

DECOLONIZE DANCE

Rainy Demerson / On Curating

Sarah Crowell / Classical Voice

Waeli Wang / The Activist History Review

Nyama McCarthy-Brown / Journal of Dance Education

Rose Martin, Sunniva Skjøstad Hovde, Robert Chanunkh, Pauline Hiroti /

JASEd (NOASP: Nordic Open Access Scholarly Publishing)

Decolonizing Tertiary Dance Education / Stockholm University of the Arts

Cecily Campbell, Gregory King, Ashley Brown, Patriann Edwards, Kieron

Sargeant, Jazelynn Goudy / Thinking Dance

**POLITICALITY OF PERFORMANCE /
PERFORMATIVITY OF POLITICS**

DANCE FLOOR

**MICRO MAGAZINE
OF PERFORMING ARTS.**



editorial note

More and more texts, analyses and studies, but also journalistic articles or essays are being written about the decolonization practices of the performing arts, including dance and choreography. Most texts can be found in the press and on English-language websites. Hence, the latest issue of DANCEFLOOR is only in English. Inside you will find excerpts from several texts, which are my subjective choice. Since they are only a paragraph or two, I decided not to translate them into Polish, especially since the whole thing is in English. Next to each excerpt is a link referring to the whole text and there - usually - you will find other links to further studies.

There are hardly any texts in Polish, but I hope this will change soon. Apparently, we don't see the problem yet. Perhaps we do not fully understand the importance of decolonizing art education. It is possible that living in Poland, we have the feeling that the topic of decolonization does not concern us because, after all, "Poland did not have overseas colonies." Another thing is that it had aspirations, fortunately it lacked the facilities and potential. However, even though the "opportunity" of having colonies eluded us, we, like many other white nations without overseas colonies, reaped and continue to reap the bloody fruits of the colonial policies of Europe and North America. Understanding this opens up an opportunity for us to rehabilitate and make reparations to nations and communities affected by the brutal violence of colonialism. (Lukas Wojcicki)

01

LUKAS WOJCICKI

Introduction

02

RAINY DEMERSON

Artistic Reparations: The Curious Curation of African Contemporary Dance

03

WAEI WANG

Dancing Decolonization: Embodying Communal Pedagogical Practices

04

NYAMA McCARTHY-BROWN

Decolonizing Dance Education in Higher Education: One Credit at a Time

05

STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

Decolonizing Tertiary Dance Education: Time to Act

06

C. CAMPBELL, G. KING, A. BROWN, P. EDWARDS, K. SARGEANT, J. GOUDY

Decolonizing Dance Writing: Who is Writing for?

07

SARAH CROWELL

Moves to Decolonize Dance

08

R. MARTIN, S. SKJØSTAD HOVDE, R. CHANUNKHA, P. HIROTI

Decolonizing Perspectives of Art Education

RAINY DEMERSON

is a dance artist and scholar invested in global intersectional feminism and decolonial embodiments.

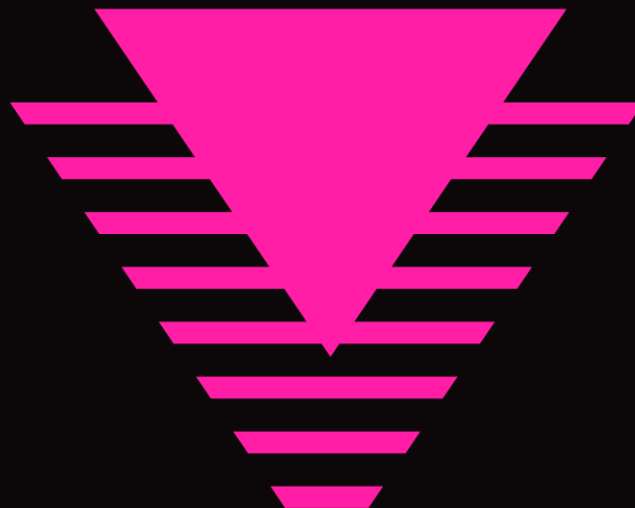
Artistic Reparations:
The Curious Curation
of African ----->
Contemporary Dance

An excerpt from an article that appeared in “On Curating” magazine issue 55 “Curating Dance: Decolonizing Dance”

In 2005, acclaimed Kenyan author and editor Binyavanga Wainaina wrote his sardonic work, *How to Write About Africa*. In it he instructs, “Africa is to be pitied, worshipped or dominated. Whichever angle you take, be sure to leave the strong impression that without your intervention and your important book, Africa is doomed.” In approaching the issue of curating contemporary dance from Africa, I think of that line and ask myself: To what extent does the foreign curation of African contemporary dance rehearse this same rhetoric that Africa is inherently different than the rest of the world and Africa is to be saved? Is there a better way to curate?

Colonialism, by definition, was a process of violent theft buttressed by the establishment of systems designed to enrich the colonist by making the colonized economically dependent, despite being the actual source of wealth. I suggest that the foreign curation of African contemporary dance can perpetuate this superstructure even while it suggests or attempts to do the opposite.

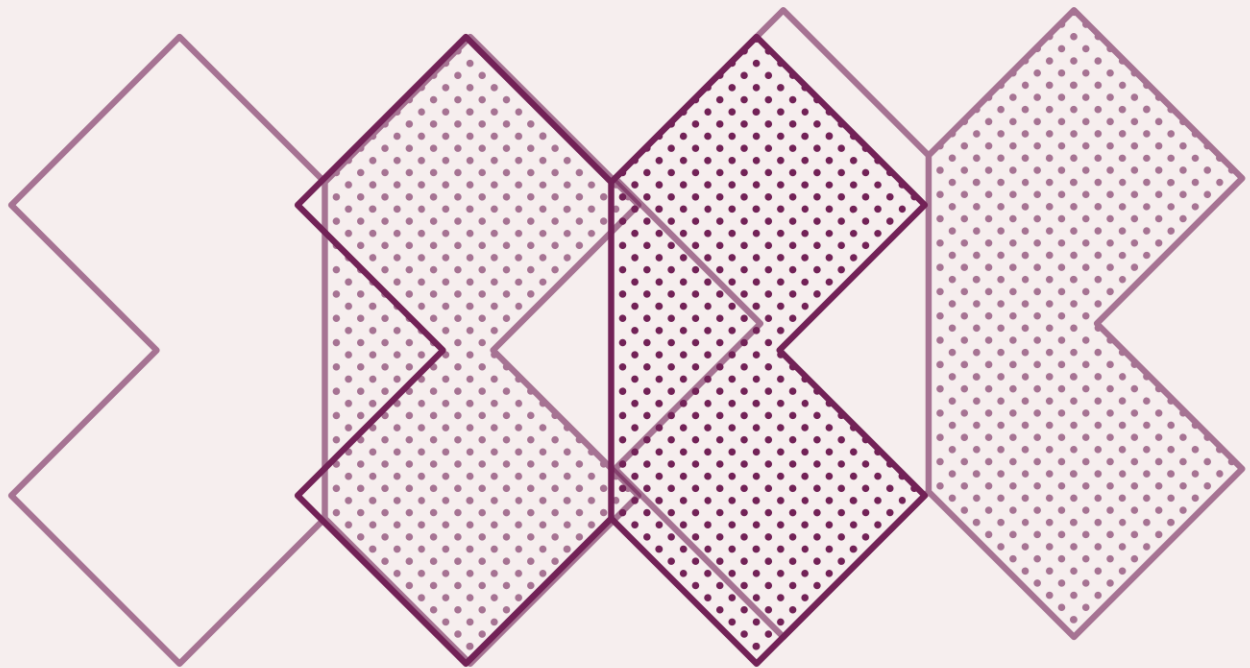
On the other end, many over-exploited African nations have assimilated the colonial mindset which undervalues African arts. Despite the post-independence fervour to develop the arts as a pivotal aspect of national identity, over time, many African governments have left dance artists dependent on foreign funding. Too many African artists find their domestic governments unwilling to invest in dance as an arm of education or cultural and economic development. Meanwhile, Europe fiends for creative products from Africa, both for their intrinsic value and their “exotic” allure. Artists across the continent want to work at home but have to work abroad, at least part-time, in order to make a living.



Dancing Decolonization: Embodying Communal Pedagogical Practices

WAE LI WANG

is a movement artist, filmmaker, and educator. She creates interdisciplinary contemporary works interweaving personal, familial, social, and artistic contexts to investigate the human condition.



**THIS IS AN
EXCERPT
FROM A
LARGER
TEXT THAT
APPEARED IN**

**THE
ACTIVIST
HISTORY
REVIEW**

My work primarily lies within the practice of art making and embodied knowledge through social justice frameworks and identity politics. My research, teaching, and creative practices are driven by an inherent desire to understand people—to come to a more expansive understanding of the human experience. Because my own life has been heavily influenced by my experiences with racism, as an educator, I find it is my civic duty to engage with anti-racist pedagogical practices.

I am a first-generation born Asian American womxn who has been surrounded by white bodies for the majority of my life. My peers, my teachers, my education. I learned a lot from being in white spaces. What I learned a lot later is that there is so much more and so much that has been partitioned away, histories meant to be hidden. Now as a creative scholar and educator, I have made it my business to fill in the gaps in our histories and build collective power.

Nyama McCarthy-Brown

an assistant professor of contemporary dance. As an emerging scholar, her research interests center around culturally relevant dance pedagogy and people of color in concert dance.

Most dance departments in the United States require rigorous study of traditional Western dance forms. This is common; many developed countries cultivate the art forms that reflect the aesthetics and philosophies of the majority culture in that nation. However, demographics in the United States have changed greatly over the past 50 years, with people of color now reproducing at higher rates than whites (U.S. Census 2013). Yet, even with this shift in population, the focus of dance departments in the United States remains Western-based. Kerr-Berry noted the difficulty in diversifying dance curriculum in higher education in her article, "*Dance Education in an Era of Racial Backlash*". In another article, "*Progress and Complacency: A 'Post-Racial' Dance in Higher Education*", Kerr-Berry pointed to the multicultural and multifaceted dance outside of higher education. She stated, "*[s]ystematically, leadership in dance in academia is being 'whitewashed'—increasingly underrepresenting the American dancing body*". Kerr-Berry's point is evident in the curriculum structures of many dance departments that require a smaller number of courses for dance forms outside modern and ballet. This author argues that departments should embrace a more inclusive system that does not privilege particular dance forms. For the purpose of this article, she chose to focus on the intent of dance departments regarding the issue of cultural diversity. The author used mission statements as an entry point to understand each department's agenda. The intent to provide a diverse educational experience for students is evident in these mission statements and many others throughout the country. Cultural diversity in dance education cannot truly be valued in this country without reshaping our infrastructure. Students deserve the opportunity to study, perform, and teach diverse dance forms with the legitimacy of higher education degrees.

Excerpt from: Decolonizing Dance Education in Higher Education: One Credit at a Time / Jurnal of Dance Education

conference/un-conference

DECOLONIZING TERTIARY**DANCE EDUCATION:****TIME TO ACT**

[The text comes from the introduction to the conference / un-conference](#)

This conference/un-conference is motivated by the paradigmatic **decolonial discourse** that is ongoing within tertiary dance education, urging for major changes in higher education in dance worldwide. Dance research has contributed to a shift of focus from previously uncritical and **colonial Western canons**, towards more critical and inclusive dance practices in higher education, where the ideals of modernism have been critically explored and deconstructed with the help of **decolonial theories**. Worldwide, as well as at the Stockholm University of the Arts, students and teachers have, for quite some time, **critically questioned the colonial, racist and sexist legacy of Western dance**, dance education and teaching pedagogies. As well, it has been a concern for Makerere University and Africa in general, where content and pedagogical methods of Indigenous dance have been defined by Euro-American-oriented canons. These legacies are also clearly traceable in higher education; in the ways study programs are structured, staffed, taught, articulated and promoted. The perspectives on teaching and learning, as well as research and theory used, are most often based in the same Western legacies. The time has come for us to act, and this conference /un-conference is setting action.

We acknowledge that **decolonial and decolonizing processes** are complex and diverse across the world. Colonialism might look and be understood very differently in Sweden and the Swedish and North-European context than in Uganda and other African countries as well as other continents with very different contexts and histories. However, we see that the responsibility of taking action for **decolonizing dance in tertiary education**, as well as in society, is a shared responsibility among the various stakeholders across different contexts. We therefore invite participants to share their practices and reflections drawing on the specific contexts in which they might engage with. The conference/un-conference aims to create and strengthen critical dialogue, action and change across diverse communities of dance practice, working towards anti-racist and **decolonial dance educational structures** in tertiary education. We encourage involvement in this conference/un-conference from those who engage in the full spectrum of tertiary dance education: undergraduate and postgraduate students, adjunct staff, artists, technical staff, administrators, leaders, full-time academic staff, and community dance practitioners.

[more about the conference / un-conference](#)

Who is the writing for? When a dance is made, when a dance is made from a set of unique physical and spatial curiosities, when a dance is made from curiosities that engage with social and cultural histories, when a dance is made through collaboration with moving bodies and minds who bring into that dance their own curiosities, their own lived histories, their own creative impulses [...]

Throughout my experience as a performer and cultural researcher, I have encountered reviews of dance performance which lacked the analytical, critical, intellectual, & cultural understanding of the Black bodies, Black aesthetics, and Black awareness required to convey the true literary expression of the works presented. If this is achieved, maybe the reader, no matter their location, can find themselves transported and informed.

I value Jazz dance forms in full context of their African roots and deep connection to social movements (historically, culturally, socially, and bodily). Though a foundational component of dance in America, Jazz dance forms have been widely missing from the concert stage and, subsequently, from many dance writings. Is it because they are rooted in social dance and represent community in a participatory performative way?

GREGORY KING, CECILY CAMPBELL, ASHLEY BROWN, PATRIANN EDWARDS, KIERON SARGEANT, JAZELYNN GOUDY

I scrutinize white dance critics for their inability to understand and connect to the Black dance narratives of Black choreographers and artists from the Caribbean and African Diaspora. As a choreographer from the island of Trinidad and Tobago whose dance practices and research focus on the African Diaspora, Circum-Caribbean, and Western Africa, I have experienced a failure to adequately offer assessment and evaluation of non-Eurocentric dance forms.

Maybe the art of dance criticism is in trouble. What if writers bore the fruit of reason and were able to re-evaluate their perceptions and preconceived notions about different dance experiences? Maybe then they'll consider inspirations, complications, calculations, implications, and abstractions as sparks for moving dance forward.

Fragments from: "Decolonizing Dance Writing: Who is Writing for?" at Thinkingdance.net

In both the USAF and dance writing, I believe the foundations were built on exclusionary practices to appease white viewers - white supremacy. If the well-regarded United States Air Force can change their practices, when will dance? We owe it to ourselves and those of the global majority.

Fragment of the interview with Sarah Crowell
“Moves To Decolonize Dance” on Classical Voice

When it comes to inequities in dance, it spans all things, and the inquiry requires that we look at all levels of society. We have a particular way of seeing beauty that leaves people out. The way we see beauty is through the white male lens. In dance, George Balanchine had a great deal to do with creating an aesthetic that was seen as valid and the truth. Very slender, prepubescent, long-legged women. They would have to be white females, but it doesn't cover all white femaleness. To me, the mind of the artist is like all the minds: colonized to think in a particular way. If what is beautiful is white and thin with long legs and very little breasts, then in the ballet world, how do we break that?

My internal work as an artist, human being, educator, and artistic director has been deconstructing that way of thinking of beauty and reimagining it — and putting it on stage and into classrooms. [Using] meticulous ways, there's a freedom and challenge to put it in my work. Whatever the technique is that the young people are doing, it's important they've worked on it hard so there's a rigor in the movement. It can be seen in the production and the way each word was chosen in a theatrical piece. It can challenge the way we think of beauty.

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The structures are in the buildings and the way art and dance are produced. The resources are put into the ballet, symphony, opera — the more traditional art forms. Classical ballet is more well-funded and more centered than other forms of dance. Even at a Dance USA conference a few years ago, the presentation was a group of young people who performed very balletic movement. These were African American kids but they were doing all balletic movement. There was not one presentation I saw that had an Afro-centric dance form represented. They were beautifully trained and doing a modern ballet piece ... but if our way of thinking of dance and what's beautiful is broader, there would be Afro-centered dance, dance that originated in Asia, dance from indigenous cultures. Where was that representation? There was no breadth to it.

We've gotten so narrow in our educational institutions and larger performance venues. It's classically trained bodies that look a particular way. My interest is to challenge that: with my students, as I produce work, and as I speak about dance and theater.

artistic director emeritus at [Destiny Arts Center](#), former professional dancer and nationally recognized educator.

DECOLONIZING PERSPECTIVES OF ARTS EDUCATION

Rose Martin
Sunniva Skjøstad Hovde
Robert Chanunkha
Pauline Hiroti

Excerpt from the introduction to a special issue of JASEd - Journal for Research in Arts and Sports Education, Vol. 5, 2021 - devoted entirely to the topic of decolonizing arts education. The issue is available by clicking on [LINK](#).

This special issue of JASEd offers insights to current research and practice per-taining to decolonizing perspectives of arts education. As the editors of this special issue, we each come from distinct positionalities, geographical locations, and contextual understandings. We found common ground in the need to discuss and share around the theme of decolonizing arts education. Spurred on by the seismic shifts of power, politics, and polarization that the world is currently experiencing, we noted an urgency to address what this might all mean in and for arts education. Over the past years, and perhaps most recently accelerated by a global pandemic, we have seen uprisings against systemic racism, police brutality, marginalization of minority groups, and calls for real change and reform. Much of the racism, injustice, inequality, and violence we see today stems from colonization and ideologies that maintain systems of domination. Arts education is not immune from such issues and legacies, and it is therefore not immune to the reproduction, support, and nurturing of such systems. This special issue emerges from a desire to extend critical and rigorous discussion surrounding decolonializing perspectives on arts education.

Whilst increasing attention has been given to decolonizing arts education practices and research, many of the approaches, processes and thoughts in arts education are entrenched in colonial histories and structures that perpetuate exclusive, privileging, and Eurocentric agendas. The work of decolonization in arts education is an ongoing process and there is an urgent need for deep dialogue around such issues, to open practices and spaces where we discuss decolonization on a collective level, in profes-sional communities, and on an individual level, where we ask: What work do I have to do as an individual to participate in these ongoing processes of decolonization? To further pursue decolonial arts education practices and research, we see this special issue as an opportunity for educators, artists, and researchers to consider how arts education has been and can be decolonized in various ways, the challenges that sit with the unravelling of a colonial past and the dismantling of ethnocentric thinking practices, and models. The special issue is a collection of each their own gemstones.



KEERTHI BASAVARAJAIAH

WORKSHOP: FOOTWORK AND COMPOSITION OF RHYTHM SCAPES

7 WRZEŚNIA 2023

10:30 - 17:30 / STUDIO42 / WARSZAWA



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**MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE
WORKSHOP BY [CLICKING HERE](#)**

THE NEXT ISSUE:

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Berlin Strippers Collective
This Takes Time