain my sharing or that they didn't think my sharing matters. In fact, it is an experience that I've experienced time and time again, not just with the ADTA, but throughout my training and in other context especially when I am in the United States. Just because I do not express my frustration the way some people do, it does not mean that I am not frustrated.

Since the plenary was in the spirit of making affinity group members feel seen within the ADTA, after discussing among the AAAAG plenary group, I decided to be vulnerable (not easy) and shared my feelings with the plenary committee (and now with you all), it is not a complaint per se, but I truly believe that it is a matter of ignorance or lack of awareness. Since then, my experience with the plenary has been a really loving, trusting, and respected one. It was a corrective experience, and it encouraged me to further express when I felt needed to and that allowed me to connect and work with the team as a whole. I was then able to share more and be more vocal about my opinion. It reminded me that DMT is all about attuning to others' way of expressing. I am very thankful that the team took my feedback on board and we were able to build a team together. I felt so supported by the time we did our presentation that I even shared more in depth than I expected. Instead of having to 'fight' I was able to merely love and be loved and learn from my fellow presenters.

I would like to thank the leaders, throughout the process, when I was able to put away my own frustration and be vulnerable, I was then able to see the amount of work and thought the leaders were putting in this project, trying to honor the needs of each affinity group.

I felt honored and free, I was allowed to learn, love and empathize; free from being judged of being ignorant and allowed to be true to my own feelings and values. I think it is the true beauty of multicultural diversity, which is respecting and honoring other people's stories, without being forced to make a stand about it. Because I can love without compromising my own values, beliefs, etc. Because it is about seeing the people, honoring their stories instead of being punished for not being/being in any specific affinity. I think it opened a door to talk about diversity without it being confrontational or blaming of any sort, I am really hoping that this experience can open doors for members to choose to participate in the ADTA in ways that feel comfortable and authentic to us. I also hope that while we respect, and get educated on different cultures, we get to celebrate our own and see that we are after all more alike than different.

Spirituality and Religion Affinity Group

The Voice of Angela Grayson

Spirituality is such a huge part of my being and the way that I show up in the world. It informs all of my interactions with people, places and things in both affirming and disjuncting ways. I realize that spirituality can be subjective and/or objective based on the perspective and perception of each individual. To be a part of the re-emerging of the Spirituality and Religion Affinity Group brings me such joy and to participate in the plenary was sort of a blossoming of that joy that I was excited to share with the ADTA community.

Initially I was preparing to present a group dance with each person incorporating movement that expressed his/her/their spirituality and/or religious beliefs. However, we were not able to coordinate times to rehearse. Although I minister through dance regularly at my church, this felt more vulnerable. Several questions loomed in my mind, "Do I want to present something that I already know or create something new? Do I want to use music and if so, what type? Will it come across as too "churchy" or overly spiritual? How can I incorporate something that's more universal across cultures and spiritual practices or beliefs?". Then it hit me the night before the plenary...Do something that encompasses the elements—earth, fire, air and water! I knew that I wanted to move and not talk so I was happy that I brought my dance dress and streamers. Because I trust the spirit that dwells in me, I allowed it to move me throughout the space and connect with everyone in the room. It was electrifying!!! I love the freedom that I feel when I move prophetically (some call it improvisational) because it elevates me to a higher state of consciousness that eludes intellectualization and scientific explanation.

As a witnessing observer of the plenary presentations, I felt as if I had a front row seat into the intimate thoughts and conversations of each group that presented. Each

expression was so beautifully and powerfully articulated that it resonated throughout my entire body. As an African American woman with Native American heritage who is deeply spiritual, I felt like every inhale and exhale of the words spoken reverberated and echoed throughout the space. It was as if each presentation dislodged a layer of heaviness that we all feel buried under and suffocated by as members of a predominantly white cisgender binary organization. I was extremely grateful and honored to be both a witness and participant with such brave and courageous souls whom I adore and pleased to call “friends.”

For those who were in attendance at the plenary, I believe their level of awareness was broadened. The inclusion of Carmen Marshall made the experience more meaningful as she was able to hold the space for self-reflection and enforce healthy boundaries for everyone. Although it may have been painful for some to witness, each presentation made a statement about the group and the pain that has been afflicted both consciously and unconsciously within the ADTA and society in general. My hope and expectation is that the ADTA will build on the new foundation that was laid by these important and timely presentations to be more affirming, inclusive and multifaceted.

Allies as Witness

The Allies’ intention was to both hold the space according to the wants and needs of the Affinity Groups and to support the witnesses in respectful processing. The witnesses were invited to sit with and move through whatever came up for them during the plenary, and if they wanted or needed support in their processing, they knew that the Allies were there.

The Voice of Pamela Faith Lerman

When Carmen Marshall began working with the plenary group, she also met with myself and the Allies to the Plenary group via Zoom. Carmen provided a balanced, grounded presence that helped the Allies group think concretely about what would make sense in “how to be” at the plenary.

By the time the conference began, a plan was laid out for the Allies to be witnesses at the Plenary, be in the room and help to hold the space so that the affinity groups could share their dance/spirit/life experience.

I was very disappointed to not be able to be at the conference and at the plenary session in person. I was present on most of our phone calls and felt connected and welcomed as an ally and a witness to the planning process.

It is clear to me as a witness, that it is important to provide a safe space for individuals who have historically felt marginalized in both society and in the ADTA. I feel honored to have been able to be part of this process in spirit, if not physically.

Part Three: Hope for ADTA's Future

“The question we face is do we have the courage to change, not just today but as we move forward”. ~Tanveer Naseer

The Voice of Ebony Nichols

As a co-facilitator, a significant experience of the 2019 plenary was learning how important it is to be in the process. It was a lesson in mindfulness and sitting with the desire to simply get things done. The co-facilitators created a virtual space where we first met to build a foundation, then invited the affinity groups along and allowed the process to unfold. That process included building relationships, trust, getting to know and really see each other even in the uncomfortable and not so pleasant moments. What we wanted was a certain amount of security and knowing in potential outcomes, we swiftly had to acknowledge how unrealistic those feelings were as we were dealing with the reality that we were taking a risk by trying something new. In the early stages, we spent a lot of time concerned with safety, and there was a point that I remember feeling and thinking we do not know how this will go, how it will be perceived, but in this moment, we are present.

During the plenary, observing the presentations, holding space for the process, and monitoring the outline of what we envisioned was an extremely complex feeling. The importance of making sure the framework somewhat reflected what we had planned collectively and still allow space for a natural and organic experience to take place, I was often fighting back the tears, engulfed in moments of emotion, but also struggled not to fully yield to those feelings. I realized that in allowing space for the presenters and witnesses to receive each message and move their own experience, also allowed a place for me to move as a co-facilitator. I found myself taking the opportunity to walk around the perimeter after each presentation. In hindsight walking the perimeter also allowed me to hold the container of what was happening from an embodied perspective where I could move and feel each section of the room. Sometimes I would make eye contact with a participant or witness; other times, I would scan the space and watch the entire room itself take shape.

Although we had a loose outline of themes, ideas, ways in which the groups intersected and differences, witnessing each piece forced me to be in the moment of what was taking place. It was as though I was viewing all that we collectively worked toward, physically move through the space with new eyes. The 2019 Plenary experience marked a historic shift for the ADTA. One that I feel we will have to continually honor what being in the process of this experience will mean for us. It felt like a glimpse into the future of what the ADTA can be: an organization where differences can be acknowledged, and all voices have value. It felt like hope for us all to remember the humanity within each of us. It was a true embodiment of what equity looks like. My hope for the ADTA is that the 2019 Plenary can serve as a brief snapshot of a future that can now be carried out into action steps for a more just and equitable organization.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

Reference

Grayson, A., Howard, L., & Puloka, R. (2019). ADTA 2018 keynote plenary panel: Power and privilege within the ADTA. *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, 41, 143–157.

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Michelle Wan Lok Chan, MS, R-DMT (Hong Kong) is a registered dance/movement therapist, art activist, performer, choreographer, and educator from Hong Kong. She cultivates herself as a global citizen and strives for connecting multi-cultural populations with diverse backgrounds through arts mediums in the world. She has been practicing her theoretical framework, which integrates the perspectives of Traditional Chinese Medicine and dance/movement therapy, with incarcerated men with mental illnesses and geriatrics in NYC. She is also passionate about advocating for mental health and criminal justice through arts.

Dugan Coburn is a member of the Blackfeet Nation (Amskapi Pikuni) of Northern Montana, with roots also in the Klamath and Pitt River tribes of Oregon. He has a B.S. in Medical Technology from the Oregon Institute of Technology and has a Montana K-12 Teachers License. He has experience in cultural research and has had the opportunity to work with members of the Pikuni Crazy Dog Society and Blackfeet spiritual leaders to learn about traditional Native design including work with eagle feathers, leather, furs, claws, buffalo horn and rawhide.

Selena Coburn, R-DMT is a descendent of the Blackfeet Nation (Amskapi Pikuni) of Northern Montana, with roots also in the Klamath and Pitt River tribes of Oregon. She has a MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and specialization in Dance Movement Therapy. She is currently working with adolescents in a residential treatment center.

Angela M. Grayson, PhD, LPC, BC-DMT, NCC is the CEO of *Good Fruit Expressive Arts Counseling & Psychotherapy LLC*, a counseling and creative arts psychotherapy practice. She is an alumna and long-term adjunct professor for graduate students at Drexel University in the Creative Arts Therapy and Counseling department. Additionally, she served as an adjunct professor for undergraduate students in the Psychology department at Wilmington University. She is a Transformational Healer, Speaker, Author and Educator. She is passionate about the interconnection of culture and spirituality, especially in relation to healing practices through dance and has taught nationally and internationally regarding mental health, multiculturalism and diversity, sacred dance and dance/movement therapy. As a member of the ADTA, she served on the Board of Directors for six years as a charter member and inaugural Chair of the Multicultural and Diversity Committee, past President of the Pennsylvania Chapter, past Vice President of the Black American and African Descendants (BAAD) Affinity Group, current coordinator of the Spirituality and Religion Affinity Group and member of the Standards and Ethics Committee.

Pamela Faith Lerman, M.Ed., LCAT, LMHC, BC-DMT is a New York State Licensed Creative Arts Therapist, a NYS Licensed Mental Health Counselor, and a Board-Certified Dance/Movement therapist. The Capital District liaison to the New York State American Dance Therapy Association, she has been the

Creative Arts therapist for the Department of Psychiatry at Ellis Medicine in Schenectady, NY, since 1998, working both inpatient and outpatient with people of all ages who struggle with mental health, substance abuse, trauma and eating disorders. In addition, she teaches an Introduction to Dance Therapy class at Russell Sage College in Troy, NY, and leads a weekly Dance/Movement Therapy group for older adults with dementia at the Rensselaer Eddy Daybreak.

Hang Yin Candy Lo, MA, BC-DMT, RDT, CCLS is a Board-Certified Dance/Movement Therapist, a Registered Drama Therapist and a Certified Child Life Specialist. She is the founding member and currently the President of both Hong Kong Child Life Association and Hong Kong Dance Movement Therapy Association. She has been serving at the ADTA Standard and Ethics committee since 2017 and co-leader of the Asian and Asian–American Affinity Group from 2019. Upon graduating from Antioch University New England, she moved back to Hong Kong and started her private practice; Piece of Sky-Creative Arts Therapy and Counseling. She serves clients across the developmental stages and her main passion is serving both adults and children with medical needs and the well-being of medical professionals. She started teaching at the University of Hong Kong’s Master in Expressive Arts Therapy program in 2014 and taught at the University’s Medical School’s Medical Humanities program (Performing Arts Module) for 3 years. She holds a BA(Hon) in Musical Theatre Dance and a Diploma in Drama, she worked at Hong Kong Disneyland as a singer prior to her therapy career. She lived in Hong Kong, Belgium, the UK and is recently relocated to the US.

Carmen Marshall is a leadership strategist, Director of the Consulting Group at Maryland Nonprofits and a Standards for Excellence Licensed Consultant. She is a national speaker and sought after by boards and CEOs to align organization and talent strategies that drive equity and build community. Her passion is integrating coaching, facilitation and training to call upon the giftedness and greatness in others. A master facilitator, she can often be found in boardrooms and organizations facilitating difficult and sensitive conversations about race, organizational culture, and authenticity. She is also the creator of *Laying the Foundation for Transformative Change*, a program designed to help organizations on their journey to build equitable boards, organizations and programs. In these sessions, she manages sensitive conversations with finesse and deep respect for the life experiences that all participants bring into the room. She steps into the fire with you. Her work with CEOs, boards of directors and teams has earned her the reputation of peaceful gatekeeper and master facilitator.

Ebony T. Nichols MA, R-DMT completed her Bachelor of Arts at The College of New Rochelle in psychology and a master’s degree in Mental Health Counseling with a specialization in Dance/Movement Therapy at Lesley University. She has been the proprietor of Locks of Nu Natural Hair Spa since 2003. Utilizing their mission of “Healing the Community Follicle by Follicle,” her primary focus was to create a therapeutic environment within the African American community; this was her genesis for connecting artistic/aesthetic expression and psychology. Trained in ballet and modern dance, she found her love for the freedom of movement in the NYC house dance community. In 2005, she co-founded Afro Mosaic Soul Dance Collective, using social dance and music as a tool for emotional healing and expression. She has experience working with individuals with psychotic and behavioral health concerns, as well as with individuals who are developmentally diverse and experience physical, emotional, and sensory challenges. She has also provided services nationally and internationally utilizing various techniques of expressive art therapy while exploring the dynamics of underrepresented communities. Currently, she works as a Dance/Movement Therapist with Pathways to Leadership, an organization in partnership with New York City public schools to develop social-emotional resiliency from an anti-oppressive, strength-based lens. Her research continues to be rooted in cultural/race identity with plans of completing her Ph.D. in Psychology.

Megz Roberts, MA, R-DMT, CPT is a graduate of the dance/movement therapy Masters program at Columbia College Chicago, a certified personal trainer, Reiki healer and therapist at Practical Audacity located in Chicago, IL. Megz specializes in helping clients become their own experts at identifying and healing trauma in the mind and body.

Paul Sevett, MA, BC-DMT, LICSW began his dance therapy education at the University of Wisconsin in 1977. His career as a dance/movement therapist began after receiving his MA degree from Goucher College in 1983. He has worked in a variety of inpatient and outpatient psychiatric settings in Maryland,

Washington DC, and Minnesota. Currently, he has a private practice in St. Paul Minnesota where he also teaches dance/movement therapy alternate route courses, supervises dance/movement therapists and other mental health clinicians, and leads classes and workshops on Dance/Movement Therapy in China. He works with clients on transformation and healing based on discovering their authentic self-utilizing the natural wisdom of the body and its energy to integrate body, mind, and heart. He also currently serves as the President Elect of the American Dance Therapy Association.

Michelle Quintus, MS, LPC, R-DMT studied Creative Arts Therapy with a focus in movement/dance at Pratt Institute and is a psychotherapist using dance/movement therapy at the University of Minnesota Medical Center to support mental & behavioral health, and foster relationships and connection to the broader movement for change.

Si Banyan Wang, MS, R-DMT based in Chengdu, China, is currently the program manager for Inspirees Institute (China)'s Creative Arts Education and Therapy online program.

Amanda Williams will be graduating from Drexel University's DMT & Counseling Program in June 2020. She is a member of the Chahta (Choctaw) Nation. Amanda is from Oklahoma and plans to return after graduation to begin working as a DMT & Counselor.

Akiko N. Yokokawa, LPCC, BC-DMT, GL-CMA currently lives in the Bay Area where she has a private practice. She is the co-founder of Asian & Asian-American Affinity Group (AAAAG) and a member of the Multicultural & Diversity Committee.

Melody Gamba, MA, R-DMT graduated from Lesley University with her Master of Arts in Mental Health Counseling with a specialization in Dance/Movement Therapy. She was the recipient of the Davis Fellowship from Salve Regina University for her thesis research utilizing dance/movement therapy as a tool to dismantle racism and injustice in service learning. She accepted their invitation to deliver the keynote address "Embodying Brave Space: A Mental Health Informed Classroom" for their annual conference on Youth Mental Health in 2019. She co-presented a full day intensive at the 2019 American Dance Therapy Association's (ADTA) Annual Conference with the Diversity in Motion Research Collective and was honored to receive the "Leader of Tomorrow" award by the organization. She is currently a program therapist at Butler Hospital in Providence, RI, adjunct faculty at Salve Regina University, guest artist at Providence College, and a member of the ADTA Multicultural and Diversity Committee (MDC). She has a deep commitment to her continued exploration and growth in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the belief that all people have the right to live as their true selves.