



## ADTA 2018 Keynote Plenary Panel: Power and Privilege Within the ADTA

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The ADTA 2018 Keynote Plenary Panel: Power and Privilege within the ADTA was comprised of three parts: historical perspectives, education and theory and practice. Three dance/movement therapists provided critical analysis of these areas based on their experiences, the experiences of those before them, and the experiences of those around them. Section one addressed historical perspectives as it relates to power and privilege within the ADTA from the various cultural dance roots that utilize dance for healing, ceremony and ritual. The second section focused on education. This section of the keynote presentation conducts a power sensitive analysis to sociocultural issues often presented in the classroom setting. The third section addressed theory and practice. Participants were invited to shift focus to see what happens when language opens up. Theory and practice was examined through emergent strategy, which looks at how complex systems arise from relatively simple interactions. By addressing power and privilege within the ADTA, this year's panel invites dance/movement therapists to interrogate patterned ways of seeing and doing that may or may not reflect the organization's mission, vision, and values. Additionally, we intended to create a safe space to begin difficult conversations that we hope will continue and have a lasting impact well beyond the conference.

Before we started the presentation, we named a list of space agreements for the session. Generally, best practice involves creating shared space agreements as a community. Due to the time restraints we were given on the Keynote Panel, we created a pre-planned list of space agreements that we requested participants to respect and engage.

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Presented by: Multicultural and Diversity Committee.

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1. Be gentle with yourself.
2. Challenge ideas not people.
3. Move up, Move back. Instead of taking up space, give permission to step back in order for others to step forward.
4. Don't make assumptions. The biggest assumption that humans make is that everyone sees life the way we do. Not true. Ask first before making assumptions.
5. Take breaks. Move it out, Breathe it out.
6. All Emotions are valid.

Chairs were arranged in a circle with people of color and other minority groups invited to sit closer to the center and those of majority groups to sit toward the outer rows of the circle. Speakers stood and sat and moved within the center open space of the chairs.

## Historical Perspectives

**Angela M. Grayson, PhD, LPC, BC-DMT, NCC**

Good morning. This conversation is long overdue, as we all know. This morning, we thank the ADTA for making the space for us to have a conversation that we've all been having. "We" being people of color behind closed doors for many years, so this morning we invite you to our conversation. I will be talking about historical perspectives of healing dance, many centuries before the ADTA was established and also within the ADTA.

The first culture or continent that I want to talk about is Africa and African natives. Whether it's West African or East African, South African or North African, dance was a first language, not a second language, not a third language, not a "let me learn English first and integrate that with my own language." Dance was the language for social interaction, for religious affiliation, and for healing ceremony. Any major event in life was associated with a dance. Each dance movement had a meaning, not only the dance itself but also the drum. The musicians played a great part in the celebration, so it's not just about watching fabulous, amazing, breathtaking, polyrhythmic dance, but also the drum, the heartbeat that connected every tribe, every village, every country.

When we think about Africa and we talk about Africa, we talk about it as if it's a small place. Africa is the largest continent in the world. Not a country. It is a continent. We get that out of context a lot when people say, "Oh, you're from Africa." Do you know how many countries are in Africa? So we need to make sure we take it in context. "What country in Africa are you from?" That is the question. Not "Are you from Africa?" So when we look at the storytelling that's passed down through African tradition that started centuries ago that would branch out into the Latin American countries, would branch out into the Indian countries, would branch out not only taking culture but regalia. Some may call it costume. Some may call it traditional garb. People in other countries, other cultures call it their style. It's how they dress

on the daily. We think it's exotic. We think it's special. We think it's, "Wow, that is elegant!" This is how we dress.

When we think about dance from a historical perspective, it's not only learning ballet and being upright. It's about getting down low. When we think about dance here in this land, in America, we think about Native American traditional homelands too. This American dance used for celebration, used for healing, used for ritual, used for social interaction, used for power, used to bless and honor the land, the moon, the sun, and the stars. Everything that we see in nature, our ancestors of this land honored.

When we think about Australian dance, part of the culture, not an afterthought. When we think about Caribbean dance, not to entertain as it is currently shown on television. It's about history. It's about culture. It's about passing down tradition. All of these dance forms from, all of these countries where people are brown, light brown, dark brown, black, or deep purple have significant dance histories. Skin color has nothing to do with heart, purity, honesty, love of humanity, and acceptance.

When we transition all of that here to this land, a lot of the culture is lost. A lot of the tradition is lost. Not only the dance tradition, the music, the language, the dress. It's lost. If you have seen me at conferences, you know I'm always dressed. I'm always ready to show my cultural heritage, my background. Even when I'm at home. It's not just here. For those of you who have not seen me in Delaware or Philadelphia. I have many students and they've learned that when I teach, I'm dressed. This is who I am. It's not for show. It's not to entertain or to get you to comment on how I look. I'm me every day.

When I came to this work as a dance/movement therapist, I was surprised, hurt, that there was not an honoring of healing dance before the Marian Chace circle which we call the Chacian circle. There were circle dances long before that. Israeli folk dance. Hebrew circle dances. When we are talking about historical perspectives of dance, we have to consider it in the larger context outside of what we learned in our dance/movement therapy education when we are having drumming circles or when we are engaging in circle dances. We need to honor where that originated. Let our students know. Young people, educate yourselves. Go beyond what you're learning in your classroom to find the origin of what it is that you're being told.

When we explore the untold ADTA stories of people of color, how many of you really knew that there were people of color, not just African-American, but there were people of color who were founding members of the ADTA? Who knew that? Show of hands. There are only a few who know, but mainly those of whom we are reading their articles and we are reading their books. They all knew, but did we know? I had no idea. Why is that? Why are we not told who they are? Why did we not know their names? Why is their contribution not honored, celebrated? Why are they not here in this room?

I love Meg Chang. She and I have had several conversations, pleasant conversations, difficult conversations, honest conversations about people of color in the ADTA. If you have not, please read the article that she wrote for the 50th anniversary. She and I talk about that a lot. She had some very, very poignant questions just like the one I just asked. Why did we not know the names of the people of color?

I'm going to take that question a step further. How many of you know the second generation ADTA membership for people of color? African-American, Asian, Hispanic, second generation folks? How many of you know? Two, two hands. Why are they not here? Why are we not giving them awards, honoring their work, celebrating their contribution, encouraging them to tell their story while they are still living?

When I joined the [ADTA] Multicultural and Diversity Committee under the leadership of then-president Robin Cruz, I was not quite aware of what I was getting myself into. But I learned a lot along that journey. I learned that there were a lot of people of color who felt invisible, felt marginalized, felt unseen, unheard in class, within the organization, and at the conference. Many people have said to me over the years, "I hardly ever see anyone who looks like me in my educational experience. I hardly see anyone who looks like me that I can talk to about what I'm feeling." This speaks to the power and privilege dynamic of the professor and student relationship. Furthermore, I've heard comments like, "I hardly see anyone who looks like me at the conference."

To share some of my own personal journey, I attended Drexel University. When I started it was Hahnemann and by the time I graduated, it was Drexel. That's what my transcript says. Drexel is a school that has a program for dance/movement therapy, art therapy, and music therapy. Out of a class of approximately sixty students in the creative arts therapy program, I was the only black person for the 2 years that I spent there. Did I feel left out? Discriminated against? No! Do you know why? Ask me why that is.

It's because most white people in my group did not see me as black. What do I mean? Because I was older than most people in my class, because I was already married, I had already had work experience, and I'm not an angry black woman, and I don't pose a threat as an angry black woman. So, within my class, many folks I'm still in touch with and many folks whom I love dearly did not see me as black. I had great interactions with my professors, whom I love dearly, and with my supervisors, whom I love dearly, but I had nobody to talk to who looked like me, who shared my cultural identity, who could tell me "Angela, it's going to be okay. You're going to make it."

When we talk about inclusion, we're talk about broadening the scope of the ADTA to make room for other voices, for other dance forms, for other types of music, for other ways of moving, and for new assessment tools, which is the big conversation that we're having right now. The assessment tools were not designed for people of color, they were not designed to look at movement patterns in the way that people of color move. When we open the door, we don't want it cracked just a little. We want the door to be flung off the hinges.

When we ask questions, we are not asking to be facetious. We are not asking permission. We are posing a question because we think it's something that we need to ponder. Why do our features or the way that we move cause pause, cause questioning? Why does that make us "not able to follow directions" or be looked upon as, "Well, you need to practice more. You need to study harder." This is who I am. This is my body. This is how my body moves. I do not have to apologize for that. I do not have to change who I am so that you feel comfortable. Why should my blackness offend you? Why should who I am even be compared to who you are? Why should

my wanting to have this difficult conversation cause you to look away, to look at your phone, to act like you're busy doing something else rather than sitting with the uncomfortable feelings that we sit with every day?

When we look at this history that we're creating right now at this conference, many people have come to me over the course of the couple days that we've been here and said, "When I first arrived, I felt like I did not belong." Why is that happening 52 years into this association? Why as therapists and therapists in training are we not embracing each other's humanity? Why are we not okay with difference? It breaks my heart because I know many of you who are working in the field work with people of color, people of different beliefs, religions, affiliations, sexual orientations, and sexual identification. I know you work with a vast array of people who identify as different than you are. I'm not even going to say other. There is no such thing as other. We are people.

Why does it matter what I believe? If it's my belief and conviction, it should not rub up against yours. We should be able to have a conversation and learn from each other and then go educate ourselves even further because it's not my job to teach you about blackness. Just as much as it's not your job to teach me about your culture. You can tell me what you believe, and I can go and research that on my own. If I cannot find the research, we can have deeper conversations. But the conversations need to continue beyond this room because I know for a fact what happens when we leave this space when everybody's feeling great and wonderful and loving. Everything is roses and champagne and dancing, and we're all having a wonderful time. When we go back home, all of that fades away. We go back into our cocoons, back into our little bubbles which we call our life, back to the norm. Back to more of the same.

How many people will actually call and reach out to people that they met here? How many people will actually reach out to people of color that you met here or people who came from another country? We have international folks here. Will you actually keep in touch with them, learn more about what they're going through? Check on them. Ask, "Are you okay?"

These are the things that make us who we are as dance/movement therapists. Dance is our first language. When you were in your mother's womb, you were moving. First language. Let that be our unifying force and continue to propel us forward. Ashe

## **Power and Privilege in Education Settings**

**Lindsay Howard, MA, BC-DMT, RYT200**

The information that I will be sharing with you today is not new information. I am pulling from the writings and research of many dance/movement therapists of color before me. Before I share, I would like to say the names of those who inspired and provided information for this section of the presentation today (#SayHerName): Dr. Angela Tatum Fairfax, Lysa Monique Jenkins-Hayden, Maria Rivera, Meg Chang, and our first ADTA President of Color, Elissa Q. White.

Students and professional dance/movement therapists continue to experience subtle and unconscious structural racism, colorism, microaggression, stereotype threat, colonialism, gender identity, ableism, misogyny and sexism in the classroom. It manifests in our professional and personal lives. As DMT becomes more resilient, inclusive, and a force for change within our own community and towards those we serve when we can talk about how to dismantle these signs of oppression in our ADTA educational systems. I can only speak for my culture, my perspective and experience so in this presentation I will say people of color or black people a lot. However, I say the statement previously because I want the audience to know that oppression in education speaks to many of us who identify with the beginning-isms of the statement and it's important that we acknowledge and identify this. I want everyone who can identify to know that I see you and a lot of this conversation is for those who are victims of oppression in America.

### **It's Okay to be Uncomfortable**

Let's face it, white supremacy and white privilege is the oppressor in these conversations. It's real! Although the frameworks used in college courses do not claim that people in dominant groups are "bad", many of us hear it that way because our current sense-making framework says that participation in inequality is something that only bad people do.

Let go of the Guilt. Often times we have difficulty discussing topics on power, privilege, gender, race, class, etc. simply because of the shame/guilt, defensiveness, cognitive dissonance we feel and this is not uncommon but white people have to Let go of it in order to learn new ways of moving forward.

The key in whether these feelings play a constructive or destructive role lies in what we do with them. There is no growth in the reaction of ignoring, guilt/shame, avoidance or even projection. Identify the feelings that come up and use that information to inform yourself. Rather than allow these emotions to block our growth, we can use them as an entry point to greater self-knowledge and self-content.

### **Know Your Social Positionality**

Social Positionality is the concept that our perspectives are based on our place in society. For example: In America, we just recently celebrated a holiday. Well, I don't recognize it as a holiday but for years most of us did. Columbus Day. When we teach in a classroom about Christopher Columbus, depending on your social positionality, the perspective of Columbus Day will be different. Many white Americans believe that it's the day that a brave settler founded a new land. Many Native Americans and African Americans will share that it was a day of genocide. Depending on your social positionality you will have different reactions to this day. But white

supremacy models in America have made it possible for Americans to celebrate this day that many other mourn and grieve the loss of their entire tribe and/or culture.

I'm asking you to identify your social positionality and stay attentive to how it informs your response to the course context in your class (i.e. race, gender, class, etc.). What limitations of awareness might you have as a result of positionality? What are things you can and can't see based on the social positions you hold or don't hold?

## Teacher/Student Interaction in the Classroom

As you study the content of your course, it is important for you to continuously consider the interplay between your positionality and that of your students. When the instructor represents perspectives from key minorities groups (women, POC, persons with disabilities, LGBTQIA), they are welcoming the opportunity to hear perspectives seldom represented in mainstream education.

Educators should also agree to step up and step back, meaning if you do not belong to a particular race, ethnic or cultural group then you should not speak for that group. Instead allow that group to speak for themselves and be an active listener.

\*Pause\*

This actually happened today—in this keynote presentation. We asked that only the black women of this panel speak and be represented during the presentation. We asked that the Board of Directors simply step back and be active listeners in this presentation. The Board agreed to this ask; however, we still had a white male speak during our introduction, which takes away from a Black Caribbean woman who agreed to be our moderator. Again (reviewing our space agreements), it's not about the person. I am not challenging the person but I am challenging the idea and the ways that we continue to work. You need you to trust us and believe that we know what we're doing.

\*Resume from pause\*

Does this mean that you can ask the one black person in your course to share about the history of what it means to be black? NO! Unless a black student is offering their perspective in class then we cannot volunteer their perspective in our class.

I appreciated my multicultural and diversity course at Drexel University. In this course, we didn't have one instructor teach on many different cultures. Instead we had different instructors who identified with various cultural backgrounds teach on the culture that they belonged to. When it was time to learn about Black History, culture and how to have healthy therapeutic relationships with black clients, we learn from another black instructor who knew the information. The same for Latino culture and Asian culture and so on.

## Conversations About Power and Privilege in the Classroom

We must change our perspective and approach to how we tackle conversations that are NOT ABOUT US. Strive to see the connections to ideas and concepts you are still unsure about, raise them in class.

Be comfortable with having open discussions in groups with open-ended questions and challenge students to see outside of their own social perspective. Be patient and willing to grapple with new and difficulty ideas. Grappling with ideas means to receive, reflect upon, practice articulating and seek deep understanding—this does not mean to debate or reject. The goal is to move us beyond the mere sharing of opinions and towards more informed engagement.

When grappling or in discussion, use “I Statements” only. Do not speak for others, assume or suggest what other people are thinking. Only speak for yourself, your social positionality and take accountability for what you say.

When engaging with students of color, consider this! Consider whether “I disagree” may actually mean “I don’t understand” and if so work on understanding. Ask yourself what part of this is me, what part of this is the instructor, what part of this is them—the student, and what part of this is the world we live in. Be honest. Also learn about what is happening in the world before you assume. Avoid making assumptions. About 80% of conflicts often start not from what someone said but how they said it.

## A Step in the Shoes of a POC

When an individual is the only person of color in your classroom, they feel isolated. As a white ally, to support a person of color requires recognizing the need to take time to recuperate, to nourish oneself, to not burn out. Such a departure from striving can be supported rather than questioned.

For people of color, feelings of anger, frustration, shame, grief, always being under the spotlight or feeling like your instructor does not see you at all are all very common and can also get in the way of a students’ academic development. However collective shared agreements in the classroom, open conversation and knowledge of one’s social cultural level of competency, can provide tools to combat the relations of oppression that lead to these feelings. It is extremely important for the instructor to be able to know the challenges their student/individual is facing are not due to their own individual shortcomings but are in large part the product of socially organized structural barriers. Rather than increase a sense of hopelessness and immobilization, teachers/instructors have the potential to empower simply by the way they create their spaces in the classroom. It’s a shared language that will be best informed from your shared space agreements that you create as a class.

A lot of the research I am finding about cultural competency focuses specifically on international students but all of these-isms also apply to people of color. The same way that you should not treat people differently based on what flag they wear or what language they speak is the same way that we should not treat students



differently based on them wearing a hoody/baggy jeans or being a male transitioned female wearing a dress in class. When an individual embraces their social positionality that is commonly oppressed by white supremacy culture, it should not be called anti-white and/or anti-American. Together, We are America. When we talk about being American, there should be representation of many different people and cultures.

In the classroom and in the educational space, we need to make sure our students feel safe enough to embrace their culture and who they are inside and out. Being yourself or embracing your culture, should not determine your capacity to be a scholarly student in the classroom.

## Recommendations for Moving Forward

Acknowledge and speak to the historical power differentials of race, culture, and ethnicity, especially as these intersect with gender, class, and able-bodiedness in the classroom. This will lead to greater facility in the treatment room.

What is most well-received by students of color, besides faculty of color, are DMT graduate programs and faculty that actively engage in continuing education and clinical supervision with the specific intention of becoming culturally competent. Clinical creative arts therapy supervisors who were trained in the past millennium, when the best practice was to be colorblind (as in, “I don’t see color!” or “everyone is the same to me.”), also benefit personally and professionally from self-study, perhaps in conjunction with dance/movement therapy programs. Knowing “where we come from” provides a common ground for conversation with supervisees who identify as racially, culturally, ethnically, gendered, or different due to class background.

Acknowledge that DMT emphasizes individualistic values of the Global North through dance forms, body use, language, music, use of space, and how emotions are expressed. Being open to dance and movement possibilities in countries and cultures with different political structures, psychophysical habitus, and language can augment and improve our understanding of how dance heals.

Recognize long-standing cultural/racial healing forms of dance such as Bomba practiced by dance/movement therapist Maria Rivera and West African Ritual dances practiced by Dr. Angela Watson (2012). Before the profession of DMT existed, we had decades of traditional, ritual, ceremonial, ancestral, cultural dances for healing and very few acknowledgement or research being invited to explore this long standing historical practices in our DMT education programs. We must know the history of the world around us in order for us to know where we are currently and know where we want to go moving forward! Engage in finding creative ways to acknowledge and relate to representatives of indigenous healing forms without improperly appropriating them or their work. Develop cultural humility and promote recognition of local teachers.

Be alert to unconscious tendencies to take up space and to always speak first, assign meaning to someone or something, and take over the classroom. Instead be curious, be humble, practice ways to step up and then...step back.

Introduce more dance/movement therapists of color to leadership roles and provide well-defined professional mentoring at national and regional levels.

In the next 2 years, our Board of Directors needs to be more cultural diverse. There needs to be multiple representatives from diversity of racial and cultural backgrounds on the board, as full-time faculty teaching in graduate programs, as clinical supervisors and as community leaders for the ADTA. This acknowledgment and intentionality encourages more students and young professionals to stay in the field as they recognize professors and models who look like them and it will also place more progressive shifts in the practice and in our association when clinicians who come from culturally diverse backgrounds are sharing the voice and making decisions that reflect the people that it will effect.

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## Theory and Practice

### Rosey Puloka, MA, LCPC, BC-DMT, GL-CMA, RYT

I'd like to start with two quotes. One is by Nayyirah Waheed and it simply reads, "all the women in me are tired." All the women in me are tired.

\*Pause\*

The next quote is by Albert Camus and it reads, "I'm strangely tired, not from having talked so much but at the mere thought of what I still have to say."

\*Pause\*

It feels important to name the exhaustion in the room. One week ago today Kavanaugh was confirmed to the US supreme court and here we are now discussing power and privilege at 8:00 am on a Saturday morning. The work feels endless sometimes. And yet I know the perseverance of a body that is loved. So I send love to Christine Blasey Ford's body just as I send love to Anita Hill and the survivors in the room and those outside of it.

Another quote—I'm going to be using a lot of quotes, I like to bring everyone with me. This is tattooed on a labor union worker's body somewhere in the bay area and it reads, "If we put all our labor into fighting what we don't like we will learn to love the fight and have only longing for our vision." As someone who often finds herself in the middle of a fight or finds the fight in the middle of me, I find rest in

the practice of visioning. So if it's ok with everybody I'm going to lead us through a vision exercise.

*Adjust however you need to in your seats, find your feet on the floor, back supported. Take a few clearing breaths whatever that means to you. Close your eyes if you're comfortable to do so, resting your gaze downward is just as good too. I invite you to imagine a space big enough for people to gather.*

*Imagine black and brown folks entering the space.*

*People of color entering the space.*

*Immigrants, indigenous folks entering the space.*

*Imagine queer folks, trans folks, non binary, gender expansive LGB folks entering the space.*

*Imagine bigger, abundant bodies enter the space.*

*Folks with impairments, disabilities enter the space.*

*I invite you to imagine people who wouldn't be able to afford this conference enter the space.*

*In your vision take a step back so you can see everyone.*

*Imagine that these are the board of directors of the American Dance Therapy Association. These are the chapter presidents and vice presidents, the secretaries and treasurers. These are the teachers of dance/movement therapy. These are the supervisors, the consultants, the keynotes, the presenters. This is your field and you are a part of it. Notice and be with the sensations in your body. Engage your breath in a way that honors your experience. Slowly begin to open your eyes and come back into the room.*

So that's one vision. It's one that I dream of seeing 1 day and with that I'll say to those of you who chose to become dance/movement therapists when no one or barely anyone looked like you or shared your experience. For those of you who never saw yourselves reflected back, but envisioned yourselves into the future of dance/movement therapy by becoming dance/movement therapists anyways. I honor you and thank you for being bodies full of experiences for other people like you to see themselves in.

This society was created by and large through a white imagination—black and brown and working class labor—in a white imagination. Claudia Rankine, Terry Marshall, and adrienne maree brown all speak of this imagination battle we're in where "...brown bombers become terrorists and white bombers become mentally ill victims" (Brown 2017). Imagination makes Christine Blasey Ford and Anita Hill unworthy of fact and Kavanaugh and Clarence Thomas worthy of political power in the US Supreme Court. Adrienne writes, "...imagination gives us borders, gives us superiority, gives us race" (Brown 2017).

Dance/movement therapy as a practice was by and large created and maintained by a white imagination—a white imagination that is also predominantly female, straight, cis, able bodied, and middle class. I am so grateful to this imagination for what it has started and there are and have been other visionaries and I'm hoping for more. It has been said many times that the face of the ADTA is changing. I would say the body of the ADTA is changing. How exciting and expected for a body to change.

And as it changes are folks willing to give up some of their power for other visions to manifest? No one person can vision for everybody. That's a symptomatic belief of the single-hero myth/white savior complex. It takes difference to vision for more than one body.

And it can be hard as hell trying to manifest your vision when you're living in someone else's imagination. We see instances all the time—where in the male imagination—female empowerment is male exclusion, which simply isn't the case. Likewise we see in the white imagination, being pro-black as being anti-white. That also is not the case. And trying to build comforts for those who are imagining so that your vision can manifest can be an exhausting process. So the question I come to is, how can we leave the white imagination so that we don't lose ourselves to the fight for space within it?

Part of interrogating institutional and organizational use of power and privilege includes observing who is at the table and who is not at the table and having some real honest conversations about why that is. It is most often those who are at the intersections of multiple compounding and interdependent systems of oppression are not at the table and therefore not contributing to decision making processes....or they're at the table, but they're outnumbered, or spoken over, or their positions are appointed as surface level niceties but never taken seriously.

A common excuse that's used in the discussion of who is at the table is "well if there were more of them here then we could choose more of them to sit at the table." For DMT this makes me think about the first steps I took to becoming a dance/movement therapist. I looked at the website, I googled it, I looked at all the schools, and read all their requirements. Is there representation in the images? Can I see myself doing this? True fact: I asked a masters student liaison at Columbia during the application process if I had to use scarves because I saw scarves everywhere and I was not about it at the time. She told me I didn't have to use scarves and I finished the application and got in. Was it really about the scarves? No, it was about being able to see myself in this field. It was about being able to see myself in the family of the profession, family is important to brown folks—all folks, I'm just saying—representation is important. I didn't want to be apart of a scarf family. Now I am and it's fine. I love scarves they're are great—we've repaired our relationship.

Where the people are also makes me think of requirements and formal dance training. Power and privilege in dance is its own conference and I get the sense that many of us are dancers who are in recovery from being in the world of dance. And yet, how are we perpetuating the same systems of oppression we're trying to escape? Or have escaped? If all or most of the students in any given program come from white dance forms, I see that as sad—I do. Not because white dance forms are a bad thing but because of the rich dialogue between studying and learning bodies that is missed when certain kinds of knowledge is othered.

Let's say folks get through graduation and are now practicing clinicians—are there mentorship opportunities? Which hands are doing this? This is already happening—I know it is. And I think it can happen more and with more support from the higher ups.

Listen, a huge issue—and everyone already knows—is the price of this conference. Accessibility—it’s an issue. Public financial transparency on record like on a website could certainly help to build understanding and trust with the members and who are we losing because of cost? Especially if someone who is in a less dominant group saves up, busts their ass to get here and then experiences microaggressions or macroaggressions, or maybe doesn’t relate to the any of the speakers or maybe the speakers are presenting aspects of their culture when they don’t belong to it but the person doesn’t have the accolades to do the presentation themselves. The list goes on, right? Do you think they’re going to come back? Maybe—maybe not.

Another common excuse is, “Well we’ve invited them to the table and no one shows” or “Only these people show” or “No one wants to be at the table” (this is my favorite). It may be a good time to reevaluate the table itself. This is politics of inclusion. Are you inviting people into a space that welcomes the fullness of who they are? What are your agreements? How does this person know how you hold yourselves accountable?

At the end of the day—this is directed to folks in less dominant groups—we gotta ask ourselves, Do we want to sit at the table? When I hear myself say that question out loud I think about critical trans politics and the work of Dean Spade, founder of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project and poverty lawyer for years. Dean talks about the danger of believing the law will protect us. This is a risky time to bring this up considering we’re in the middle of deplorable laws right now, but let’s make space for it for a moment.

The US disabilities Act in 1990. Did that [law] put an end to harm against people with disabilities? Of course not. Anti-discrimination laws. Did that end discrimination? No. It’s incredibly hard to prove a case for anti-discrimination because fewer people are going to say “you’re a this racial slur this derogatory name and that’s why I’m firing you.” It’s usually more insidious and subtle acts that are daily and not recorded except for in the bodies receiving it.

Do I think we should give up the fight to change laws and change the table? No absolutely not, but I do think one of the most insidious facets of oppression is the belief that this is the only way. This table is the only option.

I say no to that. I think the table can actually be a blanket at the beach around a fire because I’m an Aries and you know what we can use the table as firewood. I think that’s a viable option. One of the things to be careful of, of course, is that the blanket doesn’t get co-opted and turned into another table. I’m almost done with the metaphors I promise.

Everyone in this room experiences privilege in some way and oppression in another.

For the privileged parts of everyone, I invite you to let these words from Chani Nicholas from her Twitter account sit in your awareness:

“Deconstructing our privilege may feel harsh at first but that’s just a conditioned response to keeping an unjust functioning. Deconstructing your privilege is actually the most gentle thing you can do for the world around you, which includes you.”

And for the exhausted parts that find rest and fight and rest and fight, time and time again like your morning alarm clock:

In the words of Nayyirah Waheed:

“You do not have to be a fire for every mountain blocking you  
You could be a water and soft river your way to freedom too.”  
(Salt, 2013).

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of interest** The author declares that they have no conflict of interest.

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