

OPEN LETTER TO THE DANCE COMMUNITY IN RESPONSE TO THE MURDERS OF BLACK PEOPLE

Friday, May 29, 2020

Open Letter To The Dance Community in Response to the Murders of Black People

By Dance/NYC

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Dear Dance Community,

We write to you today on behalf of Dance/NYC to acknowledge the pain and mourning that Black people are experiencing and the sanctioned violence that has engendered it. We mourn George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and all Black people whose lives have been taken by the actions of white people, institutions and systems, and the many accomplices, witnesses, and beneficiaries of white supremacy who have actively participated in or stood by and observed in silence.

Over the past few weeks, we have also witnessed as a nation and city the palpable impacts that systemic racism has on the lives of Black and Indigenous people, peoples of color, immigrants, disabled and immunosuppressed people, LGBTQ+ people, and people living in low-income communities and poverty impacted by COVID-19. White supremacy continuously manifests itself in violence at the hands of law enforcement and in interpersonal interactions, our government's response to COVID-19, and our cultural institutions.

We recognize that as a nonprofit organization based in NYC, Dance/NYC benefits from white supremacist structures, including those that have led to the active and pervasive violence against Black people as well as the systemic displacement and subsequent erasure of Lenape people and governance from their lands. The history of this violence in displacement is built upon concerted acts of settler colonialism and remains active today in every area of our artistic community.

In the dance community, this violence is present in the perpetual erasure and appropriation of the traditions, legacies, and histories of Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color and the immense profit being made on the backs of these communities with little wealth returning to them. This practice bleeds into the current crisis, as artists and art workers of color are often the first to lose their jobs and the last to have access to funding.

In response to this, Dance/NYC is working to:

- Ensure that we continue learning about, investigate, identify and undo manifestations of these systems in our internal operations and external programming;
- Intentionally invest time, resources, and energy in establishing and nurturing relationships with local Black and Indigenous leaders, artists, art workers, and organizations of color; and
- Move beyond acknowledgment and into needed actions of reparation and equity.

As a part of this work, in 2018 Dance/NYC released its updated commitment to [values of justice, equity, and inclusion](#), together with [Racial Justice](#) and [Disability, Dance, Artistry](#). Agendas that outline in detail the specific actions associated with these values. As we enter the second year of their publications, Dance/NYC has been working to update these documents to reflect our more recent learnings and our continued commitment and actions in every area of our work internally and externally.

Dance/NYC recognizes that the planning and execution of racial justice work require the investment of emotional labor, financial resources, and time. To ensure the sustainability and well-being of its staff and constituents and to allow time to rest and mourn this week's events Dance/NYC will:

- Close its doors from Friday, May 29th through Monday, June 1, 2020, including but not limited to all online communications, email interactions, public responses and programming, and internal work; and
- Shift the re-opening of its Coronavirus Dance Relief Fund Freelance Dance Worker June Application from June 5, 2020, to June 12, 2020.

We acknowledge rest as an act of care and resistance and encourage mourning the events of this week in conjunction with targeted action to counter the continued devastation brought on by white supremacy. In the coming days, we will provide resources and information on how we can take collective action.

In the interim, if you would like mental health support, please visit our [Coronavirus Preparedness Resource page](#), which includes a series of mental health resources. You can also review our [Glossary and Resource Directory](#), which includes a preliminary compilation of resources for addressing racial justice and disability justice within cultural institutions.

We thank and recognize the labor of the many organizations, community organizers, artists and arts workers engaged in this work, who have laid its foundation before us and who continue to lead it into the future.

And above all, we acknowledge and extend our solidarity to Black people, their families, and communities in their fight for justice.

In Solidarity,

Dance/NYC Staff and Board of Directors

Alejandra Duque Cifuentes, Executive Director
Alexeya Eyma-Manderson, Administrative Assistant
Brinda Guha, Programs Assistant
Candace Thompson-Zachery, Manager of Justice, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives
Heather Gault, Administrative Assistant
Heather Robles, Grantmaking Assistant
Jovanka Caires, Executive Consultant
Kirsten Reynolds, Development and Grantmaking Coordinator
Kyle Rudnick, Operations Manager
Maleni Palacios-Delgado, Research and Advocacy Coordinator

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