

A black and white photograph of a man and a woman dancing tango. The man, wearing a dark pinstripe suit, has his right arm around the woman's waist and his left hand near her head. The woman, wearing a light-colored dress, has her left arm around the man's neck and her right hand on his shoulder. They are in a close embrace, with their bodies angled towards each other. In the background, another couple is visible, and a sign on the wall reads "BALLET".

# Advancing Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Avanzando Inmigrantes. Danza. Artes. 前进 移民。舞蹈。藝術。

2019

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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Dance Service New York City, Inc.'s (DBA Dance/NYC) mission is to promote and encourage the knowledge, appreciation, practice, and performance of dance in the metropolitan New York City area. It embeds core values of justice, equity, and inclusion into all aspects of the organization. Dance/NYC works in alliance with Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance.

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This study was made possible with leadership funding from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Founding support for Dance/NYC's Immigrants. Dance. Arts. initiative was also provided by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Mertz Gilmore Foundation.

Dance/NYC research is supported, in part, by the City of New York, Bill de Blasio, Mayor, and the New York City Council, Corey Johnson, Speaker, through the Department of Cultural Affairs, Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner; and by the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

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Dance/NYC thanks the many people, organizations, and public agencies that helped guide this project. Special thanks to the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Bitta Mostofi, Commissioner, Eileen Reyes, Sabrina Fong; Department of Cultural Affairs, Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner, Angela Kingham, Ryan Max; Department of Education, Paul King, Ana Nery Fragoso, Ben Espinosa; SMU DataArts, Arin Sullivan, Rebecca Johnson; Women of Color in the Arts, Kaisha Johnson; as well as to Queens College and the Kupferberg Center for the Arts, Julia Del Palacio, Kenneth Talberth, Michael Kelleher, Craig Platt, and Virgil Wong, for hosting the convening that is a foundation for this study. Thanks also to ArtsWestchester, Aaron Paige, Debbie Scates; Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Sophie Lam; Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance, Joanna Castro, Michelle Orsi Gordon; Queensboro Dance Festival, Karesia Batan; Alexandra Amirov, Casey Brown, Juan Castaño, Mirielle Clifford, Davalois Fearon, Rebecca Fitton, Alison Fleminger, Cory Greenberg, Denae Hannah, Fernanda Hong, Tina Huang Abrams, Tanya Jackson, Simone Johnson, Kate Ladenheim, Traci Lester, Alberto Lopez, Claudie Mabry, Mia Martelli, DJ McDonald, Christopher Núñez, Yasemin Ozumerzifon, Taryn Sacramone, Kimberly Savarino, Juan Pablo Siles, Joyous Pierce, Ling Tang, Candace Thompson-Zachery, Mindy Toro, Mikaila Ware, Layla Zami, and Bri Ng Schwartz.

# TESTIMONY

"Dance artistry plays such an important role within our city—from preserving and celebrating the diversity of ever-growing dance genres to sparking conversations about critical human rights and social justice issues. As highlighted in this Dance/NYC report, there are many ways that organizations and agencies can continue to improve the equity and inclusivity of immigrants in dance by providing opportunities to all, regardless of immigration status. I commend these actions as an important step towards the elimination of inequities that impact our immigrant communities."

Bitta Mostofi, Commissioner, NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

"Dance/NYC has a long history of working to ensure that the dance community reflects the diversity of all those who call New York City home—the natives and the newcomers. This report is the latest in a series of significant Dance/NYC research and advocacy initiatives raising questions that must be addressed in order to create equity for all within dance. The artistry of immigrants contribute so much to our international city, and now thanks to this report we have a better picture of who makes up this community. Though several of the stated concerns of immigrant dance artists are common to many New Yorkers—such as affordability—it's also important to understand how we in the cultural sector can better address the needs unique to this group. This includes improving access to resources and information, as well as helping cultural organizations to support the creativity and the rights of undocumented dancers. The intersectional approach taken in this research—incorporating conversations on race, disability, age, and sexual orientation—provides an even greater set of opportunities to actively lift up the artistry of New Yorkers from all across the globe, which in turn lifts up the rigor and integrity of dance itself."

Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

# INTRODUCTION

Migration is a human right. Proclaimed through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 13, people's freedom of movement and residence between nation states has long been noted as a fundamental part of human existence.

Migration has occurred in many forms over the course of history, for example, through nomadic cultures, through people's search for better opportunities, through colonial invasions (migration in its worst form), and with the rise of globalization. Yet, not everyone has had equal access and opportunity to safely migrate.

Over the course of the past few years, and most acutely over the past few months, the United States has seen a consistent and systemic assault to this human right in our own backyard. From Immigrations Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids executed within large metropolitan areas, including New York City, targeting black and brown immigrants most prominently, to the mistreatment and deaths of detained migrants in border detention centers, it is clear that as a nation we are in a crisis of humanity. A May 16, 2019 presidential speech proposed replacing the current immigration process of employment and family-based categories with a points system based on age and education.<sup>1</sup> The criteria through which this new plan would grant immigrants access to the United States is grounded in racism, ableism, classism and ageism. It also further criminalizes and jeopardizes the well-being of immigrants currently living within U.S. territories.

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<sup>1</sup> "Remarks by President Trump on Modernizing Our Immigration System for a Stronger America."

So what is the role of arts and culture in fostering the integration, inclusion, and human rights of immigrant people at this time? How does dance, a practice of bodies in movement, play a role in local and national dialogues about immigration? How do dance artists and cultural workers engage in intentional acts of resistance and support at a time when our human right to migrate is under attack? The study you are about to read is a reflection of Dance/NYC's inquiry into these questions. As a team predominantly comprising immigrants and descendants of immigrants, from its board and executive leadership to interns and temporary staff, we are implicated in both the findings and the recommendations that follow.

*Advancing Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* focuses on this nexus of immigration and dance and represents Dance/NYC's commitment and call to action to advance justice, equity and inclusion in the arts and culture sector. It is the third research deliverable of the *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* initiative, launched in 2018, aimed at extending the role of artistry in fostering the inclusion, integration, and human rights of immigrants in the New York City area. This report contributes to the generations of work by artists, activists, and academics and responds directly to Dance/NYC's recent quantitative research: *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.: Data on NYC Dance (2018)* ([Dance.NYC/IDAData2018](#)) and *New York City's Foreign-Born Dance Workforce Demographics (2018)* ([Dance.NYC/ForeignBornWorkforce2018](#)).

The study includes quantitative data on the needs and opportunities of immigrant dance artists and cultural workers and qualitative data gathered through an *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* Conference ([Dance.NYC/IDAC](#)), conversations and feedback with an *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.* Task Force ([Dance.NYC/equity/immigrant-artists/task-force](#)), and personal essays about immigration in relation to the New York City arts economy contributed by immigrant dance artists and cultural workers and their allies. Featured essayists represent various races, ethnicities, ages, geographies, disability status, gender identities, sexual orientations, and social classes—a reflection of the pan-ethnic and diverse landscape of immigration.

What makes this research unique is how Dance/NYC's values of justice, equity, and inclusion ([Dance.NYC/equity/values](#)) guide our reimagining of a dance ecology that examines the ways in which power, funding, opportunity, conduct, and impact can be fair for all artists, cultural workers, and audiences. In creating the report, we focused our efforts on community organizing, co-powering, and building camaraderie among the immigrant dance artists and cultural workers who contributed to the findings. We created a space of transparency that allowed artists to name real experiences and needs. And we asked ourselves: What happens when institutions don't make immigrant artists do the work of educating those in power? What does it mean when an institution has educated itself, has adopted values and assumptions that interrupt its relationship to white supremacy, and now allows artists to focus on their artistry as opposed to teaching the institution cultural competence? In pulling from so many voices and ideas, the study offers meaningful, individual entry points for every reader, while exhorting collaboration as a way to effect change.

The findings suggest key opportunities for the dance community; call for investing in immigrant artists, audiences, and cultural workers; and demand expressly, equitably, and continuously including immigrant rights among diversity, equity, and inclusion matters throughout the sector. Across every issue area—funding, access to resources, education and mentorship, audience development, and community engagement—the immigrant workforce studied articulated a need for sustained support and investment. With financial accessibility being a major gatekeeper for representation, the study points to opportunities for new and expanded financial and in-kind investments in dance.

Most notably, the immigrant dance workforce studied explicitly named the role that racism and bias play in their experiences, encouraging the application of intersectional and racially explicit frameworks to programs for and by immigrant artists, and presenting a call to action for stakeholders across dance to examine the manifestation of systems of oppression in their internal operations and external programs. Furthermore, it has become clear that there is not one single definition or experience that fully encompasses immigration; and yet, all ideas of

immigration that surfaced are inextricably linked to the impacts of white supremacy. In following the leadership of the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Task Force and the immigrant rights movement, Dance/NYC embraces a wide understanding of the term “immigrant” in this research and its recommendations—one that allows individuals to self-identify as immigrants regardless of their legal classification and includes foreign-born people in the United States and their descendants. We recognize the term as a marker for identification and membership within specific minority groups connected by social, political, and cultural experiences. This critical nuance enables us to assess and articulate the needs of a deeply diverse group of people across race, nation of origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender, and age without narrowing or simplifying them to fit a white-centric, xenophobic, or nativist framework that often focuses conversations of immigration or immigrant identification on skin color, documentation or lack thereof, or the good/bad immigrant narrative.

Ultimately, it is not the data-driven findings that will determine the value of this report, but rather their application. Everyone can participate in advancing immigrant dance artists and cultural workers. For public agencies and institutional funders, the study points to opportunities for new and expanded financial and in-kind investment in dance—from programming and capital awards to technical assistance—and for internal planning and operations. For dance artists and companies, the research is a management tool and a resource to advocate and build awareness. For our fellow service organization leaders, the report offers pathways to achieve scale by working together and across stakeholders. All of the recommendations in this report rely on the comprehensive understanding and intentional inclusion of immigrant artists, cultural workers, and audiences at every level. As an underlying tenet of its justice, equity, and inclusion work, Dance/NYC embraces the concept of “Nothing Without Us,” borrowed from the disability rights movement: no policy should be formed without the full, direct involvement and vesting of members of the affected group.

While Dance/NYC's work is discipline and geography-specific, the findings in this report encourage local, national, and international dialogue across arts and culture and point to the need for iterative inquiry and response. As leaders across the sector learn from the findings, we encourage them to remain in conversation with their local immigrant arts communities. From there, we can begin to ask the following questions that remain after this report: What responsibility do cultural institutions have in educating ourselves to create safer spaces that honor the communities we are part of and serve? What could a just, equitable, and inclusive dance ecology look like when stakeholders intentionally express and honor the rights of immigrants? How can we work collectively to make this a reality?

Finally, I am pleased to thank the Rockefeller Brothers Fund for their leadership funding of this study; the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Mertz Gilmore Foundation for their founding support of the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. initiative; the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs for its collaboration on all aspects of this project; and our research partners, Julie Koo, Vice President of TDC, and Mireya Guerra. We thank the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Task Force, who generously offer their guidance and leadership, and the Dance/NYC staff for bringing their experiences and stories to this work.

And to the more than three million immigrants who call New York City home, this work is dedicated to you.

*Pa'lante!*

Alejandra Duque Cifuentes  
Executive Director

Bri Ng Schwartz  
Research & Advocacy Coordinator

# FOREWORD

Movement is all around us.

I was an awkward child. I was both brown and undocumented. I did not feel like I belonged anywhere. I felt alone. I remember attending P.S161 in 1995 when I migrated here from Ecuador. I had to wear a yellow blouse with a round collar and a pleated navy blue skirt uniform that Mami ironed before heading to work. I remember the large classroom of ESL students I was placed in during those first few years in elementary school. I also remember very vividly the art and dance classes I attended after lunch. Picture me learning to dance the waltz and bachata. My pleated skirt moving as I learned how to carefully step along with the beat. Through these dance classes, I and fellow migrant <sup>2</sup>children from Guatemala, Ecuador, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic existed in joy. We felt like we belonged somewhere.

As we read this *Advancing Immigrants. Dance. Arts. 2019* we may see glimpses of ourselves, our families, and fellow dancers in our lives and communities. As a poet I'm familiar with beat and rhythm, but I am far from a dancer, so when Alejandra asked me to write this foreword I hesitated. What could I say about a field I am not part of nor have any training in? The report itself is not limited to dance technique: it holds a larger meaning. It is both a study and a reminder about what it means to be part of a larger ecosystem of creatives and artists, and how we must show up for migrant dancers. It is a report that asks us to hold the reality of what is happening in our city and show up, now more than ever, for migrant communities. We are bearing witness to the mass incarceration (in both prisons and detention centers) of migrant folks. Migrant children are dying in custody of I.C.E. Thousands of children are stolen from their parents by the immigration system. Trans and Queer asylum seekers are being mistreated in detention centers.

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<sup>2</sup> "Immigrant" is a formal legal term. It centers not the person, but the nation the person wishes to move to. The word 'migration' centers bodies. The word 'immigration' centers bodies of law" —Jeff Chang, 2015

Immigration officers are terrorizing our communities in Queens and Staten Island with massive raids. Current political parties are vilifying those seeking refuge. Anti-Muslim rhetoric keeps spinning in news media outlets. Draconian anti-immigrant laws keep passing, anti-black legislation targets Black migrants, there is an on-going block of access to health care. Climate change is real. The report asks us to hold all of this, all of these complexities and layers. I am not a dancer, but I share a creative ecosystem with you. I am not a dancer, but I share a city with you. What do we do now with the findings of this report?

The findings are not shocking. If anything, they are bold affirmations of what we already know to be true. The findings here have already been said by migrant dancers. This report is a formalized document that gives no room for dismissiveness. I've spent several hours reading this report, going back and forth on the statistics, survey data, responsibilities, and recommendations. These findings shed light on the real inequity that exists in the dance field. Foreign-born dancers are not being compensated in living wages, are not given the right spaces to create, are not brought in for research. There is a lack of representation of gender non-conforming and migrant dancers, and many migrant audiences are not brought into our spaces. Maybe, just maybe, we are not equipped to create a safe space for them or daring enough to create a welcoming spaces with leadership and staffing that are from those communities. Maybe we need the right training and new leadership. We need a stable infrastructure that is just, inclusive and safe and that explicitly advocates for the participation of marginalized populations and future artists. Many have also been throwing around the word "sanctuary." What does it really mean to create a sanctuary space?

So, where do we begin? What do we do now? This is a powerful moment where artists and cultural workers in the Pop Hollywood Entertainment industry are self-organizing for equity. We have museums entering the conversation around racial justice, and literary spaces are creating more intentional infrastructures for writers of color. Where does dance fall in all of this? As the managing director at CultureStrike, a national organization doing work at the intersection of arts and culture and social change, I come with more than a decade of experience in organizing the cultural field and pushing for cultural equity. It was a true honor to have been asked to read this report prior to its release because I got to bear witness to a visionary body of work that has been crafted responsibly. Many times, our cultural spaces are asked to react or create from a reactionary place. The report lays out a roadmap for us to consider, build, and imagine from. This report offers more than 11 key recommendations, laying out possibilities for this dance and creative ecosystem to thrive. The report unites across points of access, power, equity, and representation. It also centers urgency and agency. Many artists and cultural workers are being activated and organized across the country, answering the call to really envision a world that's possible beyond what we currently have because this cannot be the world we continue to live in. There must be a better, more joyful world for all of us. It will take all of us, dancers and poets and creatives alike, to imagine this. It will take for all of us to be equipped, supported, invested, mentored, and empowered. It will take all of us to recognize how we overlap. After reading this report, I am committed to showing up more thoughtfully for dancers to make sure they are in the cultural spaces and at the table when we begin to imagine these new worlds. I am gently calling in dancers and dance institutions/companies to do the same. I ask you, the reader, to consider how are you going to engage beyond this reading?

Sonia Guiñansaca  
Managing Director, CultureStrike

# DANCE/NYC VALUES OF JUSTICE, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Dance/NYC believes the dance ecology must itself be just, equitable, and inclusive to meaningfully contribute to social progress and envisions a dance ecology wherein power, funding, opportunities, conduct, and impacts are fair for all artists, cultural workers, and audiences. It seeks to advance policies, investments, programs, mind-sets, and actions that remove and prevent inequities that exist along the continuum of lives in dance, from the public school classroom to the stage.

Dance/NYC's approach cuts across its public programs—advocacy and research; leadership training, networking, and convening; technology and visibility; and regranting—and all aspects of its operations. Its approach is intersectional, building upon multiple issue areas that together create a more just, equitable, and inclusive dance ecology. Dance/NYC's approach is also grounded in collaboration. It recognizes generations of people and organizations working to advance justice, equity, and inclusion in the arts and culture and strives to contribute to their efforts. It has established formal partnerships with colleague arts service organizations. Learn more about our partners on our website at [Dance.NYC/equity/equityinclusionpartners](https://Dance.NYC/equity/equityinclusionpartners).

Dance/NYC is currently focused on three main issue areas:

## Racial Justice Agenda

Dance/NYC seeks to dismantle white supremacy in dance and amplify the voices and autonomy of the African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) community. Please refer to Dance/NYC's Racial Justice Agenda to learn more about our work.

Agenda: [Dance.NYC/RacialJusticeAgenda](#)

## Disability. Dance. Artistry. Agenda

Dance/NYC aims to dismantle ableism in dance and amplify the voices and autonomy of disabled people. It seeks to advance a cultural ecosystem that expressly includes disabled artists and disability communities. In doing so, it puts disability front and center as a positive artistic and generative force. Dance/NYC launched its Disability. Dance. Artistry. initiative on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act ([Dance.NYC/equity/disability/disability-initiative](#)). Please refer to Dance/NYC's Disability. Dance. Artistry. Agenda to learn more about our work.

Agenda: [Dance.NYC/DDAAgenda](#)

## Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Agenda

Dance/NYC seeks to dismantle xenophobia and nativism in dance and extend the role of dance artistry in fostering the inclusion, integration, and human rights of more than three million immigrants in the New York City area. Dance/NYC launched a multiyear Immigrants. Dance. Arts. initiative in 2018 ([Dance.NYC/equity/immigrant-artists/immigrant-initiative](#)).

An agenda is in formation.

Dance/NYC's use of terms builds on learning with Race Forward's Racial Equity in the Arts Innovation Lab ([raceforward.org/practice/nyc-arts](http://raceforward.org/practice/nyc-arts)) and established leaders and experts in justice, equity, and inclusion. Dance/NYC recognizes that language is constantly in flux and that words might have different meanings depending on their context and use. Please refer to a full glossary and resource directory: [Dance.NYC/JEldirectory](#).

## **Dance/USA Statement on Equity & Inclusion**

Committed to dance in the metropolitan New York City area, Dance/NYC had adopted Dance/USA's former national statement on and core values of equity and inclusion as adapted for Dance/NYC. In June of 2019, Dance/USA updated their core values ([danceusa.org/danceusa-core-values](http://danceusa.org/danceusa-core-values)) to reflect their new strategic plan ([danceusa.org/new-strategic-plan](http://danceusa.org/new-strategic-plan)). Dance/NYC works in alliance with Dance/USA, the national service organization for professional dance.

Dance as an art form provides expression, celebration, exploration, and transformation for all people. Inclusion and equal treatment of all members of the dance community in the metropolitan New York City area are core values of Dance/NYC and central to its mission. In achieving core values of equity and inclusion, Dance/NYC is committed to diversity in every aspect of its programming and services. Diversity in this context refers to groups, communities, and individuals identified by dance genre or form, race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, age, or disability status. Dance/NYC is committed to honoring, nurturing, and advancing dance through the lens of diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity in all aspects of its programming, services, and organization. Inclusion means a commitment to making all members of the dance community feel welcome and comfortable at Dance/NYC.

## Actions

Dance/NYC demonstrates its commitment to the core values of equity and inclusion by:

- Recruiting and retaining leadership and staff who reflect the diversity of the communities in which it serves;
- Providing educational and professional development programs, research, publications, and policy positions that are relevant and culturally competent;
- Acting as a leading voice in the dance and greater arts community for the recognition of the challenges to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and providing a platform for the honest and open exploration of paths toward a truly inclusive dance community in the metropolitan area; and
- Supporting Dance/USA's development of national standards, in conjunction with Dance/USA's overall mission to promote and encourages the dance community to be knowledgeable and sensitive to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Dance/NYC acknowledges the acute need to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of dance groups, dancers, choreographers, and administrative/management staff from historically excluded populations who are currently underrepresented in the dance field.

# REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The majority of the immigrant dance workforce studied (71%) identified as **first-generation immigrants** with almost half of respondents (44%) having been based in the United States for more than 15 years.
- Nearly half (47%) of the immigrant dance workforce studied stated modern, contemporary, and/or postmodern **dance genres** as their main practice with folklore and traditional dance forms as the next most popular.
- The **most common countries of origin** for the immigrant dance workforce studied (United States and Mexico) differ from those of the City's population (Dominican Republic and China).
- As is the case with the wider dance workforce, while the concentration of immigrant dance workers studied is highest in Manhattan, **the majority of immigrant respondents** (68%) is based outside the borough.
- The immigrant dance workforce studied is just as or **more ethnically and racially diverse** than the city's foreign-born population (with only 6% of survey respondents identifying as white non-Hispanic) in every ethnic and racial category, encouraging the application of intersectional and racially explicit frameworks to programs for and by immigrant artists.
- 5% of respondents **identified as disabled**, which is out of step with the City's overall percentage (11%) of foreign-born disabled New Yorkers. A large 2011 study about disability among recent U.S. immigrants concluded that immigrants from all regions of the world were less likely to report disabilities, encouraging the application of intersectional frameworks for engaging disabled immigrants in dance.

- The immigrant dance workforce studied **skews female**, outpacing the City's foreign-born population that identifies as female (53%).
- The percentage of the immigrant dance workforce studied **identifying as LGBTQ+** is substantial at 19%.
- The immigrant dance workforce studied skews young, with 60% of respondents being Millennials and 26% belonging to Generation X indicating an **opportunity for increased engagement of aging populations**.
- Despite being dance artists or workers, almost one-fourth (22%) of the immigrant dance workforce studied **does not receive income for dance-related activities**.
- The immigrant dance workforce studied ranked **affordable presentation space and living wages** as their highest needs, followed by affordable development space; affordable healthcare; affordable living space; affordable training; supplies and equipment; technical assistance, networking opportunities, and affordable legal assistance, among others.
- Only a slim percentage of the immigrant dance workforce studied stated that they were **able to identify and access all the resources** to fulfill their needs (11% and 5% respectively).
- The majority of the immigrant dance workforce studied is **working predominantly outside the nonprofit structure**, with 40% working as an independently/privately financed artist or group and 17% working as a fiscally sponsored artist or group.
- The overwhelming majority of the immigrant dance workforce studied indicated **working in disciplines in addition to dance** (88% working across an average of 1.89 other disciplines) **and in multiple roles in the dance field** (87% working an average of 3.5 roles).

# RESEARCH CONTEXT & METHODOLOGY

This study is the third research deliverable of Dance/NYC's Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Initiative aimed at extending the role of artistry in fostering the inclusion, integration, and human rights of immigrants in the New York City area, while shaping national and global discussions. It extends a first phase of work grounded in available quantitative data at the nexus of immigrant matters and dance, and follows *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.: Data on NYC Dance* (2018) ([Dance.NYC/IDAData2018](#)) and *New York City's Foreign-Born Dance Workforce Demographics* (2018) ([Dance.NYC/ForeignBornWorkforce2018](#)).

This study is grounded in the voices of dance artists and workers who self-identify as immigrants and are underrepresented in existing data. The work, by design, remains iterative and encourages more inquiry. It presents opportunities for collaborative action with all of Dance/NYC's stakeholders, from dance artists and companies to the public and private funding sectors.

Formal or informal, discovery based in dialogue has long been used as a research methodology, whether it is the testing of new ideas through formal discourse, or through activism and civic engagement. The methodology for this study embraces making meaning from four primary sources to arrive at common and new understandings: conversation onstage and among audience participants at the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Conference, which is archived in video at [bit.ly/2TkpfBM](https://bit.ly/2TkpfBM); a field-wide survey to immigrant dance artists and dance workers in the metropolitan New York City area; the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Task Force (described below); and learnings contributed in the form of essays available in the online version of this report. Some of the key findings and recommendations presented here surfaced multiple times in one or more of these sources, or multiple times from one source.

## Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Task Force & Participants

As an underlying tenet of its justice, equity, and inclusion work, Dance/NYC embraces the concept of "Nothing Without Us": no policy should be formed without the full, direct involvement and vesting of members of the affected group. "Nothing Without Us" is borrowed from the disability rights movement and upheld as a core value for all of Dance/NYC's justice initiatives. The phrase was popularized in the 1990s in relation to the disability activist movement by James Charelston, although he credits South African activists Michael Masutha and William Rowland for his definition. The Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Task Force advises and assists Dance/NYC on all aspects of the initiative, including research. The Task Force of majority immigrant (11/14) artists, advocates, educators, and service providers from Africa, Asia, Australia/Oceania, Europe, Middle East/North Africa, North America, and South America, bring lived and learned experience in immigrant arts and arts education matters. Task Force members include those who can reflect on the intersectionality of the immigrant experience across race, gender, disability, and country of origin. The Task Force charter is available at [Dance.NYC/IDAcharter](https://Dance.NYC/IDAcharter).

The Task Force met three times at the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Affairs from May 2018 to March 2019, to develop hypotheses around each data set, respond to research questions, review and refine findings, and shape recommendations and action items presented in this report. The March 2019 meeting invited essayists to join the discussion and to contribute a volume of written statements included in the online version of this report.

## Language

Dance/NYC's use of terms in this report builds on learning with established leaders and experts in justice, equity, and inclusion. Dance/NYC recognizes that language is constantly in flux and that words might have different meanings depending on their context and use. Dance/NYC is engaged in a continuous process of refining language used in its research and prioritizes feedback from communities impacted by its work.

"Immigrant" is broadly defined by the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) as "any alien in the United States, except one legally admitted under specific nonimmigrant categories" and is the common referent for permanent resident alien ([dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/data-standardsand-definitions/definition-terms#permanent\\_resident\\_alien](https://dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/data-standardsand-definitions/definition-terms#permanent_resident_alien)).

Dance/NYC follows leadership in immigrant rights by embracing a wider understanding of the term "immigrant," one that allows individuals to self-identify as immigrants regardless of their classification by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and includes people who are foreign-born and their descendants. Dance/NYC also recognizes the term as a marker for identification and membership within specific minority groups connected by social, political, and cultural experiences.

## Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Conference

In presenting the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Conference, Dance/NYC set out to catalyze conversations that would go beyond a pleasing and informative chat into places for research in which transformative suggestions for actions, collaborations, policies, and processes could occur. The underlying concept was to delve deeper—through the time-tested mode of inquiry—to uncover bright spots and leadership in the dance field, and solutions-oriented recommendations about how to address the needs and opportunities for immigrants in the New York City dance field.

Data were collected at the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Conference, held on November 8, 2018 at The Kupferberg Center for the Arts at Queens College. There were approximately 200 participants at the conference, including interlocutors and attendees, who were the primary source of data. Conference attendees included dance artists, educators, presenters, administrators, and funders who identify as immigrants, and their allies.

Data were collected on five research topics:

1. Advancing Immigrant Rights through Dance
2. Immigrant Audiences & Audiences for Immigrant Artists
3. Role of Presenters in Advancing Immigrant Rights
4. Dance Education for Immigrant Students & Artists
5. Role of Funders in Advancing Immigrant Artists

A panel discussion was presented on each topic, offered as a catalyst for facilitated conversations among attendees at nine tables. Analysis included learning from the panel discussions and small group conversations. Attendees were free to choose their table and to move from table to table over the course of the conference. One table had a Spanish-speaking facilitator and another had a Mandarin-speaking facilitator. Facilitators were supplied with discussion questions, and conversation transcripts were captured by human notetakers and audio recording.

## Survey to Immigrant Dance Artists & Dance Workers

Our first two research reports regarding immigrant dance makers revealed the lack of publicly available information on the immigrant dance workforce in New York City. The purpose of the survey was to collect information about issues that matter to immigrant dance artists and dance workers in the metropolitan New York City area, as well as demographic information. The survey was created by Dance/NYC, researcher Mireya Guerra, and our research partners at TDC ([tdcorp.org](http://tdcorp.org)) and Women of Color in the Arts ([womenofcolorinthearts.org](http://womenofcolorinthearts.org)), in collaboration with an Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Task Force ([Dance.NYC/equity/immigrant-artists/task-force](http://Dance.NYC/equity/immigrant-artists/task-force)). Workforce demographic survey questions on race, disability, age, gender, and LGBTQ+ identity are courtesy of SMU DataArts. Learn more at [smu.edu/dataarts](http://smu.edu/dataarts). The full survey used in the study is available in the report appendices.

The survey, also available as an appendix to this report, had three primary sections:

1. Eligibility questions to determine the respondent's self-identification as an immigrant dance artist or dance worker based in the New York City metropolitan area;
2. Questions about workforce activity as well as the needs and opportunities that were adapted from questions shaped by the CreateNYC cultural planning team used in Dance/NYC's previous research, *Advancing Fiscally Sponsored Artists & Arts Projects* (2017) ([Dance.NYC/FiscalSponsors2017](http://Dance.NYC/FiscalSponsors2017)); and
3. Demographic questions on race, disability, age, gender identity, and LGBTQ+ identity provided courtesy of SMU DataArts.

The survey tool derives value by capturing data from an individual rather than an organizational level and by collecting data on multiple workforce and identity categories. To ensure that participants were not excluded by the answer choices, the survey offered respondents a broad range of options for self-identification, as well as the opportunity to write in an answer not already listed. Demographic findings for the studied immigrant dance workforce are compared to New York City's population, using United States Census Bureau American Fact Finder 2013–2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate as well as data publicly available by City agencies.

Pretesting was conducted to assure the understanding of the survey. Six respondents pretested the survey: two in the English version, two in the Spanish version, and two in the Chinese version. To pretest the survey, respondents were asked to answer the survey and provide feedback on the clarity of survey language and usability and the accessibility of the survey platform. The research team did not find the need to revise any questions.

As revealed in previous Dance/NYC research, many immigrant dance artists and dance workers are active outside nonprofit settings that are off the radar of most data collectors. Thus, the use of a combination of non-probability purposive and snowball sampling methods was deemed appropriate. The purposive sampling method allows researchers to rely on their own judgment when choosing members of a specific population to participate in a study. Snowball sampling allows existing study participants to recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances.

The survey was available online and in print and sent to all Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Conference participants, with local partners based in each New York City borough, and through a network of Dance/NYC constituents and partnering organizations from October 11, 2018 to November 30, 2018. The research team asked respondents to share the tool with other immigrant dance artists and dance workers in their networks.

235 survey responses were collected, with a completion rate of 65.5% (154 fully completed surveys). Ninety-four (94) surveys complied with eligibility requirements.

## Survey Limitations

This research presented challenges, including recruitment strategies, history of distrust for research in many minority populations,<sup>3</sup> technology, and linguistics. The research team addressed all these limitations.

The first limitation comprises the sampling methods chosen to gather survey participants. Nonprobability purposive and snowball sampling methods can create bias and make it difficult to determine how the study results apply to larger populations. Thus, the survey findings cannot be interpreted as representative of the underlying population. However, research shows that snowball sampling is a recruitment strategy that is particularly effective in reaching hard-to-reach, vulnerable population groups.<sup>4</sup> Due to difficulties accessing participants for this study, the recruitment strategies used were considered the most appropriate ones.

The current rhetoric of criminalization of immigration in the United States can be the cause of a second limitation: a distrust or unwillingness to participate as respondents in a study about immigrants. The research team addressed this limitation by explaining the purpose of the research to the respondents, working with borough-based community leaders, and by assuring confidentiality and anonymity.

The survey was mainly distributed electronically. This could have limited the access to those participants who are not technologically savvy, do not have access to technology, or have concerns of privacy and confidentiality. The research team addressed this challenge by offering participants the option of a paper copy at the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Conference and local convening identified by local partners supporting in survey distribution.

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3 Rothstein, M. Ethical Research and Minorities. *Am J Public Health*. 2013 December; 103(12): 2118. Published online 2013 December.

4 Robins, Sadler G., Lee H, et al. Recruiting hard-to-reach United States population sub-groups via adaptations of snowball sampling strategy. *Nurs Health Sci*. 2010 September 1; 12(3): 369-374. doi:10.1111/j.1442-2010.00541.x.

Because the most commonly spoken languages by New Yorkers are English, Spanish, and Mandarin,<sup>5</sup> the survey was distributed in English, Spanish, and Chinese in order to provide multilanguage options. This limitation was not addressed for those participants that required other language options.

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<sup>5</sup> New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. *State of Our Immigrant City, Annual Report*. March 2018. [www1.nyc.gov/assets/immigrants/downloads/pdf/moia\\_annual\\_report\\_2018\\_final.pdf](http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/immigrants/downloads/pdf/moia_annual_report_2018_final.pdf)

# KEY FINDINGS:

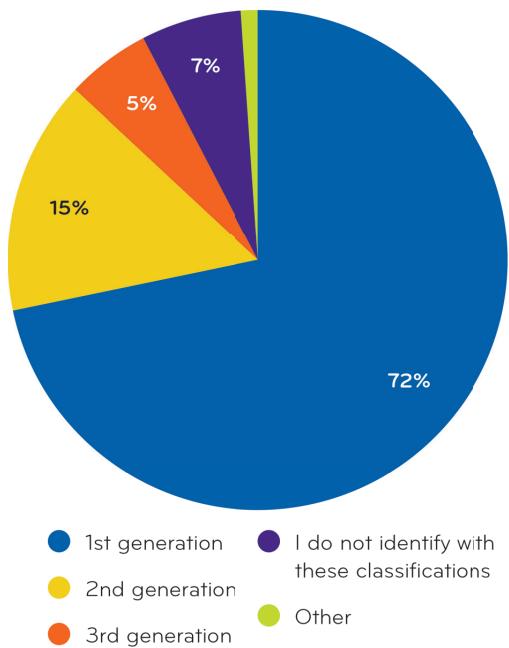
## CHARACTERISTICS OF IMMIGRANT DANCE ARTISTS & DANCE WORKERS

The findings from this section are based on responses to Dance/NYC's survey to immigrant dance artists and dance workers.

### Immigrant Identities of the Dance Workforce

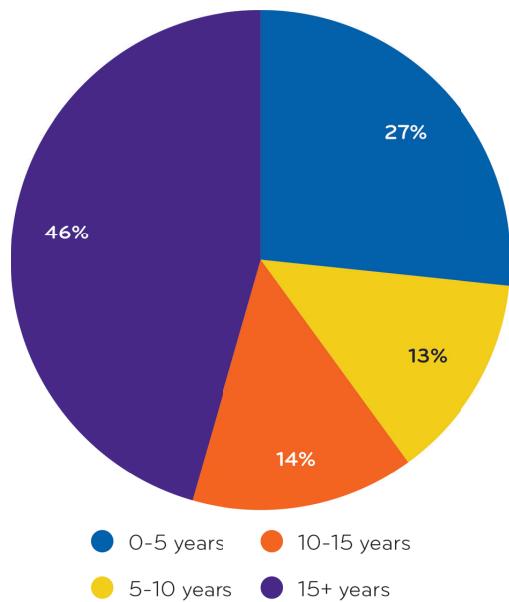
The majority of survey respondents (71%) identified as first-generation immigrants, that is, persons who immigrated to the United States any time after birth. 44% of respondents have been based in the United States for more than 15 years.

**FIGURE 1. IMMIGRANT GENERATION (N= 92)**



Alt text: This pie chart displays the distribution of number of years that a respondent from a sample size of 92 has resided in the NYC metropolitan area : 0-5 years (27%); 5-10 years (13%); 10-15 years (14%); 15+ years (46%).

**FIGURE 2. YEARS RESIDING IN NEW YORK CITY (N=90)**



Alt text: This pie chart displays the distribution of immigrant identities of the dance workforce from a sample size of 90 respondents: first generation (72%); second generation (15%); third generation (5%); I do not identify with these classifications (7%); Other (1%).

## Dance Genres

Among dance genres identified by the immigrant dance workforce studied, 47% of respondents stated primarily stated modern, contemporary, and/or postmodern dance genres as their main practice. The next most popular genres identified were, in this order: folklore and traditional dance forms (14%,) Indian classical dance forms, such as Bharatanatyam and Kathak (9%,) and ballet (5%).

**FIGURE 3. DANCE GENRES (N=92)**

Dance Genre	# of respondents	% of respondents
Modern/ Contemporary/ Postmodern	43	47%
Folklore/Traditional	13	14%
Indian Classical	8	9%
Other	6	7%
Ballet	5	5%
African	3	3%
Salsa	3	3%
Dance Theatre	2	2%
Hip Hop	2	2%
Middle Eastern	2	2%
Improvisational	2	2%
Experimental	1	1%
Flamenco	1	1%
Tango	1	1%

## Country of Origin

Among the 34 countries of origin identified by survey respondents, the United States was the most common (18%). The next most common countries of origin identified were, in this order: Mexico (13%), Taiwan (6%), United Kingdom (6%), and India (5%). This differs from the most common countries of origin found among foreign-born nonprofit and sponsored dance workers studied in Dance/NYC's New York City's *Foreign-Born Dance Workforce Demographics* ([Dance.NYC/ForeignBornWorkforce2018](#)), which were Canada and Japan. For the City's foreign-born population, the Dominican Republic, which is not represented in the immigrant dance workforce studied, and China are most common<sup>6</sup>. This finding invites country-specific strategies to engage the immigrant dance workforce.

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<sup>6</sup> Office of the New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer. *Our Immigrant Population Helps Power NYC Economy*. January 2017. [comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Our-Immigrant-Population-Helps-Power-NYC-Economy.pdf](http://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Our-Immigrant-Population-Helps-Power-NYC-Economy.pdf).

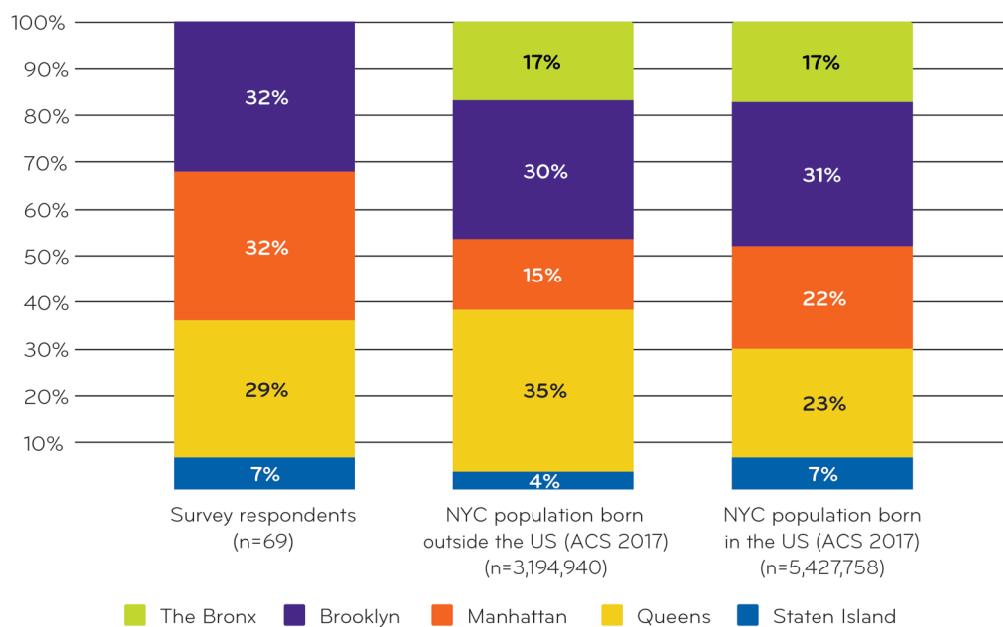
**FIGURE 4. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN (N=81)**

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b># of respondents</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
Argentina	2	2%
Bulgaria	1	1%
Canada	1	1%
China	2	2%
Colombia	2	2%
Costa Rica	1	1%
Côte d'Ivoire	1	1%
Croatia	1	1%
Cuba	1	1%
Curaçao	1	1%
Finland	2	2%
Germany	2	2%
Ghana	1	1%
Greece	1	1%
Haiti	2	2%
India	4	5%
Iran	3	4%
Iraq	1	1%
Italy	1	1%
Jamaica	1	1%
Malta	1	1%
Mexico	11	14%
Netherlands	1	1%
Nigeria	1	1%
Philippines	3	4%
Russia	1	1%
Senegal	1	1%
South Korea	2	2%
Taiwan	5	6%
Trinidad and Tobago	2	2%
United Kingdom	5	6%
United States	15	19%
Uruguay	1	1%
Venezuela	1	1%

## Geographies of the Immigrant Dance Workforce

While 24% of the immigrant dance workforce studied is based in Manhattan, the majority of survey respondents are based outside the borough, with Brooklyn and Queens being home to the largest share (24% and 22% respectively) of immigrant dance workers. The largest gap between the immigrant dance workforce studied and the City's foreign-born population can be found in the Bronx and Staten Island, which could be explained by easier access to data gathering in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens, where the research team had deeper relationships. These findings encourage place-based strategies for advancing immigrant dance artists and workers and invites deeper inquiry into immigrant dance activity in the Bronx and Staten Island.

**FIGURE 5. GEOGRAPHIES OF THE IMMIGRANT DANCE WORKFORCE**

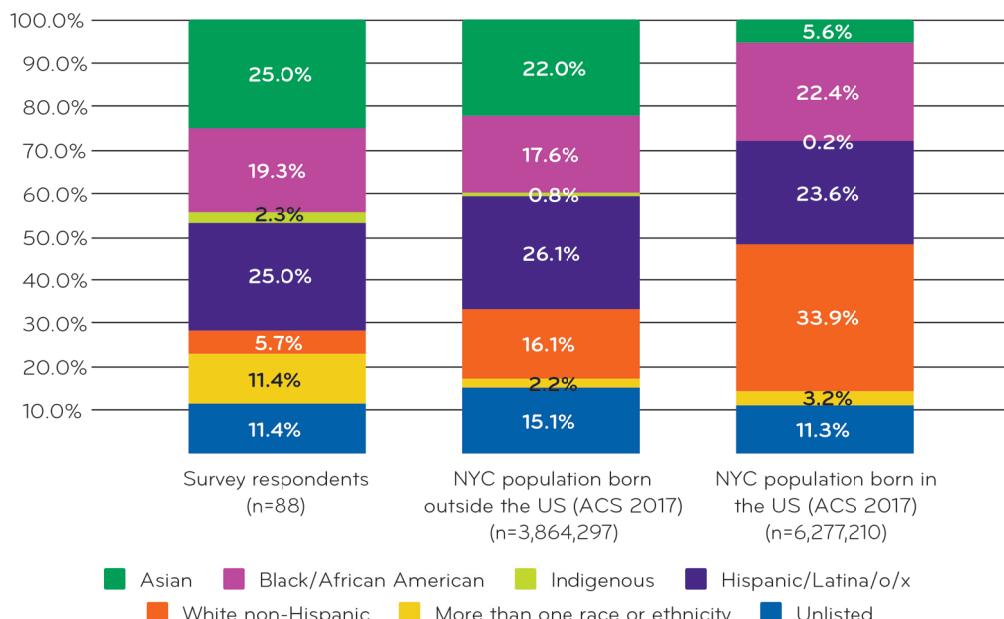


Alt text: The bar chart displays the distribution of the geographies of the immigrant dance workforce: survey respondents from a sample size of 69, the distribution of NYC population born outside of the US from a sample size of 3,194,940 respondents and the distribution of NYC population born in the US from a sample size of 5,427,758 respondents –Bronx (0%), Brooklyn (32%), Manhattan (32%), Queens (29%), Staten Island (7%); NYC population born outside the U.S. (ACS 2017) –Bronx (17%), Brooklyn (30%), Manhattan (15%), Queens (35%), Staten Island (4%); NYC population born in the U.S. (ACS 2017)–Bronx (17%), Brooklyn (31%), Manhattan (22%), Queens (23%), Staten Island (7%)

## Race and Ethnicity: Immigrant Dance Workforce Is More Diverse Than the Wider Field

The immigrant dance workforce studied is significantly more ethnically and racially diverse than the wider field, with only 6% of survey respondents identifying as white non-Hispanic. Compared to foreign-born workforce studied in New York City's *Foreign-Born Dance Workforce Demographics* ([Dance.NYC/ForeignBornWorkforce2018](#)), where 41% of nonprofit respondents and 54% of sponsored respondents identified as white-Hispanic, and New York City's foreign-born population, which is approximately 16% white non-Hispanic, survey findings suggest that the immigrant dance workforce studied engages significantly more African, Latina/o/x, Asian, Arab, and Native American (ALAANA) populations. In fact, the immigrant dance workforce studied is just as or more diverse than the City's foreign-born population in every ethnic and racial category, encouraging the application of intersectional<sup>7</sup> and racially explicit frameworks to programs for and by immigrant dance artists.

**FIGURE 6. RACE & ETHNICITY**



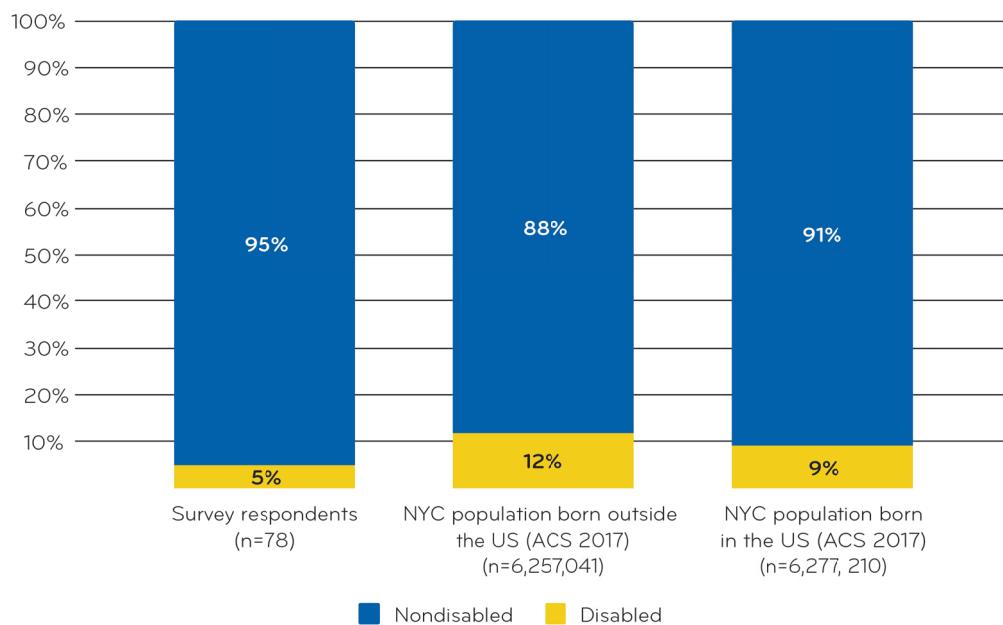
Alt text: The bar chart displays the distribution of race and ethnicity: survey respondents from a sample size of 88, the distribution of NYC population born outside the US from a sample size of 3,864,297 respondents and the distribution of NYC population born in the US from a sample size of 6,277,210 respondents –Asian (25.0%), Black/African American (19.3%), Hispanic/Latina/o/x (25.0%), Indigenous (2.3%); White non-Hispanic (5.7%), More than one race or ethnicity (11.4%), Unlisted (11.4%); NYC population born outside the U.S. (ACS 2017) –Asian (22.0%), Black/African American (17.6%), Hispanic/ Latina/o/x (26.1%), Indigenous (0.8%), White non-Hispanic (16.1%), More than one race or ethnicity (2.2%), Unlisted (15.1%); NYC population born in the U.S. (ACS 2017) –Asian (5.6%), Black/African American (22.4%), Hispanic/Latina/o/x (23.6%), Indigenous (0.2%), White non-Hispanic (33.9%), More than one race or ethnicity (3.2%), Unlisted (11.3%).

<sup>7</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberle "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: [chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8](http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8)

## Disability: Fewer Immigrant Dance Workers Identify as Disabled

The survey data suggest gaps in the engagement and employment of disabled immigrant New Yorkers in dance. 5% of respondents identified as disabled, which is similar to findings in Dance/NYC's New York City's *Foreign-Born Dance Workforce Demographics (2018)* ([Dance.NYC/ForeignBornWorkforce2018](#)), which found 5% of nonprofit and 6% of sponsored respondents identified as disabled, but out of step with the City's foreign-born population (11% disabled). This discovery is not an unexpected one. A large 2011 study about disability among recent U.S. immigrants concluded that immigrants from all regions of the world were less likely to report disabilities,<sup>8</sup> encouraging the application of intersectional frameworks for engaging disabled immigrants in dance.

**FIGURE 7. DISABILITY**



Alt text: The bar chart displays the distribution of disability: survey respondents from a sample size of 78, the distribution of NYC population born outside the us from a sample size of 6,257,041 respondents and the distribution of NYC population born in the US from a sample size of 6,277,210 respondents –disabled (5%), nondisabled (95%); NYC population born outside the U.S. (ACS 2017) –disabled (12%), nondisabled (88%); NYC population born in the U.S. (ACS 2017) – disabled (9%), nondisabled (91%).

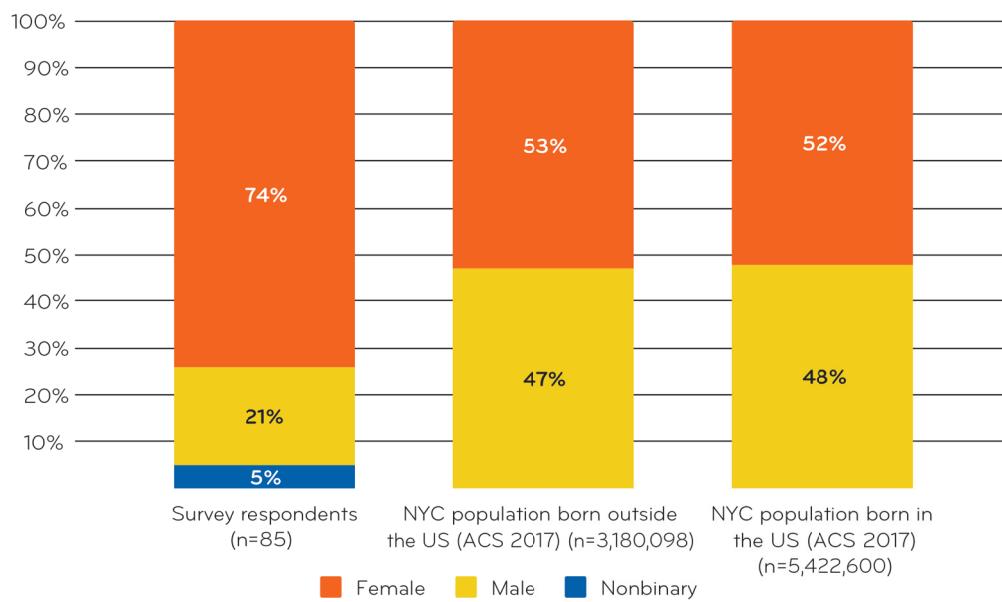
<sup>8</sup> Huang C, Mehta N et al. Region of Birth and Disability Among Recent U.S. Immigrants: Evidence from the 2000 Census. *Popul Res Policy Rev* (2011) 30: 399. [doi.org/10.1007/s11113-010-9194-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11113-010-9194-x)

## Gender Identity: Majority of Immigrant Dance Workforce Identifies as Female

The majority of respondents identified as female<sup>9</sup> (69%), consistent with findings in New York City's *Foreign-Born Dance Workforce Demographics* ([Dance.NYC/ForeignBornWorkforce2018](#)), with 72% of foreign-born nonprofit respondents and 84% of foreign-born sponsored respondents identifying as female. Twenty percent (20%) of participants identified as male and 4% as genderqueer or gender nonconforming.

Language for gender identity is borrowed from recommendations in reports by the UCLA Williams Institute's Gender Identity in U.S. Surveillance Group (commonly called the GenIUSS report) and the Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team (the SMART report). A summary of recommendations may be found here: [lgbtfunders.org/resources/best-practices-for-foundations-on-collecting-data-on-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity](#). Dance/NYC is currently in the process of refining the question and answer choices for gender identity to better implement equitable and inclusive language.

**FIGURE 8. GENDER IDENTITY**



Alt text: The bar chart displays the distribution of gender identity: survey respondents from a sample size of 85, the distribution of NYC population born outside the US from a sample size of 3,180,098 respondents and the distribution of NYC population born in the US from a sample size of 5,422,600 respondents—Female (74%), Male (21%), Nonbinary (5%); NYC population born outside the U.S. (ACS 2017)—Female (53%), Male (47%); NYC population born in the U.S. (ACS 2017)—Female (52%), Male (48%).

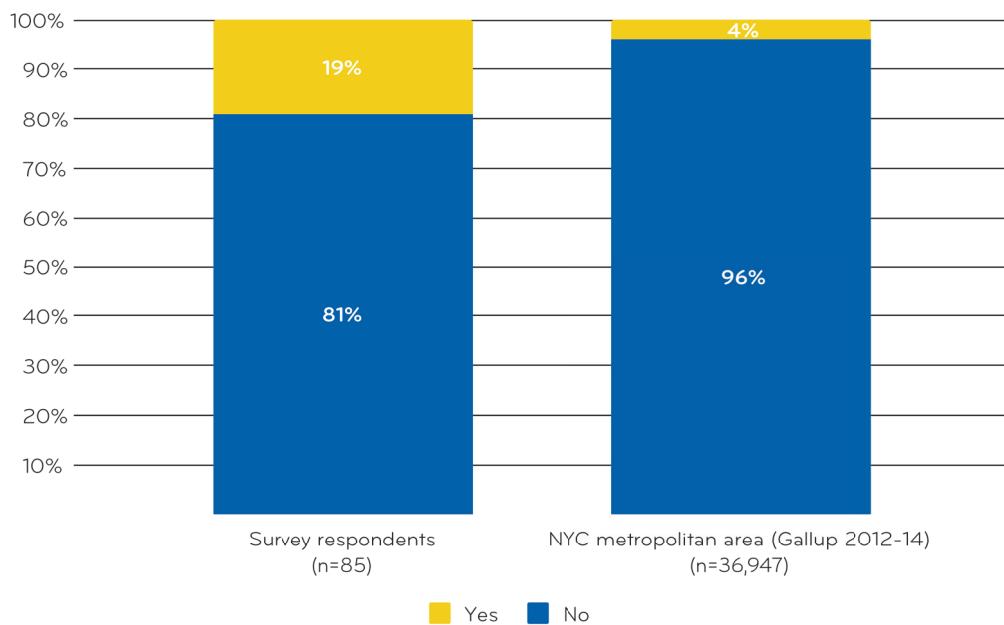
<sup>9</sup> Language used in this report and the research survey for this study align with recommendations by the UCLA Williams Institute's Gender Identity in U.S. Surveillance group (commonly called the GenIUSS report, [williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/census-lgbt-demographics-studies/genius-report-sept-2014](#)) and the Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team (the SMART report, [williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/SMART-FINAL-Nov-2009.pdf](#)). The authors of the GenIUSS report hoped: "These questions are a step towards making transgender and other gender minority people visible and countable in nationwide surveys." Recommendations may be found at [lgbtfunders.org/resources/best-practices-for-foundations-on-collecting-data-on-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity](#). Dance/NYC is currently in the process of refining language for gender and sexual identity to better implement equitable and inclusive language. For research purposes, the survey included a write-in option for respondents to provide an answer that best described their identity.

## LGBTQ+: Workforce Engages Immigrant LGBTQ+ New Yorkers

19% of respondents identified as LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer; the "+" recognizes that there are other identities not encompassed by LGBTQ).<sup>10</sup> This finding is consistent with findings in Dance/NYC's *New York City's Foreign-Born Dance Workforce Demographics* ([Dance.NYC/ForeignBornWorkforce2018](#)) (19% LGBTQ+), but significantly higher than the local population, which, according to a 2015 Gallup research study ([bit.ly/19F1Y29](#)) is 4% LGBTQ+; it does not offer a breakdown for foreign-born LGBTQ+ New Yorkers.

*Language for LGBTQ+ identity is borrowed from recommendations in reports by the UCLA Williams Institute's Gender Identity in U.S. Surveillance group (commonly called the GenUSS report) and the Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team (the SMART report). A summary of recommendations may be found here: [lgbtfunders.org/resources/best-practices-for-foundations-on-collecting-data-on-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity](#). Dance/NYC is currently in the process of refining the question and answer choices for gender identity to better implement equitable and inclusive language.*

**FIGURE 9. IDENTITY AS LGBTQ+**



Alt text: The bar chart displays the distribution of those who identify as LGBTQ+ from a sample size of 85 survey respondents and the distribution of NYC metropolitan area from a sample size of 36,947 respondents—Yes (19%), No (81%); NYC Metro Area (Gallup 2012–2014)—Yes (4%), No (96%).

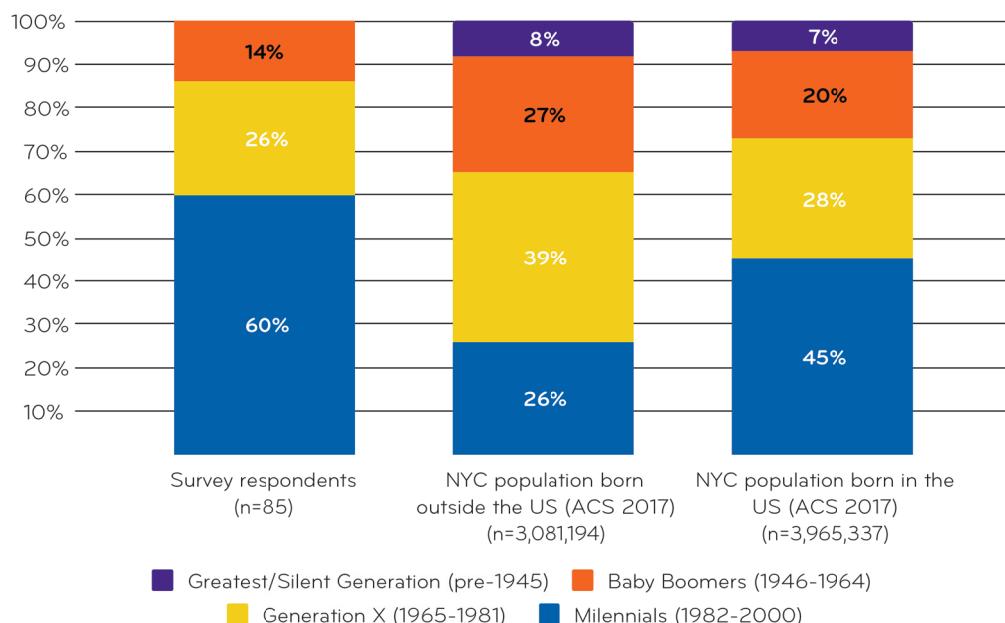
10 Ibid.

## Age: Opportunity to Engage Silent/ Greatest Generation

Four categories were used for the data analysis of the sample in terms of age groups, based on generations' classification by Pew Research Center ([www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org)): Millennials (Post 1980), Generation X (1965–1980), Baby Boomers (1946–1964), and Silent/Greatest Generation (1945 and before).

Consistent with findings from *New York City's Foreign-Born Dance Workforce Demographics* ([Dance.NYC/ForeignBornWorkforce2018](https://Dance.NYC/ForeignBornWorkforce2018)), the immigrant dance workforce studied skews young, with 60% of respondents being Millennials and 26% belonging to Generation X. In terms of generations studied, the biggest gap between respondents and the wider foreign-born population exists for people born before 1945, indicating opportunity for increased engagement of aging populations.

**FIGURE 10. AGE**



Alt text: The bar chart displays the distribution of age: survey respondents from a sample size of 85, the distribution of NYC population born outside the US from a sample size of 3,081,194 respondents and the distribution of NYC population born in the US from a sample size of 3,965,337 respondents—Millennials (1982–2000) (60%), Generation X (1965–1981) (26%), Baby Boomers (1946–1964) (14%), Greatest/Silent Generation (pre-1945) (0%); NYC population born outside the U.S. (ACS 2017)—Millennials (1982–2000) (26%), Generation X (1965–1981) (39%), Baby Boomers (1946–1964) (27%), Greatest/Silent Generation (pre-1945) (8%); NYC population born in the U.S. (ACS 2017)—Millennials (1982–2000) (45%), Generation X (1965–1981) (28%), Baby Boomers (1946–1964) (20%), Greatest/Silent Generation (pre-1945) (7%)

# KEY FINDINGS:

## THE IMMIGRANT ARTIST EXPERIENCE: NEEDS & OPPORTUNITIES

The findings from this section are based on responses to Dance/NYC's survey to immigrant dance artists and dance workers, small group discussions at the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Conference, and conversations with the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Task Force.

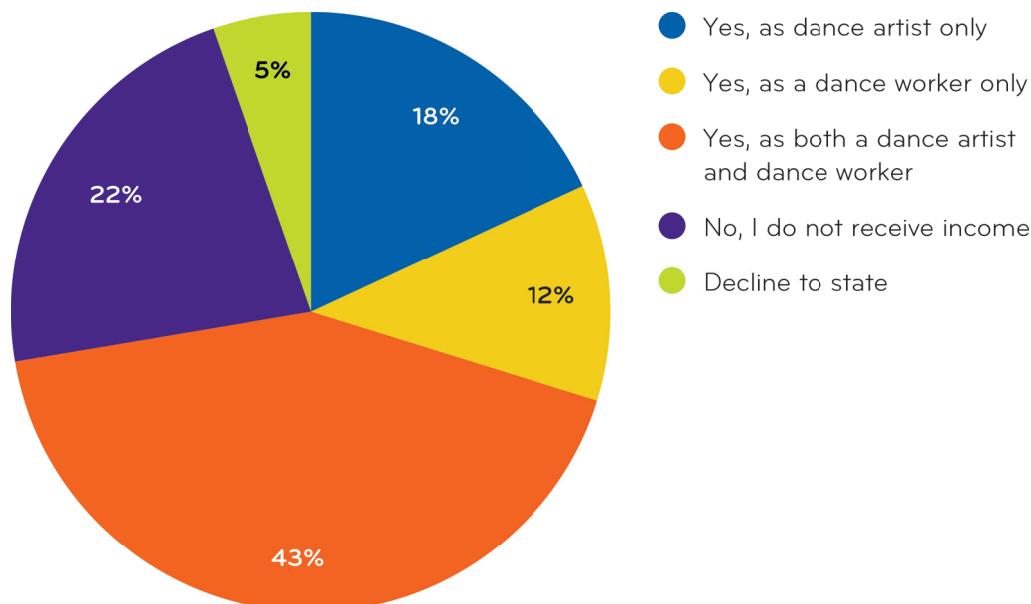
### ACCESS TO RESOURCES

#### **Nearly one-fourth of immigrant dance workers are not paid for their work**

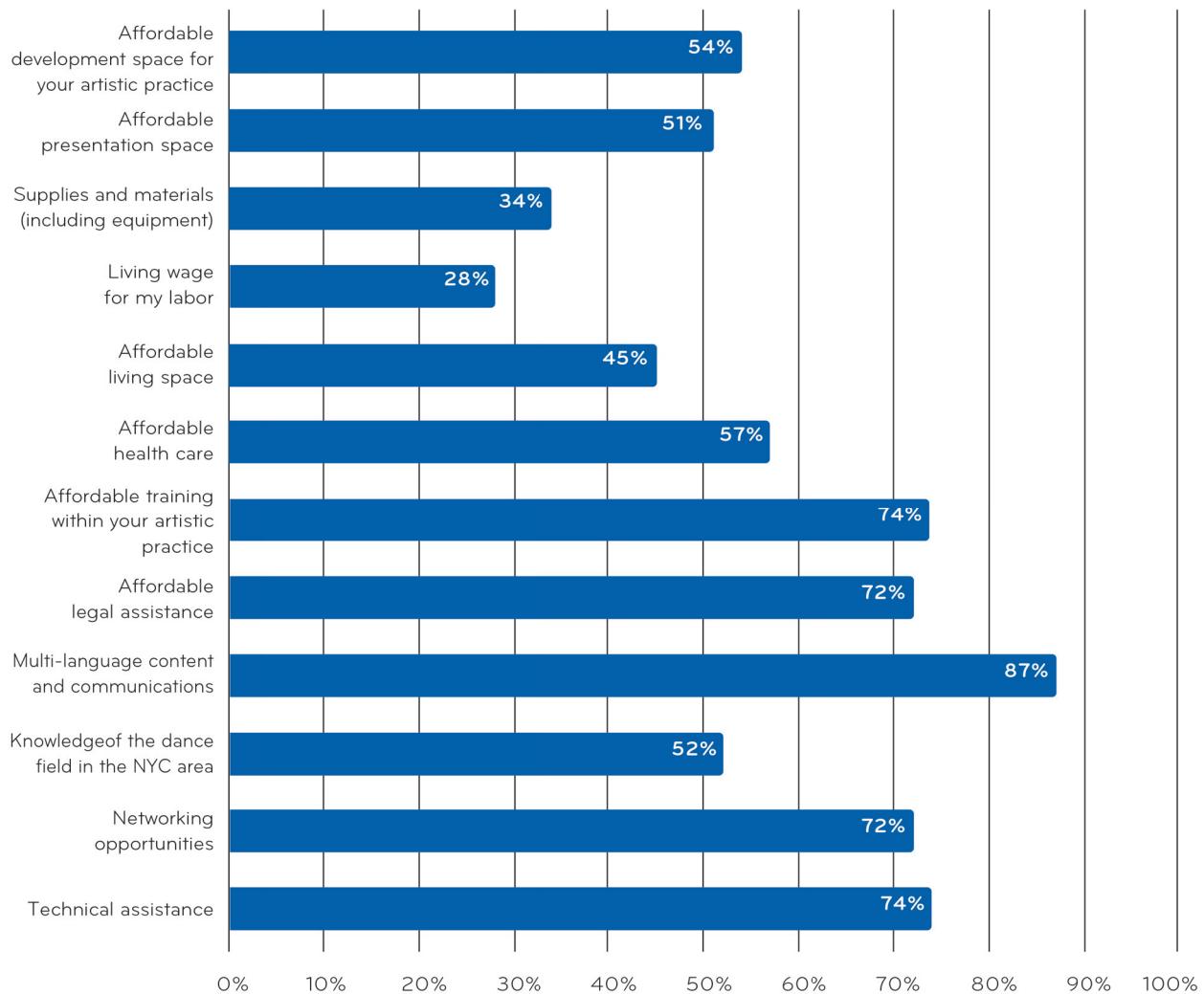
Despite being dance artists or workers, almost one-fourth (22%) of the immigrant dance workforce studied do not receive income for dance-related activities. Of the remainder, only 18% of respondents stated receiving income as dance artists and 12% as dance workers, with 43% stated receiving income as both. Conference attendees noted that a lack of consistent wages for dance activities means that many artists make their livelihoods outside of dance.

Given the lack of adequate wages, it is not surprising that survey responses indicate that affordability is also a major issue for immigrant dance workers. Specifically, survey respondents mentioned affordable presentation space (93%), living wages (92%), and affordable development space for their artistic practice (92%) are the most critical needs for the immigrant dance workforce, followed by affordable health care (85%) and affordable living space (84%). These findings were echoed by conference attendees and the Task Force. Affordable space was mentioned as a key need—not only for performance and rehearsal, but also for immigrant dance artists to work with community members on a consistent basis.

**FIGURE 11. DO YOU RECEIVE INCOME AS A DANCE ARTIST AND/OR DANCE WORKER? (N=94)**



**FIGURE 12. NEEDS OF THE IMMIGRANT DANCE WORKFORCE (N=93)**



Alt text: The bar chart displays the percentage of needs identified by respondents from a sample size of 93: affordable development space for your artistic practice (92%); affordable presentation space (93%); supplies and materials (including equipment) (76%); living wage for my labor (92%); affordable living space (84%); affordable health care (85%); affordable training within your artistic practice (81%); Affordable legal assistance (70%); Multilanguage content and communications (52%); Knowledge of the dance field in the NYC area (54%); Networking opportunities (72%); Technical assistance (75%).

## Immigrant artists have trouble connecting to resources

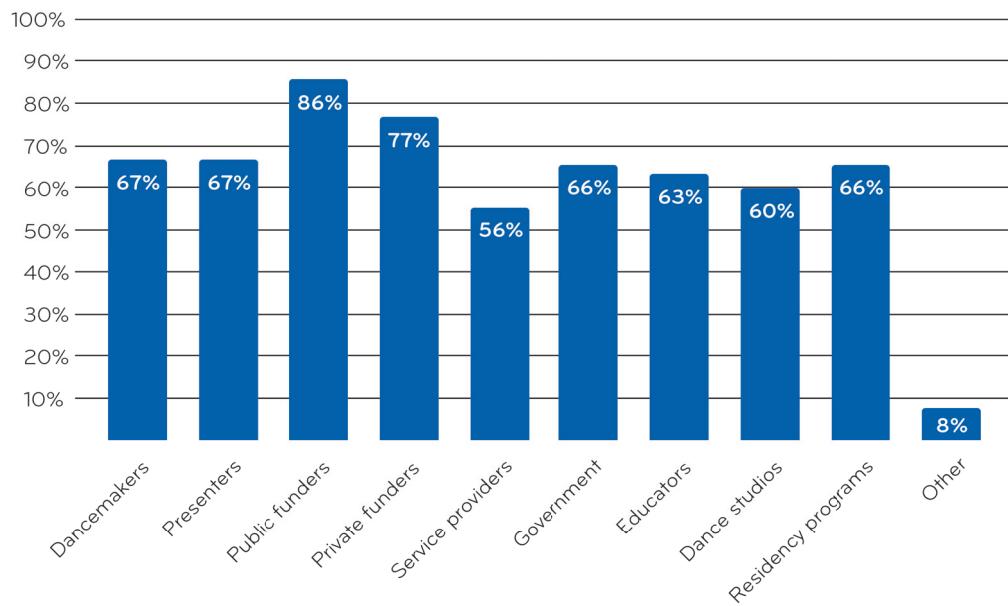
The survey findings reveal needs and opportunities to advance the lives of immigrant dance artists and dance workers given by various stakeholders and a supportive community that provides platforms for social engagement and spaces for cultural exchange. According to respondents, the stakeholders who play the most important roles in advancing immigrant dance artists and workers are public (86%) and private (77%) funders, closely followed by dance makers (67%), presenters (67%), government (66%), residency programs (66%), educators (63%), dance studios (60%), and service providers (56%).

Despite this ecosystem of supports, the survey findings suggest that the immigrant dance workforce has difficulty identifying and accessing resources necessary to meet their needs. Only 11% of the immigrant dance workforce studied stated that they were able to identify all resources to fulfill their needs. 72% of respondents stated that they were able to identify some resources, but not all, and 17% could not identify any. Once identified, 5% of respondents stated that they were able to access all these resources, 72% stated that they were able to access some, and 23% of respondents stated that they were not able to access any.

Conference attendees also stated that gaining awareness of where to seek resources can be challenging for immigrant artists, particularly for those not fluent in English. Issues having to do with gaining documented status, too, are a barrier. Even if citizenship status is not stated as a criterion to access opportunities such as grants, lack of clarity on this issue in and of itself can be a barrier for those worried about disclosing their immigration status.

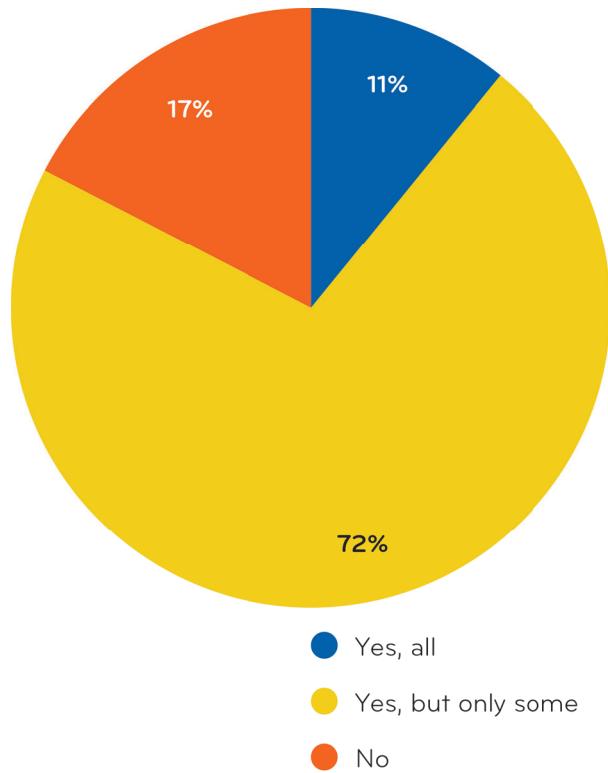
Survey respondents suggested that stakeholders could better support immigrant dance artists by providing fair compensation, legal assistance, work opportunities, education opportunities, and venues' support.

**FIGURE 13. WHICH OF THESE STAKEHOLDERS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN ADVANCING IMMIGRANT DANCE ARTISTS AND/OR WORKERS? (N=90)**



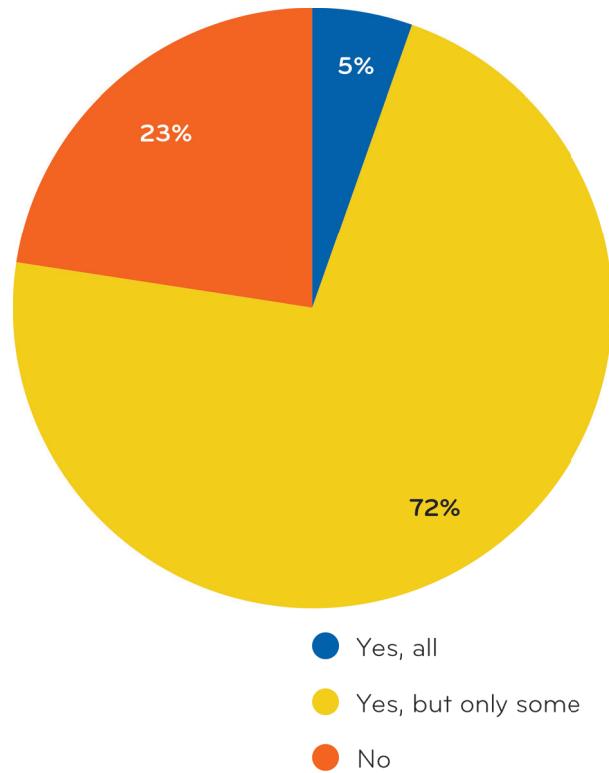
Alt text: The bar chart displays the percentage of stakeholders from a sample size of 90 that play the most important roles in advancing immigrant dance artists and workers: Dancemakers (67%); Presenters (67%); Public funders (86%); Private funders (77%); Service providers (56%); Government (66%); Educators (63%); Dance studios (60%); Residency programs (66%); Other (8%).

**FIGURE 14. ABILITY TO IDENTIFY RESOURCES TO FULFILL NEEDS (N=92)**



Alt text: The pie chart displays the distribution of respondents from a survey size of 92 who were able to identify resources to fulfill: yes, all (11%), yes, but only some (72%), no (17%).

**FIGURE 15. ABILITY TO ACCESS RESOURCES TO FULFILL NEEDS (N=93)**



Alt text: The pie chart displays the distribution of respondents from a sample size of 93 who were able to access resources to fulfill: yes, all (5%), yes, but only some (72%), no (23%).

## Access to education and mentoring is a key need

Access to educational resources is a need and opportunity for immigrant dance artists and dance workers in New York City. Lack of university degrees or access to affordable training, residencies, and workshops could be limiting their opportunities to thrive in a system that they may just be learning how to navigate. Survey responses indicate that education can help advance opportunities for the immigrant dance workforce. Access to higher education degrees and other educational resources such as development workshops, residencies, and talks were some of the examples given by respondents.

Survey respondents also mentioned the importance of mentorships to satisfy needs and opportunities of immigrant dance artists in NYC, mostly those coming from educational institutions. They identified possible opportunities with institutions such as the Pan American Musical Art Research (PAMAR), NYU Institute of Hemispheric Studies, American Indian Community House Volunteer Program, Center for the Advancement of Public Action at Bennington College, The Juilliard School, Haiti Cultural Exchange, Caribbean Cultural Center, Center for Traditional Music and Dance, Scarborough, ACRE, and NYFA Immigrants Artists Mentorship Program.

Conference attendees noted that presenters can also be a key source of technical assistance for immigrant dance artists as they learn how to produce cultural events and connect with audiences.

## New York Foundation for the Arts Immigrant Artist Program

Through the Immigrant Artist Program (IAP), the New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) is building and serving a community of artists with diverse backgrounds who share the experience of immigration.

NYFA's Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program is the only known program of its kind in the United States, and has provided close to 200 NYC-based immigrants with mentorship, community, and exposure for their work since it was founded in 2007. The New York program includes sessions in Visual/Multidisciplinary Art, Performing and Literary Arts, and Social Practice. In 2017, NYFA received a two-year grant from Ford Foundation to support the expansion of the program to Detroit, MI; Newark, NJ; Oakland, CA; and San Antonio, TX.

The program fosters a community, providing opportunities to connect with other immigrant artists through group meetings, peer learning, and informal gatherings with program alumni. Through access to other artists, arts professionals, and organizations, the program offers immigrant artists the opportunity to focus on their creative practice, gain support and exposure for their work, while upholding their distinct identities. Many of the mentors are immigrant artists themselves who understand the challenges of sustaining one's art practice while navigating different cultural perspectives in the art world.

Learn more at [nyfa.org/Content>Show/Immigrant-Artist-Program-\(IAP\)](http://nyfa.org/Content>Show/Immigrant-Artist-Program-(IAP)).

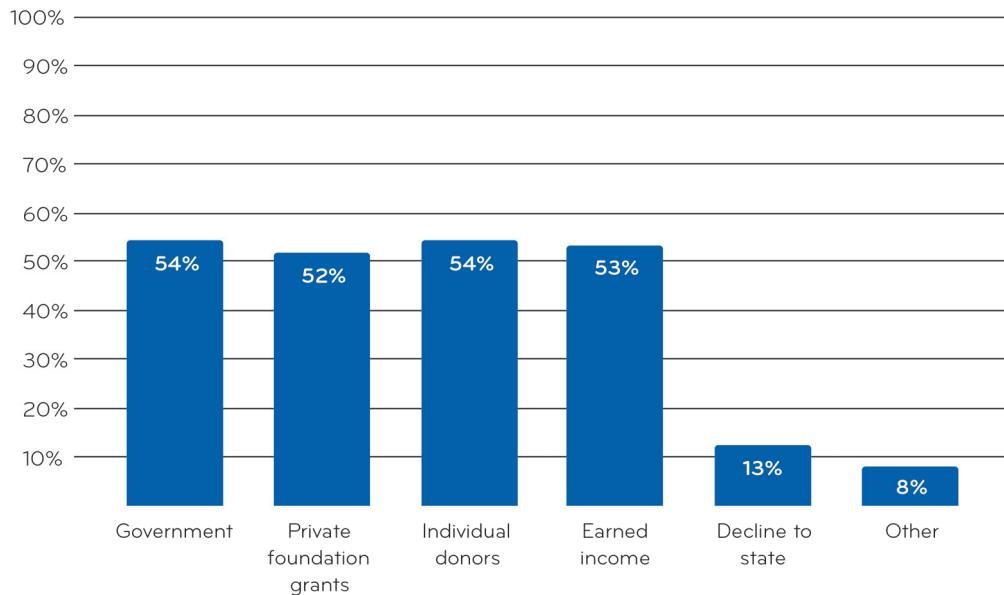
## Access to funding is limited for immigrant dance artists

Funding from public agencies and private philanthropy is a critical source of resources for immigrant dance artists. The survey found that a majority of immigrant dance artists and workers seek funding for their work. More than half of the respondents affirmed that they had applied for funding from government (54%), private foundation grants (52%) and individual donors (54%).

Answers from respondents when asked about funding and/or presenting opportunities for immigrant dance artists were mainly related to programs and initiatives provided by the City (21%) (e.g., [City Council initiatives](#), city organizations), dance organizations (14%) (e.g., Movement Research, [movementresearch.org](#)), Dance/NYC, Gibney, [gibneydance.org](#)), non-profit organizations (9%) (e.g. Culture Push's fellowship, [culturepush.org](#), Association of Latin American Art, [associationlatinamericanart.org](#), NALAC, [nalac.org](#), museums), and festival producers (7%) (e.g., Queensboro Dance Festival, [queensborodancefestival.com](#), DCC New Traditions Festival, [dancecaribbeancollective.org](#)). Other funding opportunities mentioned were those provided by individuals or community members (5%), educational institutions (5%), and corporations (4%).

Despite these opportunities, survey respondents noted that funders could provide more opportunities that were earmarked specifically for immigrants or that supported work exploring immigrant themes. Moreover, conference attendees observed that immigrant dance artists find the process of applying for funding confusing, and suggested that funders streamline the application process to reduce technical challenges and complexity. They were intrigued by the idea of an oral application process, which could reduce barriers for ELLs. Clarity was also prized. Artists want clear funding guidelines, which articulate whether undocumented people are eligible to apply or if citizenship status is required. If funding is declined, they want honest feedback so that they can improve future proposals.

**FIG 16. HAVE YOU/YOUR ORGANIZATION APPLIED FOR FUNDING FROM ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SOURCES? (N=127)**



Alt text: The bar chart displays the percentage of funding sources respondents from a sample size of 127 who applied to: Government (54%); Private foundation grants (52%); Individual donors (54%); Earned income (53%); Decline to state (13%); Other (8%).

## CONNECTING TO AUDIENCES

### Immigrant dance artists can find it challenging to compete in a crowded cultural marketplace

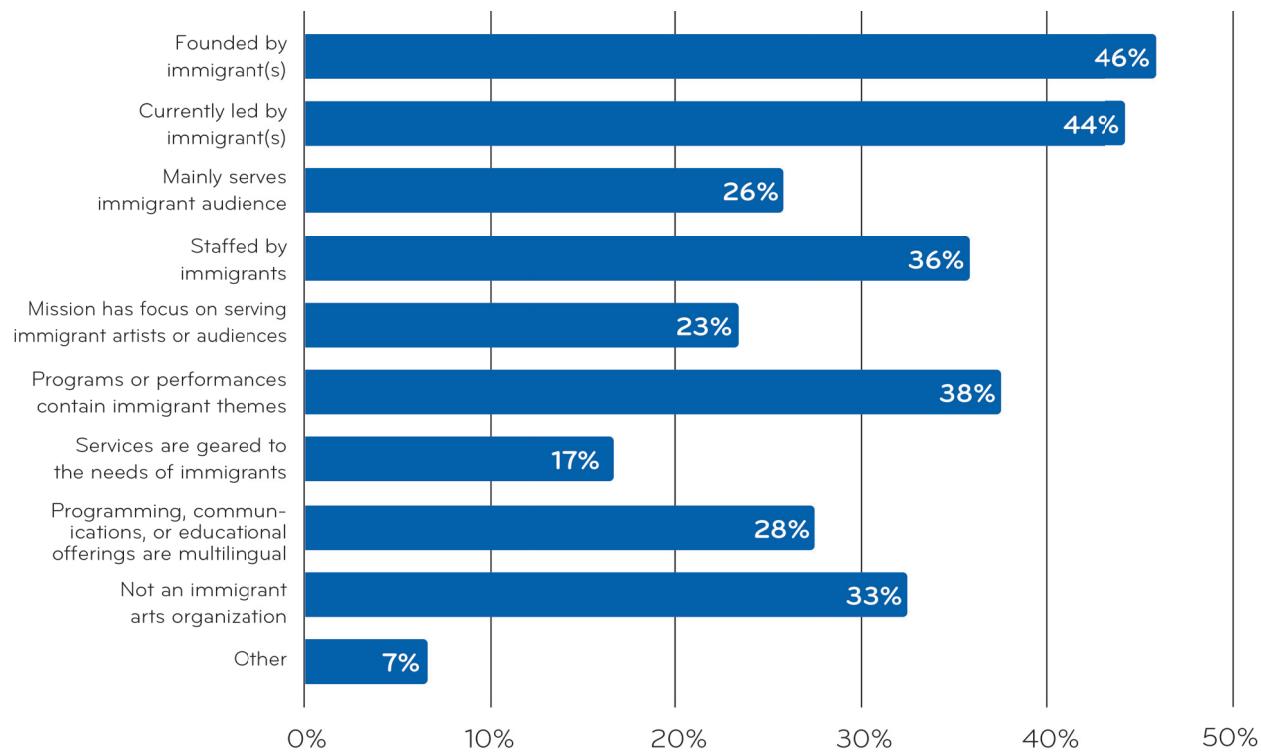
Conference attendees noted that immigrant artists feel under-equipped to compete for attention from audiences and presenters in a crowded and glitzy marketplace. Artists can get stuck in a Catch-22 situation: presenters are reluctant to book artists without a proven following, who find it hard to build an audience because they are not booked into known venues or are only offered times (such as weekday evenings) when their working-class audiences cannot attend. The Task Force observed that presenters can sometimes be more likely to book overseas artists over local immigrant artists, and could instead adapt these models to promote immigrant artists already living in New York.

Conference attendees noted that presenters could better support immigrant dance artists if they offer fair compensation, strive to create an ideal environment for artists to do their best work, and help artists reach a broad audience.

## Some immigrant dance artists are engaging with immigrant audiences

More than half (52%) of respondents stated that they were affiliated with, lead, or work for an immigrant dance or arts organization. Respondents stated that reasons for identifying an organization as an immigrant dance or arts one included if it was founded by an immigrant or immigrants (46%), if it is currently led by an immigrant or immigrants (44%), if its programs or performances contain immigrant themes (38%), if the organization is staffed by immigrants (36%), if its programming, communications, or educational offerings are bilingual or multilingual (28%), if it serves an immigrant audience (26%), if its mission has a focus on serving immigrant dance artists and/or audiences (23%), and/or if its services are geared to the needs of immigrants (17%).

**FIGURE 17. REASONS TO IDENTIFY ORGANIZATION AS AN IMMIGRANT DANCE OR ARTS ORGANIZATION (N=127)**



Alt text: The bar chart displays the percentage of reasons that respondents from a sample size of 127 for identifying as an immigrant organization: Founded by immigrant(s) (46%); Currently led by immigrant(s) (44%); Mainly serves immigrant audience (26%); Staffed by immigrants (36%); Mission has focus on serving immigrants artists or audiences (23%); Programs or performances contain immigrant themes (38%); Services are geared to the needs of immigrants (17%); Programming, communications, or educational offerings are bilingual or multilingual (28%); Not an immigrant arts organization (33%); Other (7%).

Conference attendees noted that to better support immigrant artists, funders should allocate support toward smaller companies and emerging artists.

Artists from grassroots companies are frustrated when they observe large organizations with an absent track record of serving immigrants artists and audiences whose capacity allow them to have dedicated development departments receiving funds to serve immigrants. It was noted that immigrant dance artists often need to wear multiple hats—teaching, making work, presenting work—and that funding sources should recognize all roles.

## **Immigrant dance artists may achieve more financial success if presenters support the participation of immigrant audiences**

Conference attendees questioned whether presenters can support immigrant artists given their business model, which is highly dependent on ticket sales. Could immigrant artists' work be subject to a different set of economics, such as cross-subsidy from commercial presentation or philanthropic support? Other attendees noted, however, that they do have a following but that presenters do not always offer an audience experience welcoming for immigrant audiences. Conference attendees noted that presenters have the responsibility to create a safe space for immigrant audiences, regardless of their immigration status, and that creating sanctuary spaces should be considered by more venues.

## **Immigrant audiences need to feel welcome**

Conference attendees noted that it can be bewildering to be an audience member in New York. The overwhelming nature of finding interesting offerings is compounded when there are language barriers at play. Price too is a factor, although IDNYC helps to reduce financial barriers. Immigrant audiences can feel more welcome at dance performances if they are presented at trusted locations and in an approachable context, such as a block party. Immigrants need to feel safe from discrimination and intimidation to enjoy art, and even small gestures such as printing program notes in their native language first with English second can be significant. Artists can support immigrant audiences by including riders in their contracts that stipulate culturally competent marketing and front-of-house practices.

## Art Space Sanctuary

Art Space Sanctuary calls on cultural and arts institutions, from libraries to theaters to museums to galleries and more, to join other groups in declaring sanctuary—an important strategy with symbolic, moral, and practical efficacy. The goal of the sanctuary movement is to create safe spaces, spaces that declare their refusal to condone and abet actions and laws that violate justice and conscience. Sanctuary provides a broad umbrella for an intersectional coalition of people to stand together, build networks and create spaces of convergence.

Art and cultural spaces and institutions that want to declare sanctuary should at minimum agree to:

- Provide a safe space where people won't be mistreated because of their race, gender, ethnicity, disability, immigration status, gender, sexual orientation, religious faith, disability, political or scientific views. Everyone is entitled to art and culture without fear.
- Make a public statement regarding their commitment to protect information on immigration status of all members, staff, artists, and visitors.
- Agree to not allow federal immigration authorities to search the premises without court-issued warrants specific to those premises. This is legal and in line with the declarations of many sanctuary campuses and sanctuary cities. Due process is an important aspect of the judiciary that needs to be upheld.
- Disseminate information and provide programming and resources helpful to undocumented and other vulnerable populations.

In addition to these, each space can opt to adopt further policies such as:

- Offer temporary or long-term refuge in case of hate crimes, raids, deportation threats, and so on.
- Petition state and federal officials to support legislation and policy that protect the civil liberties and the right of noncitizens to remain living in the United States, such as the BRIDGE Act.
- Petition local and state officials to end policies, such as broken windows policing, that lead to the racialized and class-based criminalization of certain populations, and to their incarceration and deportation.

Learn more about declaring sanctuary, including information on signage, training, and programming, at [artspacesanctuary.org](http://artspacesanctuary.org).

## IDNYC

IDNYC, New York City's municipal identification program, has become a tool that every New Yorker can use to open up access to the City—from City services to free and reduced cost access to cultural institutions. Having an IDNYC card can help all New Yorkers—including immigrant, young adult, homeless, and transgender New Yorkers—provide proof of ID or residence across all city agencies, including with the NYPD. On December 2nd, 2019, the IDNYC program will launch an online renewal portal for New Yorkers who enrolled in the program in 2015. The new online renewal portal for current IDNYC cardholders will make the process more streamlined and efficient. Most card changes will be able to be updated through the online portal, including change of address and adding a gender designation.

IDNYC's innovations have helped cities across the country and around the world develop their own municipal identification programs. IDNYC has a wide array of benefit partners. All City residents ages 10 and above are eligible to get a municipal ID card, and enrollment is free. All first-time IDNYC applicants must have documentation that proves their identity and residency in New York City. The City will protect the confidentiality of all IDNYC card applications and never asks applicants about their immigration status. For more information on eligibility criteria, benefits, enrollment centers across the five boroughs, and the online renewal portal, visit [NYC.gov/IDNYC](http://NYC.gov/IDNYC) and MOIA & DSS to Launch IDNYC Online Renewal Platform ([www1.nyc.gov/site/immigrants/about/press-releases/07-23-2019-idnyc-online-renewal.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/immigrants/about/press-releases/07-23-2019-idnyc-online-renewal.page))

IDNYC is a card for all New Yorkers, from all backgrounds, and from all five boroughs.

## Immigrant audiences can be offered more agency

Conference attendees also talked about immigrant audiences being offered more agency in the decision-making process. Conference attendees talked about presenters that are experimenting with Community Arts Councils, "centering community in decision-making around curatorial decisions that have classically been made at a distance." While this work has been promising, community decision-making is a time-consuming process, and funding should reflect that fact. Finally, it is critical to understand that immigrant groups can have existing systems of communal decision making in place, which can be damaged if an external entity attempts to institute a new process should be not be supplanted. Engaging with communities must be conducted with humility and willingness to learn community culture and practice.

## How can art go beyond audience development and toward community development?

Conference attendees and the Task Force posed a question to the dance field: Can audience development goals reach beyond a ticket transaction? They noted that the premise of audience development is a self-serving goal for artists and presenters and challenged the dance field to strive instead for *community* development. A grounding in community development would shift the responsibility of artists and presenters to serve the audience rather than audiences serving as consumers. One artist talked about putting resources associated with performance back into the community by hiring local residents to supply labor and catering. More artists trained to work with local communities are needed.

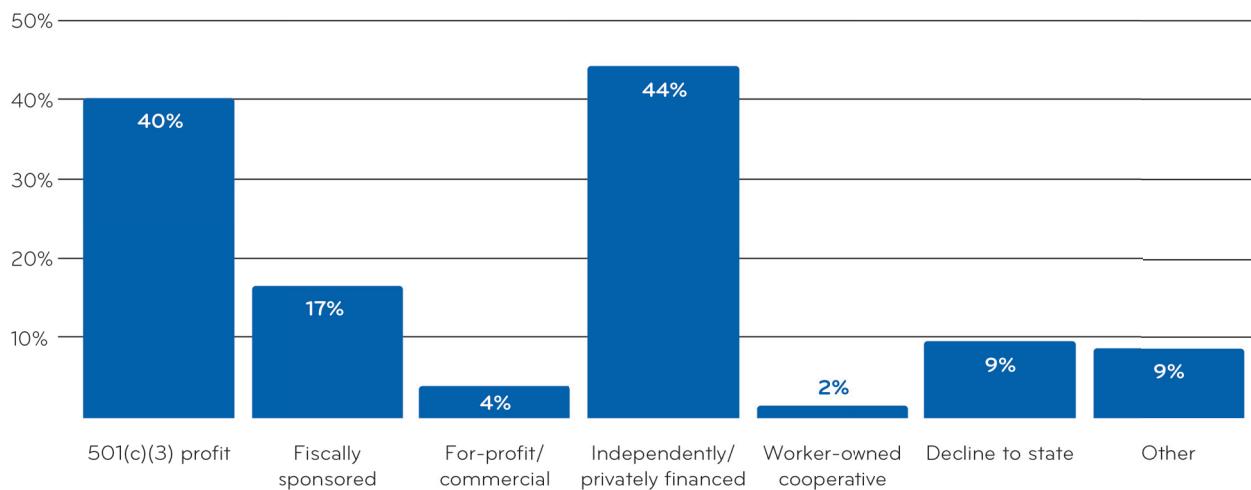
# NEW MODELS FOR COMMUNITY, COLLABORATION & SUSTAINABILITY

## Immigrant dance artists are working outside traditional dance paradigms

The immigrant dance workforce studied reported working in ways outside of traditional dance paradigms, in terms of financial structure, discipline, and role.

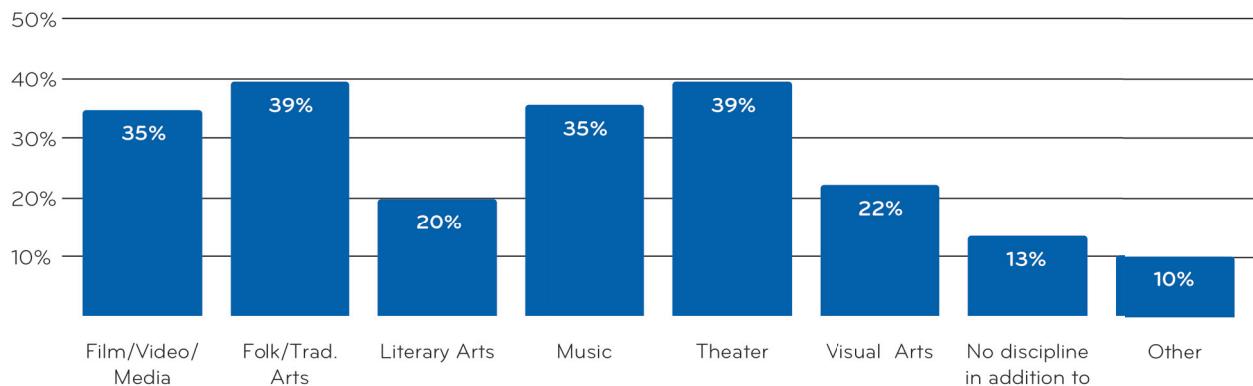
The immigrant dance workforce primarily works under the following financial structures: 44% as an independently/privately financed artist or group, 40% as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and 17% as a fiscally sponsored artist or group. In other words, a plurality of respondents operate fully outside of the nonprofit ecosystem.

**FIGURE 18. FINANCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE IMMIGRANT DANCE WORKFORCE (N=127)**



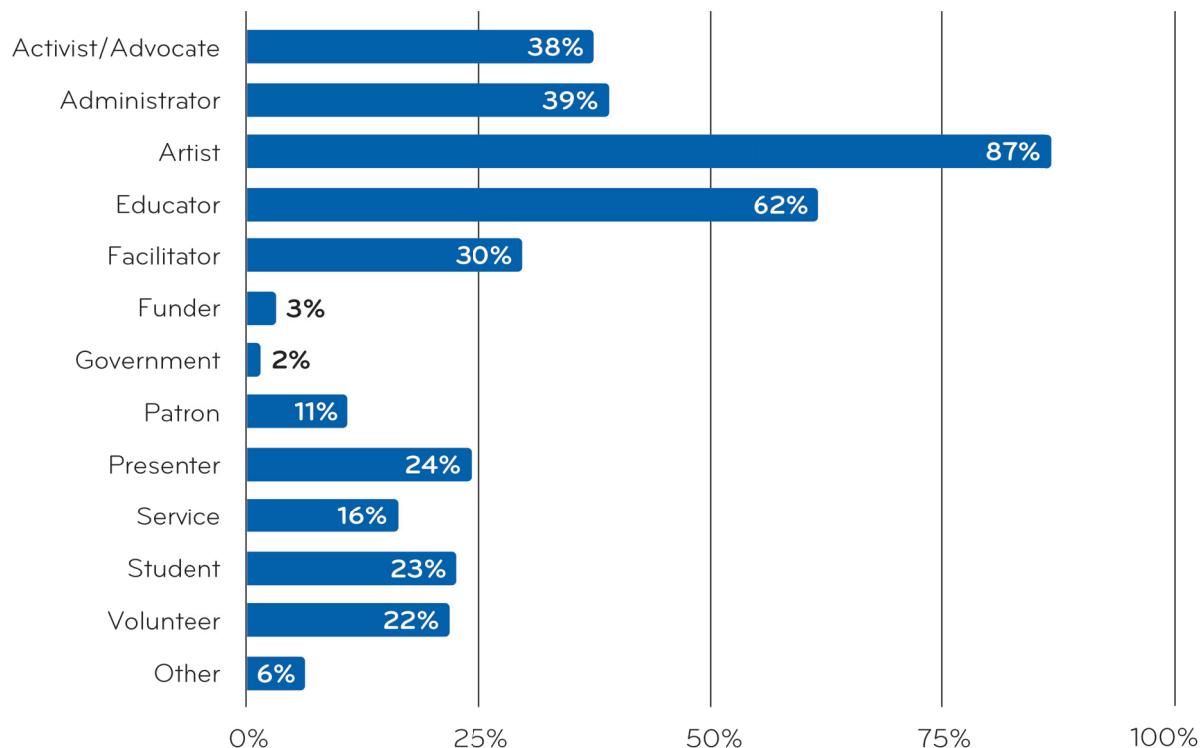
Alt text: The bar chart displays the percentage of financial structures that respondents work under: 501(c)(3) profit (40%); Fiscally sponsored (17%); For-profit/commercial (4%); Independently/privately financed (44%); Worker-owned cooperative (2%); Decline to state(9%); Other (9%).

This survey speaks to the intentionality behind adding "arts" to our report title. A significant 88% of survey respondents indicated working on other discipline/s in addition to dance (1.89 other disciplines on average). Respondents noted working in theater (39%), folk/traditional arts (39%), film/video/media (35%), music (35%), literary arts (20%), and visual arts (22%).

**FIGURE 19: ARTISTIC DISCIPLINE IN ADDITION TO DANCE (N=128)**

Alt text: The bar chart displays the percentage of artistic disciplines that respondents from a sample size of 120 who work on in addition to dance: Film/Video/Media (35%); Folk/Traditional Arts (39%); Literary Arts (20%); Music (35%); Theater (39%); Visual Arts (22%); No discipline in addition to dance (13%); Other (10%).

A significant 87% of respondents indicated working in multiple roles in the dance workforce, 3.5 roles on average. Among survey respondents, the most popular roles indicated were artists (87%) and as educators (62%), followed by, in this order: activists/advocates, administrators, facilitators, presenters, students, volunteers, service organizations, patrons, funders, and government officials.

**FIGURE 20. ROLE IN DANCE FIELD OF IMMIGRANT DANCE WORKFORCE (N=128)**

Alt text: The bar chart displays the percentage of roles in dance that respondents from a sample size of 128 work in: Activist/Advocate (48%); Administrator (39%); Artist (87%); Educator (62%); Facilitator (30%); Funder (3%); Government Official (2%); Patron (11%); Presenter (24%); Service Organization (16%); Student (23%); Volunteer (22%); Other (6%).

## Immigrant dance artists want new, collaborative models outside the nonprofit sphere

Conference attendees noted that the dance company nonprofit business model, where a company cross-subsidizes its artistry through a school, is slowly sinking and that new models for sustainability are needed.

Conference attendees yearned for a way to collaborate toward an improved situation for all immigrant dance artists. Artists talked about self-advocacy and creative problem-solving, seeking access to resources outside of the traditional funding world. They wondered how they could share resources and work collectively as opposed to competing against each other. As the conference progressed, a dream emerged in some discussions about a shared venue that would present diverse voices, support immigrant dance artists' audience development needs, and allow for sharing of resources. Survey respondents echoed this desire, and suggested that stakeholders could support immigrant dance artists by providing social media platforms to build networking opportunities and help strengthen the immigrant artists' community.

The Task Force noted that affiliation with Eurocentric institutions can be the key to validation—o other artists, presenters, funders, audiences, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (in their review of O-1 visa applications). They recommended that the sector deconstruct this system, which limits the ability to imagine new paradigms that meaningfully integrate and support immigrant artists.

## THE ROLE OF RACE, BIAS & INTERSECTIONALITY

### Disparities are present among immigrant dance artists

Conference attendees highlighted that being an immigrant does not affect all immigrant dance artists equally—as people or as artists. Disparities are demonstrated in the motivation for a person to come to New York in the first place. For some, the choice is rooted in necessity—economic, political, or personal. For this group, immigration can result in the pain of displacement, and dance can serve to heal by maintaining a connection to home and identity. For others, the choice is made from the desire to live in an international hub for dance, and affirms their core identity as a dance artist.

For those for whom immigration was not an affirmative act, the intersection of multiple marginalizing factors are often at play, such as race, gender, and class. "Intersectionality" is a concept first described by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 as a theory that (to paraphrase the definition stated by Crenshaw's Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies)

recognizes that people have multiple identities and that unique experience are produced when various forms of discrimination intersect with converging identities. Intersectionality is a factor that contributes to a spectrum of disparities of immigrant experience. Immigrant artists who are people of color are not seamlessly accepted into the dominant white culture. Immigrant artists who must work to support family members cannot focus on their artistry. They also cannot afford to attend workshops or residencies, or pay for spaces to create and perform, as noted by survey respondents.

Immigration status is another key differentiator among immigrant artists, and the expense associated with the process to gain documented status can serve to reinforce economic disparities between documented and undocumented immigrants. Conference attendees noted that seeking documented immigration status is an expensive endeavor, particularly for artists who are not sponsored by an institution or person and for those who work outside of culturally specific dance forms.

Establishing a case for an O-1 visa is particularly challenging for artists working in contemporary forms. It is also challenging for artists to build their O-1 visa portfolio when their work is validated in foreign-language media and/or sources unknown in the United States.

## **Immigrant dance artists' work can be subject to misinterpretation stemming from white normative bias**

Immigrant dance artists' work can be exoticized and marginalized if presented in opposition to white normative culture, implicitly or explicitly. Conference attendees noted that presenters can create a supportive interpretive context for artists' work that reduces stereotypes and, by extension, supports the movement for immigrant rights. Presenters are the tastemakers: They can challenge assumed norms that exoticize immigrant dance artists. They can learn how to facilitate illuminating pre- or postperformance talks and train artists to participate.

Conference attendees pointed out two potential internal issues that presenters may need to address. First, lack of staff who have lived experience comparable to immigrant artists and audiences is a barrier. Critical mass is important: just one immigrant on staff is not enough to drive change. Second, presenters were challenged to examine their boards to discover if the work of their corporations violates the rights of immigrants. Attendees also noted that funders could improve the cultural competence of their application and review processes if their staffs included more representatives from immigrant communities.

Survey respondents suggested that dance stakeholders support immigrant dance artists by addressing xenophobia, advocating for immigrant rights, rejecting regulations that exclude immigrants, and spreading and appreciating the knowledge that immigrants bring. Moreover, they also supported stakeholders moving to promote an inclusive and diverse dance community.

## ARTS SUPPORTING COMMUNITY WELL-BEING & CULTURAL SELF-DETERMINATION

### Artists are discovering their role in the immigrant rights movement

Conference attendees talked about how artists are healers. Artistry can help people process divisive and corrosive events by retelling the stories from their point of view. For immigrants specifically, the experience of displacement can lead to trauma. The work of immigrant dance artists can help immigrant audiences connect with their identities and restore pride in their communities.

At a societal level, artistry can fuel movements for change. The words of Jeff Chang (cofounder of Founder of Culture Strike and current Vice President of Narrative, Arts, and Culture at Race Forward) were invoked several times during the conference: "There cannot be policy change without culture leading that change. In fact culture has to change first." For conference attendees, the presentations and discussions of the day were energizing. For some, the conference was a catalyzing force that encouraged artists to get engaged or more deeply engaged in the ongoing movement for immigrant rights.

### Immigrant artists want recognition as artists and valued contributors to society

Conference attendees noted that artists feel a lack of recognition across several dimensions. In a large sense, artists in general are undervalued by society, despite the contributions that they make as healers and innovators. This bias against artists can stem from their own communities, which can favor professional careers traditionally associated with high earning potential. Immigrant artists can feel unrecognized as individuals when they perceive that they are present at a performance to check a box rather than for their unique artistry. Immigrant artists from underrepresented countries can feel unrecognized when their specific cultures are grouped into larger categories with no attention paid to their unique, complex, and ancient cultures.

# KEY FINDINGS:

## OPPORTUNITIES IN DANCE EDUCATION FOR IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

The findings from this section are based on responses to Dance/NYC's survey to immigrant dance artists and dance workers, small group discussions at the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Conference, and conversations with the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Task Force.

### **Benefits of Dance Education for Immigrant Students**

Conference attendees affirmed that dance teaches many lessons that support learning, such as empathy, tenacity, communication, and inquiry. Dance education can be an incentive for students to do well in their academic classes. By giving immigrant students access to dance education, the DOE supports their core mission to educate young people.

Moreover, conference attendees also noted that dance benefits students beyond the classroom and can help young people address identity issues. As they attempt to fit into a new culture in New York, immigrant students may lose connection with their heritage or even begin to internalize norms that prize American culture over others. Exposure to their heritage through dance can rebuild connection, value, and pride. For immigrant students who are English language learners, dance can be a welcome time during the school day when English language skills are not required.

## Magnifying the Benefits

At the conference, speakers from the Department of Education noted that the Department employs 450 dance educators and 80% of students are connected to at least one arts organization partner. While human resources are present, spaces for dance in schools is limited. Educators desire more funding for dance studios that communicate respect and value to students.

Even with this array of resources supplied by the DOE, not all students are connected. Survey respondents mentioned the importance of providing students information about educational resources and financial assistance. Survey respondents also mentioned ways to reduce barriers for immigrant students to access dance education outside school, including allowing students to receive services without having to be citizens or having other documented immigration status, offering bilingual or multilingual programs, and providing affordable classes taught by immigrant artists.

Conference attendees affirmed that positive effects of dance instruction can be stronger if students share heritage or language with the teaching artist, who could be seen as a role model or mentor. However, even a teaching artist from a different culture who can empathize with the immigrant experience can be effective. The DOE has no stated mandates or goals regarding the hiring of immigrant or multilingual dance teachers. It is also challenging for dance artists to earn teaching certification. For both these reasons, there is a lower number of immigrant dance educators than needed, particularly those with certification.

Dance/NYC's data on immigrant dance artists in educator roles present a mixed picture. Nearly 60% of respondents to the Immigrant Dance Arts survey indicate that they are educators. At the same time, New York City's *Foreign-Born Dance Workforce Demographics (2018)* ([Dance.NYC/ForeignBornWorkforce2018](https://dancenyc.org/ForeignBornWorkforce2018)) found that only 3% of workers employed by dance education organizations are foreign-born. Taken together, these findings imply that immigrant dance artists are likely to work as freelance teaching artists rather than as staff educators.

A common theme mentioned throughout the conference was that immigrants are not always supportive of dance education for their children. They can be concerned that it will lead to children aspiring to become professional dancers, which they perceive as an undesirable career choice. They can prioritize immediate goals, such as a job or helping with household tasks, as more important. Conference attendees who are teaching artists mentioned that they have been able to change parents' minds by offering connection to social services. All told, conference attendees noted that immigrant dance students are most successful when educators, teaching artists, and parents work together.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The value of this research will be demonstrated by the deeper inquiry and action it generates to catalyze change. The recommended actions offered here—for dance makers and companies, public agencies and institutional funders, and the service sector—are neither comprehensive nor absolute, but harness key opportunities to strengthen dance making by immigrant artists and organizations; build dance education programs for immigrant students, particularly in the public schools; engage immigrant audiences and audiences for immigrant artists, organizations, and programs; grow and nurture the careers of immigrant artists and cultural workers; and showcase dance artistry that illuminates the immigrant experience.

Organized by stakeholder type for presentation purposes only, the recommendations seek to foster collaboration among and across stakeholders and involve immigrant New Yorkers at every level. For all, it is an invitation to join in cultural advocacy that supports and extends the commitments of New York City's Mayoral administration and of countless people and organizations working to make the metropolitan area more just, equitable, and inclusive for every resident, regardless of immigration status, and to advance the role of artistry in fostering immigrant rights.

Finally, while discipline-, community-, and geography-specific in their focus, the recommendations also invite arts- and culture-wide national activity. It is only within a shared framework of responsibility that real change may be achieved.

Dance/NYC invites you to weigh in with your recommendations for how to best turn the data into action and ensure that dance becomes truly inclusive of all of New York City's immigrant artists and communities. Spread the word and share your ideas on Facebook ([facebook.com/DanceNYCorg](https://facebook.com/DanceNYCorg)), Twitter ([twitter.com/DanceNYC](https://twitter.com/DanceNYC)), Instagram (@dance.nyc or [instagram.com/dance.nyc](https://instagram.com/dance.nyc)), or by email at [research@dance.nyc](mailto:research@dance.nyc).

## Considerations for the Dance Field

Proactively support immigrant dance artists and workers by:

- Seizing the opportunity to extend artistry's role in fostering the inclusion, integration, and human rights of immigrants, and driving creativity and social progress;
- Apply intersectional and racially explicit frameworks while ensuring immigrant artists are present at every stage of developing, implementing, and evaluating initiatives impacting their work;
- Pursuing opportunities for peer learning and collaboration between immigrant dance artists, their communities, and programs that facilitate community development through the arts;
- Receiving training and education on immigrant rights matters and implicit bias in partnership with groups or agencies such as the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs; and
- Participating in fieldwide dialogue and collective advocacy necessary to generate field-wide solutions.

Welcome immigrant workers and audiences by:

- Enhancing communications practices by, for example, providing multilingual content and regularly distributing promotional materials in multilingual media; and
- Finding solutions for providing living wages to eliminate economic status as a barrier and allow immigrant artists to thrive, and ensure that employers become adopters of the City and State's commitment to a minimum wage of \$15/hour.

Address need for affordable space by:

- Improving access to nontraditional spaces, such as sacred spaces, community centers, senior centers, libraries, and retail and office space for short- and long-term use;
- Strengthening and expanding dance rehearsal space subsidy programs for immigrant dance artists by adapting programs led by New York State Council on the Arts, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Mertz Gilmore Foundation;
- Ensuring that needs of immigrant dance artists are expressly and equitably considered as part of arts-wide efforts to develop affordable workspace, in particular the implementation of the CreateNYC, the City's cultural plan; and
- Fostering collaboration by connecting developers to immigrant dance workers, to local residents, and to borough arts councils to ensure that dance spaces reflect community interests, with a strong emphasis on geographies where majority of immigrant dance workers are located.

## Considerations for Dance Artists & Companies

Building on considerations for the dance field, create networks and foster community by:

- Pursuing opportunities to create collaborative spaces for creating work and sharing resources among immigrant dance artists. Companies that have implemented this practice include: BAAD! (The Bronx Academy of Music & Dance) with their Sanctuary Series, El Puente Bushwick's region(es) and NYFA's (New York Foundation for The Arts) Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program.
- Extending the role of dance artistry and storytelling to advance healing in immigrant communities and magnify understanding of the immigrant experience; and
- Engage wider dance community to practice immigrant-inclusive practices at venues, such as sanctuary spaces and multilingual signage, by developing and utilizing inclusion riders.

## Considerations for Presenters

Building on considerations for the dance field, transform internal practices by:

- Learning about the cultural context for the artistry of immigrant dance artists and offering culturally competent marketing and experience to immigrant audiences;
- Declaring presenting spaces as sanctuaries. As modeled by Art Space Sanctuary, sanctuary provides a broad umbrella for an intersectional coalition of people, including immigrants and refugees, to join together, build networks, and create spaces of convergence (More information available at [artspacesanctuary.org](http://artspacesanctuary.org));
- Inviting immigrant community members to be embedded into the process of curatorial process decision-making, and codesigning processes that align with existing practice and culture; and
- Leveraging presenter affinity organizations, such as the Association of Performing Arts Professionals and the Presenter League of the New York Dance and Performance Awards (the "Bessies") to foster mentorship and shared learning among presenters, locally, nationally, and internationally.

Advance immigrant artists by:

- Offering technical assistance for immigrant dance artists that need support for producing cultural events;
- Strengthening relationships with immigrant dance artists by, for example, developing contract riders prioritizing immigrant-inclusive practices;
- Highlighting immigrant dance artists without an established following by presenting their work on weekends when working-class audiences can attend; and
- Supporting the work of immigrant artists who are seeking an O-1 visa.

## Considerations for Public Agencies & Private Funders

Building on considerations for the dance field, Invest in immigrant dancemaking by:

First and foremost, investing in immigrant organizations, programs, and projects:

- Developing immigrant-specific programs by both arts funding initiatives and project funding initiatives: for example, production support for dance addressing immigrant rights, and general support initiatives;
  - Integrating immigrant matters as a funding priority in existing arts portfolios; and
  - Expanding purview of funding to ensure small-budget groups, fiscally sponsored projects, independent artists, and unincorporated groups that are immigrant-led or are meaningfully integrating immigrants are served.
- Secondarily, invest in the wider ecosystem, from presenters to service providers, with an emphasis on education and audience engagement activity.

Transform internal practices by:

- Training funding decision-makers in immigrant matters, including grant review panelists;
- Removing restrictions to funding sources based on immigrant status and, if not possible, provide transparent information on eligibility of noncitizen applicants;
- Supporting immigrant artists and organizations in identifying and accessing funding by expanding technical assistance and training and offering materials in multilingual content;

- Strengthening collaboration among funders traditionally focused on the arts and funders focused on immigrant rights, racial justice, and broader equity matters to increase resources available and to define and achieve common objectives; and
- Leveraging funder affinity organizations, particularly Grantmakers in the Arts ([giarts.org](http://giarts.org)), which can do more to move the needle with respect to funding by demonstrating best practices to their members, cultivating partnerships, and delivering relevant field advocacy, research, communications, training, and convening with a focus on immigrant matters.

## Considerations for Educational Institutions

Building on considerations for the dance field, advance immigrant dance students by:

- Expanding dance education opportunities for immigrant children, particularly in public schools;
- Addressing compliance and access issues in public school buildings and the quality of their dance facilities;
- Growing partnerships between immigrant dance artists and companies and schools; and
- Training, certifying, employing, and investing in immigrant dance educators.

Expand opportunities for higher education and continued professional and artistic development for working immigrant dance artists by:

- Building education structures that reflect real career opportunities in the field now;
- Meaningfully integrating immigrant students into conservatory and university dance departments, including graduate programs; and
- Expanding instructional offerings for immigrant artists outside of school settings, from choreographic centers to dance studios.

Enhance service delivery by:

- Exploring dance education spaces as sites for delivering information on social services to immigrant parents and students; and
- Promoting awareness of existing services provided by the Department of Education and other educational institutions.

Expand mentorship opportunities and shared learning locally and nationally by:

- Supporting complementary training initiatives: for example, New York Foundation for the Arts Immigrant Artist Program;
- Pairing the artistic leadership of emerging groups with that of midcareer or established groups, as may tie to history in the field and budget size; and
- Fostering dialogue among presenters, educators, and immigrant artists at and across every level about training and development.

## Considerations for Arts Service Providers

Building on considerations for the dance field, increase access and networks by:

- Facilitating collaborative efforts among immigrant dance artists and dance workers across sectors, between arts service organizations, immigrant service providers, and/or dance companies and groups;
- Following leadership of existing immigrant rights and arts advocacy organizations to build relationships and trust with immigrant dance artists, communities, and organizations;

Build capacity to support immigrant artists by:

- Employing intersectional and racially explicit frameworks while ensuring that immigrant populations are present at every stage of service programming, including service organizations' boards and staff;
- Evolving and creating programming to meet service priorities identified in this report, from opportunities to engage immigrant audiences to rehearsal space needs
- Exploring place-based strategies that address needs and opportunities of local immigrant communities;
- Advocating for enhanced service delivery to immigrant dance artists who require legal assistance as they seek documented immigration status or address the negative effects of anti-immigrant policies such as the travel ban; and
- Leveraging existing affinity groups, such as the Association of Performing Arts Service Organizations, Performing Arts Alliance, and Dance/USA's Service Organization Council, to share learning and codeliver relevant services.

# ESSAYS

Dance/NYC commissioned essays by immigrant dance artists and dance workers to offer reflections and recommendations based on the research findings, as well as on their own personal experiences. Dance/NYC thanks the essayists all for their generosity, wisdom, and leadership in advancing immigrants, dance, and arts.

# ADVANCING IMMIGRANT RIGHTS THROUGH DANCE

## Dancing In the Shadows of Invisibility

Christopher Núñez

Immigrants and artists are similar: We keep hope and optimism during times of hardship. I arrived in NYC five years ago from Costa Rica seeking asylum. I identify as a queer and visually impaired choreographer. Since my early years of training as a dancer, I was devalued, ignored and discriminated because of my gender and disability. In Central America, the violence perpetuated by homophobia presupposes a complex scenario for queer artists. My work, which explores non-normative sexualities, highlighted key and controversial national debates. I was arrested and censored multiple times for performing my work.

During my first years in the US, I did not know my immigration status nor my status as an artist. The United States migration policies are complex and at times inefficient. The processes through which immigrants are subjected to in order to obtain the most basic rights are exhausting. Simultaneously, I was facing similar problematics while trying to find my place as an artist in New York City. The processes to which immigrant artists are subjected to here, are also, exhausting.

Sometimes relocating to a new country means that you must start over. I struggled significantly to adjust my artistic values and cultural traditions to my new community of dance makers. Cultural shock, feeling out of place, the sense of loss of my homeland and working 20 hours a day to pay the rent and my lawyer led me to extreme physical and mental exhaustion.

As an artist I navigated through different cultural institutions assimilating American concepts— grant, fellowship, nonprofit, fundraising, tax exemptions, donor and fiscally-sponsored —that were completely unknown to me.

The lack of fluency in the dominant language and the fear of talking about my disability and identity in general led to a series of rejections. The same week that I was rejected for the fellowship or the residency I was rejected for political asylum. I had a strong emotional response to these rejections. Both my lawyer and dance mentor told me the same week that I was "too sentimental".

Immigration arouse deep feelings. Many artists work facing invisibility. We are not sentimental, we are working on the emotional edge of our stories. Having the support of a community is crucial in these cases. Institutions like New York Foundation for the Arts, Dance/NYC, Battery Dance, New Dance Alliance and Movement Research provided workshops, consultations and space to rehearse. Most importantly, they provided hope and optimism during times of hardship.

Many institutions provide performance opportunities and residencies for undocumented artists, but at some point these artists will have difficulties obtaining larger financial support due to their immigration status. Some of these artists experience traumatic departures from their countries of origin. For them, art is a powerful way to cope with the mourning process and to validate feelings of dislocation, especially when they're not allowed to go back to their country.

There are rights that immigrants artists should have no matter what. These rights include space to produce, exposure and financial resources to make their work a reality. All artists should have access to the same resources, including a safe space to work and build community, educational programs to help them integrate into the new surroundings and connect to resources and income as dance artists to sustain their practice.

I was lucky enough to find the right community to support my work and to help me overcome the struggles of beginning a new life in a new country. Maybe we can't have it all, but we can have what we need. I am not working under the shadows of invisibility anymore but I'm worried for those who are. Working as an activist, dance curator and as a dance educator, I witness the struggles that all immigrant dance artists face to preserve their heritage through their work. This uncompromising passionate resistance that keeps artists alive.

So, how can institutions ensure the right to a valid space for radical immigrant artists to exist and maintain their practice under any political, social or economic system? How can we protect them legally? How can we provide housing? How can they obtain the same benefits as the artists who were born here?

In times of hardship there is a reason for optimism: Dance is important. It is our legacy beyond frontiers. Dance helps us keep moving forward and no matter at what point in your career you are as an artist, everyday, you must start over.

# The Invisible Dancers: Indigenous Immigrants in NYC

Marco Castillo

A version of New York City's history says that in its origins, Dutch settlers built a wall to keep out Native American tribes in the seventeenth century, where Wall Street is today.<sup>11</sup>

More than 400 years later, beyond the accuracy of the anecdote, we still experience symbolic walls throughout the city that attempt to segregate cultures and social groups from each other, generating discrimination against certain social sectors, cultures, and practices. This struggle still happens today, in 2019, in a city that is home to a wide range of cultural diversities.

To bring down those walls, dance, as well as other artistic and cultural expressions, have proven to be effective demolishers and magical keys to connect differences and advance intercultural dialogues.

Dance/NYC's Advancing Immigrants. Dance. Arts. report finds that only 5% of those that identify as immigrant dance artists practice ballet as their primary discipline. Yet, ballet is one of the best-funded dance disciplines with the largest infrastructure to perform (while a large percentage of NYC's dance community practice folklore and traditional dances (ADD STATISTIC), which have limited funding, spaces to perform, and very few or no incentives to its audiences. This is today's invisible wall that keeps certain artistic expressions from getting the recognition they deserve.

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<sup>11</sup> *Wall Street: A History* by Charles R. Geisst, published by Oxford University Press, 2018, [global.oup.com/academic/product/wall-street-9780190613549](https://global.oup.com/academic/product/wall-street-9780190613549); *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* by Edward G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, published by Oxford University Press, 2000, [global.oup.com/academic/product/gotham-9780195140491](https://global.oup.com/academic/product/gotham-9780195140491); *A Short and Remarkable History of New York City* by Jane Mushabac, published by Fordham University Press, 1999.

Such is the case with one of the fastest growing populations in recent years in NYC, one to which I have dedicated my last ten years of work as an anthropologist, artist, and organizer: Mexican indigenous immigrants.

According to the Mexican Consulate, in 2012, 350,000 Mexicans lived in the tristate area, of which 250,000 self-identify as Indigenous.<sup>12</sup> According to the Endangered Language Alliance, this makes NYC one of the cities with the largest concentration of Indigenous Mexican people in the United States<sup>13</sup>—a new Tenochtitlán.<sup>14</sup> Still, several walls of discrimination make them invisible to most New Yorkers.

As I have observed, the people typically labeled as "Mexican" represent many Indigenous identity groups, many of whom do not speak Spanish. The all-encompassing use of "Mexican" as their identifier creates erasure and doesn't acknowledge their specific identity or the cultural traditions they bring, of which dance is one of the most important.

In Mexico, and all over the "Native Americas," Indigenous communities perform dances to honor nature, spiritual and religious beliefs, and the agricultural cycle. Within these communities, there are some men and women who are experienced designers, dancers, and organizers. However, almost everyone in the community creates and designs their own outfits, and understand the movements to be part of these festivities. The festivities are not intended to be observed or admired, but instead as act an invitation for everyone to be participate. part of it.

Since the late 1980s, when these communities started to arrive in New York, Indigenous Mexican communities slowly started to form dance troops and to make costumes to perform their dances.

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12 [nacla.org/news/2017/08/11/new-life-indigenous-languages-new-york-city](http://nacla.org/news/2017/08/11/new-life-indigenous-languages-new-york-city)

13 [elalliance.org/languages/meso-america](http://elalliance.org/languages/meso-america)

14 Díaz del Castillo, Bernal (1963) [1632]. *The Conquest of New Spain*. Penguin Classics. J. M. Cohen (trans.) (6th printing (1973) ed.). Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.

Today, throughout the yearly calendar, thousands of men and women from the Tlaxcala, Mixtec, and Nahuatl regions gather in private venues, parks, sports fields, and parking lots in Coney Island, Staten Island, the Bronx, and Queens to perform their dances. Some of them participate for the joy of it, while others do it with accurate technique and professionalism, acting as teachers for coming generations.

This also happens with communities from Guatemala and Honduras. However, the data analyzed in this report didn't locate a significant presence of professional dance performers in these NYC neighborhoods. This is most likely because most of these people don't see themselves as professional dancers and have other jobs, usually underpaid, and overexploited, to sustain their lives.

Some hometown associations have increasingly organized public events to showcase traditional dances, with very little emphasis on the originality, life, history, structure, and significance of them, putting profit and self-promotion as a priority, often billing them as Mexican folklore.

Despite all these obstacles, it's through dance, that thousands of Indigenous immigrants from Mexico are gaining access to public spaces and spreading their worldviews. In recent years, that has included finding ways to reunite with their hometowns through dance events, such as the NewYorkTlan Festival,<sup>15</sup> which works to bring down one of the impossible walls: our current immigration system.

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15 [pueblostransnacionales.org/new-york-tlan](http://pueblostransnacionales.org/new-york-tlan)

In Favianna Rodriguez's words,<sup>16</sup> this proves that "culture goes ahead of social change". New York City needs to challenge its concept of immigrants, dance, and art in order to incorporate the value of other forms and expressions, such as indigenous dances. Nonprofit art organizations should include indigenous dance as part of their cultural programming and educational agenda, separated from folkloric Mexican and Latin American dance. Further, governments and funders should consider indigenous cultural groups as expert producers, performers, and cultural organizers, providing support to ensure the strength of such projects, including them at every level of the development and decision-making process.

The City's cultural agenda, public and private, should incorporate indigenous dance as a specific discipline, separate from Mexican and Latin American folklore, identifying expert teachers, producers and other specialists, not only to showcase them (this would be a contradiction to the spirit of the Indigenous dance but also to also support them in their role.

New York City should create better conditions for the promotion of traditional dances, performers, producers, and audiences, in accordance to the city's demographic growth, to ensure that the City's cultural life represents the diversity, vibrancy, and ideas of all its population.

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16 [culturalorganizing.org/interview-with-cultural-organizer-favianna-rodriguez](http://culturalorganizing.org/interview-with-cultural-organizer-favianna-rodriguez)

# ROLE OF PRESENTERS IN ADVANCING IMMIGRANT ARTISTS

## **Roots of Remembrance: Presenting Dance Works of Cultural Empowerment by Immigrant Artists of Color**

Abdel R. Salaam

**"A man ( or woman) without the knowledge of themselves is like a tree without roots" —El Haj Malik Al Shabazz aka Malcom X**

One of our greatest responsibilities as presenters of dance is to curate choreographic works by immigrant artists of color that entertain, provoke thought and empower our audiences with moving images of cultural enrichment. As many artistic souls have left the lands of their origin, the search and desire for a better life and a place where they can create meaningful, uncensored work is oftentimes one of the driving factors. Whether motivated by an escape from their environment's cultural darkness in its many forms, or reaching to elevate oneself, their loved ones and their communities into a state of grace and enlightenment, all people who come to our shores should be entitled to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness as well as an opportunity to develop and exercise their creative disciplines.

Today we struggle against a giant political behemoth with an ableist, racist, and xenophobic mindset that believes that immigration is a crime when exercised by people of color from a "disenfranchised" or so-called "inferior" culture and that their forms of creative expression should be limited to entertainment that is easily digestible and devoid of risk, societal criticism and political controversy. They believe the right to life changing cultural pursuits is an entitlement that should only be granted to those of white European heritage. One of the roles of the dance presenter is to curate work of immigrant artists of color that at times take risks, dispels negative myths and offers an alternative view of their culture, artistic intelligence and humanity.

Today we have to remain diligent in our support for our new artistic family from those distant or neighboring lands who are the descendants of those ancient civilizations and cultures that, in fact, were the First World. In addition to presenters like the American Dance Festival, Theater of the Riverside Church and the Apollo Theater of Harlem, Brooklyn Academy of Music's forty-two year old Dance Africa Festival presents the work of such immigrant artists of color in ways that not only entertained, but educated and empowered its audiences with visions of amazing dance, music and art that often expanded one's cultural consciousness and appreciation about Africa and its Diaspora. These performances often provided a lens through which the viewer could see and experience various elements of these ancient worlds, who through aeons of inner struggle, evolution and a search for the knowledge, wisdom and understanding of the external and internal world that lived without and within their own experience, gave the gifts of light and culture that became the foundation upon which much of western civilization was built. In fact, our society is an amalgam of the many cultures, societies, and traditions that ultimately formed what the indigenous peoples called Turtle Island and we now call the Americas: North, Central, and South.

Progressive presenters must offer immigrant dance artists of color the following alternative: That they will work to help present artists if they commit to creating their best work, instead of continuing to sustain a system that forces artists to prove that they deserve to be accepted by those who at times have chosen in the past and still choose in the present to deny their contributions to civilization and their humanity through genocide, systemic racism and oppression. As a presenter, I always emphasize to artists of color, and by extension to all artists of any race, color or creed, that they can choose to walk in this mindset –

**You walk with your ancestors, and they walk with you. Feel the best of them in you. Know that your culture, music, art, dance, spirituality, humanity, intelligence, and work ethic feed the soul of this nation. See your work as a necessary and important catalyst that propels the forward motion of our society through dance and movement.**

Presenters who have had the vision to work with artists who perform and create work of this caliber, essence and commitment, have been able to achieve more than a modicum of success over the years and generally served their audiences and constituencies well. The works and in some cases, followings of Ballet Folklórico de Bahía, Cuba's Katumba, Dance Brazil, Nai'Ni Chen Dance Company, National Dance Theater Company of Jamaica, Ayikodans of Haiti, The Thunderbird American Indian Dance Company, Pura Fe, and Forces of Nature Dance Theatre, are examples of companies that perform with a high degree of professionalism, cultural commitment and artistic integrity. They understand that artists who design work from this center give something to their audiences beyond steps, combinations, technique and simple formula. And while all artists and presenters have developed their own personal or institutional formulas for success, there can be something magical that the viewer receives when experiencing an artist that has tapped into *The Source* – That in that very moment, the movement of such an artist's life dance energizes the audience and at times, helps make this land and our society whole again. A wise presenter understands that their job is to become more knowledgeable about the artist(s) they intend to present, build relationships when possible, stimulate and insist that their artist always "BRING IT!" They must ultimately identify those whose work creates an environment and space that unifies the three A's... where the audience, artist and art become one!

As a director, curator and presenter, I have had many conversations with dancers, dance teachers and dance makers of all ages. The following could be a dance curator's mantra or mandate to the artist they intend to present:

**"And as you continue to perform your day to day responsibilities and give your creative energy and artistic talents to this society, understand that you are always empowered by giving and being your best; and you elevate the meaning of life and what it has always meant to be an immigrant artist of color, or their descendant in this society."**

"Walk with your Ancestors, and no matter who you evolve to be, never forget the best of your culture, never forget the beauty and intelligence you bring to this life through your art..... never forget it is your raison d'être."

"Know that darkness ultimately consumes itself ..... giving way to the emergence of Light..... choose your inner light that will guide and enable you to see and create your best work"

"Your memory is your root of being....."

"Remember.... Remember..... Remember.....that your best already lives, moves and dances from within... and if you able to bring it into being, my job and commitment as a presenter is to work with you to help bring it to the world..... Remember that in order for any presenter to offer you to the world ..... you have to create and deliver the dance....."

## Presenters' Responsibility as Community Activists

Karesia Batan

An immigrant artist arrives in NYC. They experience degrees of culture shock while simultaneously navigating the inner workings of a foreign dance landscape. They need support in obtaining visas, working within immigration laws, or processing payment. If immigrant artists work mainly in their heritage's traditional dance form, that particular dance community may be limited. They may have difficulty finding resources relevant to them, or may not know how to utilize available resources to their advantage. Language or technology challenges may be other hurdles, in addition to the overarching challenges all dancers take on when developing their careers in NYC: space, funding, audience following, performance opportunities.

Dance presenters have an understated sphere of influence when it comes to the advancement of immigrant artists. There are challenges such as resource access in effectively supporting immigrant artists, but there are creative opportunities to address this. I believe the key in addressing these challenges begins with valuing a sense of community among NYC presenters. By working in tandem, presenters have the ability to lead a shift in focus to advancing immigrant artists in the dance world, causing a ripple effect that could elevate the paths of immigrant artists' careers. Presenters have a comprehensive role that goes beyond programming. We must also be community organizers with a responsibility to identify the needs of our immigrant artists and audiences. This requires presenters to have improved access to resources, and calls for coordinated efforts.

Strengthening the presence of immigrant artists is a collective effort. At the core of our role, presenters have a creative opportunity to produce new programming that features immigrant artists, or reframe existing programming to highlight immigrant artists already being presented. While this is already occurring, we can coordinate efforts to create a bigger audience impact for our immigrant artists. Larger presenters can partner with smaller ones to cross-expose audiences. Presenting with cultural centers or community spaces can reach diversified audiences. Together, when we present programs that express cultural diaspora, traditions, and

controversies, we can facilitate an ongoing dialogue that brings immigrant artists and their work to the forefront of the public mind. We can curate thematic programming that reveals connections for audiences and inspires them. We can influence the level of public interest and build following. It is also our responsibility to make sure funders, venues, other presenters, and cultural institutions are in the audience, as potential future opportunities for immigrant artists. And ultimately, contributing to a strong presence of immigrant artists in NYC upholds the larger battle of increased city and state funding in support of immigrant artists.

Presenters should also embrace the mode of thought that dancers of all styles and cultures should regard each other as equal peers relevant to one another's careers, and interact with one another as a resource. A way of doing this is purposefully integrating the modern dance and traditional dance realms in the same programming platforms, which broadens the reach of both realms simultaneously. In the Queensboro Dance Festival, this has become a natural need due to our focus on presenting only dance groups from Queens, which is home to an intrinsically diverse range of modern and traditional dance forms. By cross-exposing dancers' various areas of expertise and cultural experiences, we foster a vibe among immigrant and nonimmigrant artists where appreciating differences and expanding dance knowledge are valued. The Queensboro Dance Festival further hosts workshops, classes, and networking events for artists to encourage them to remain engaged with one another and their audiences beyond the stage. Perhaps more programs, in coordination with partner organizations, could offer more relationship-building opportunities between immigrant and nonimmigrant artists, or between newly arrived artists and longer-term immigrant New Yorkers. We want to inspire our artists to empower each other, whether it be creating new work together or being a local advocate in communities. We want to convey the message that we are all in this together as artists and fellow New Yorkers.

Like many others, the Queensboro Dance Festival is a small, hyper-local presenter. Our concern is having enough program capacity and access to information to sustainably support immigrant artists' careers beyond visa letters. Larger organization presenters (including those with venues) and smaller presenters alike could come together and welcome one another to share resources for immigrant artists: legal services, grant funders specifically for immigrant artists, translators, grant writing, or cultural centers. This would require presenters of all capacities to prioritize a shared vision of comprehensive, city-wide accessibility for immigrant artist services. City government support of this vision by providing a line of direct access to their service agencies would help presenters to help others, boosting the effectiveness of the effort.

Presenters can establish long-term partnerships with these resources for immigrant artists, offering access to services presenters may not be able to provide in-house. They can further share professional development resources among one another to learn how to better establish a safe, thriving environment between immigrant artists and the public. Networking in this way will often call on larger presenters to support smaller ones, toward the common goal of advancing immigrant artists at a community level upwards. The strategies included above can be especially helpful between immigrant and non-immigrant presenters.

The challenges immigrant artists face calls for presenters not only to be producers, but also community connectors. Presenters at all levels play a critical role in this trajectory. We can acknowledge a shared responsibility to prioritize support of immigrant artists so they can access equitable opportunities. We can be mindful of the gaps in resources, and collaboratively work to close them. Regardless of immigration status or citizenship, there should be a place for all dancers to show work and feel supported in NYC.

# IMMIGRANT AUDIENCES AND AUDIENCES FOR IMMIGRANT ARTISTS

## The Invisible Work of Audience Development: Creating Connections in Immigrant Communities

Candace Thompson-Zachery

This current focus on leveling the playing field for marginalized communities is entirely overdue. As a member of the Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Task Force with Dance/NYC and the founding director of Dance Caribbean COLLECTIVE (DCC) for the past 4 years, I've been engaged quite heavily in the conversations about ways to reach immigrant and Caribbean communities. As an immigrant dance maker and cultural producer from Trinidad and Tobago, it has often times felt like I chose the shortest of sticks: to be an immigrant in a country that has grown increasingly hostile to new inhabitants, to be in a field that is largely underresourced, and to be from a place whose culture is so ubiquitous yet so misunderstood. For a long time, the dance world and my community of Caribbean friends and relatives were distinctly separate. There were exceptions, these being the rare occasions when they would come to see me perform modern and contemporary dance work. My performance veritably introduced them to venues such as New York Live Arts, Danspace Project, The Actor's Fund Theater, and to a culture of noncommercial performance. It was only once I started making my own choreographic work about my experiences rooted in my Caribbean identity that I realized how I not only appreciated but needed their presence to make my work complete and how cherished my commitment to this work was to them.

When I started DCC four years ago, if you asked me if I was doing audience development I may have said no. Or rather, I was unaware of the importance of audience development for arts and culture organizations. I knew that I wanted to create stronger networks among Caribbean dancers, share in the load of self-producing and create more visibility for Caribbean Dance and Caribbean artists within the Caribbean community. In my journey from then until now, in addition to comprehending the relevance of DCC's accomplishments,

my desires for cultural activism within my community have become clearer and my understanding of the responsibility of the arts organization I wanted to create in this context have deepened.

Organizationally, DCC has spearheaded many initiatives including masterclasses, town hall discussions, community projects, commissioned writing, and of course the New Traditions Festival (for Contemporary Caribbean dance). What is paramount in considering immigrant audiences, in this case, West Indian communities, is the need to play a role in creating reparative narratives and experiences that counteract the constant pressures of socioeconomic lack or perceived lack (the rat race), immigration policies and stigmas, and othering that occurs with social groups that are on the so-called “fringes.” The stories we unearth bring many closer to legacies that they believe have been kept from them and that can aid in their self-determination—cultural pride is an outcome we strive for. We aim to create spaces that reflect the values that many of our heritage share:

Sankofa—connection to the past to move forward.

Cultural Leadership—taking charge of our own narratives and not waiting for a mainstream artist or organization to educate our own people about our culture and profit off it.

Cyclical Sharing—by engaging in learning together across differences and perspectives.

Innovation—reframing our creativity and evolution as genius, and creating room for new developments within our cultural sphere so that we can be affirmed and challenged, and

Celebration—finding the joy inside of these processes as much as possible.\*

The idea of building audiences for and with immigrant dance makers is larger than simply filling a theater house for a weekend. For me, it is about creating more interconnected networks within communities, with a practice at the center that is generative for participants at every level.

Dance within Caribbean communities still has real-life implications in dancehalls, bars, christenings, weddings, churches, religious rituals, and processions. Despite this fact, there is oftentimes considerable distance from professional dance performance, on the part of both practitioners and the public. But how can connections be made between these places? How can we create stronger networks of folks that understand that their way of life is not singular, and can be supported by the work of other spaces and communities? And how can dance and dance performance be a bridge to reinforce the humanity of immigrant communities in the face of so many stories of discrimination and second-class citizenry?

The barriers to engaging with immigrant audiences through dance are numerous, including lack of interest or awareness of contemporary performance culture, less available time for entertainment, lower thresholds of disposable income, preconceived notions of what dance is based on previous experiences, feelings of insecurity or annoyance about the rules of contemporary performance, lack of a centralized hub to find out about dance they might be interested in, belief that dance isn't a worthwhile profession: and the list goes on. Through my work with DCC, we have found creative ways to move forward, including working with youth to instill the value that dance can offer but also opening them up to the world of performance, using creative marketing avenues including using party promoter listservs and regional Caribbean press outlets, serious cross-promotion initiatives and copresentations with other Caribbean organizations, in addition to creating a welcoming environment specifically geared toward Caribbean audiences in our communications and at our events.

Working within constituencies especially those that make up peripheral culture in any given geography is divine work, yet its worth is constantly in need of support, defense, and explanation. This measure of cultural dedication is equally burdensome and exhilarating for those that carry it out, and is made harder by these structural barriers.

Here is what I wish organizations and cultural operators at the center, understood about this work:

1. Every program and every performance feels like our lives depend on it. Representing our communities is delicate work heightened by the general lack of hypervisible examples of cultural excellence. With fewer options, each step carries the weight of our constituents. We want to make them proud, despite the dearth we face on many levels.
2. Merely programming immigrant artists as a token or as an audience diversification strategy is not enough. Diversification of the artistry on stage must be paired with the diversification of curatorial framing, communication strategy, and audience reception and investment. Anything less is irresponsible and opportunistic.
3. We aim to work and produce at a high level often under less than favorable conditions. How can you account for this added exertion in your engagement with or philanthropic support of us?
4. Our audiences may also be new audiences for dance—supporting immigrant-led or focused entities means a growing population interested in dance performance. Can our projects be awarded financial support specifically for community and audience engagement? Every person who walks through the door to one of our events requires twice the amount of effort, both on their own part and on part of our team. This is an integral reality of every project. As such the impact of our work is all the more necessary and all the more transformative.
5. Navigating funding streams and support as a foreigner and/or someone working in non-European-derived forms is challenging and time-consuming. The series of “co-signs” necessary to climb the chain of cultural legitimacy and arts philanthropy seems to be distinctly arduous. This is the very reason I have chosen the path (currently enrolled in MA in Performance Curation) I’m on to demystify the arts and culture-scape for the sake of my community’s increased access.

6. Immigrant audiences are not a monolith—we are cultured, expressive, creative, educated, queer, radical, of varying disabilities, genders, ethnicities, and languages, and simultaneously operating at the intersection of several oppressive systems.
7. The undocumented among us come in all walks of life. Be sensitive to this—requirements like ID, citizenship, questions about employment, etc., cannot only be barriers but also active and intense triggers for some.

Here's what I wish the non-artist members of our community understood about this work:

1. We need your endorsement. The work doesn't exist unless real people help spread the word. Culture is like religion. It needs evangelists.
2. Seek out local artistry. If you come across a project or performance that moved you, let the artists know! Artists want to hear from people like you about how their work is experienced.
3. Get involved. If you (miraculously) have some extra time volunteer at a show or organization, labor support is always welcomed.
4. Support us. Where possible buy tickets to shows and donate yearly to your favorite artist. If that's not possible simply telling a friend about our work is meaningful.
5. Express yourself. Do creative activities with your loved ones. You don't need to wait for the next event or performance to have an artistic experience. May our accomplishments be magnified and our collective humanity strengthened.

\*DCC Core Values created in collaboration with Safi Harriott, assistant Director and lead artists Joya Powell and Maxine Montilus.

## Response to Dance/NYC's Third Report as a Part of Its Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Initiative

mersiha messiha

We can no longer turn a blind eye to issues of hegemony and the colonial perceptions of beauty and virtuosity rooted in anti-blackness and an aversion to the Other. As a global society moving toward an equitable environment in the field of dance, I cannot emphasize enough the important role dance institutions and presenters play in continuing to do the emotional labor creating opportunities that inform and break down these pre-existing barriers in New York and beyond.

With a rise of global xenophobia and intolerance toward what is perceived as the Other, a mindset of "us" versus "them," it is urgent we put our efforts toward collectively transgressing the predominant ideologies which have shaped the ways in which we validate certain bodies, and the aesthetics in dance which these bodies help to convey, perceived as the "proper" forms of dance. The same ideologies act as determinants in which dance artists and organizations are made visible, to receive available opportunities and funding. This is why it is integral that we keep thinking through questions of corporeality and re-articulating our idea of what a body is. In doing so, we reset the parameters rooted in anti-blackness and phobia of the Other, moving beyond the reduced and limited perception of what constitutes a body, who has a valid/desired body, and where these bodies fit in performance spaces.

It is imperative we invest in immigrant artists and artists of color, without pigeonholding their works to solely dealing with issues of identity and race which we believe to be digestible to the general public. I wake up everyday as a Muslim, refugee, immigrant, woman artist, who moves in the world as such. As much as my choreographic exploration is occupied with my personal story and cultural heritage, it is equally engaged with the bio-mechanics of the human body. I am interested in the infinite possibilities of the body, re-imagining and articulating what a body is and could be. The beautiful and exciting thing about dance and performance art at large for

me, is that although it is rooted in the historical and present moment, it also allows us to move beyond and envision the possibilities for the future. I am invested in seeing more support for immigrant artists and artists of color, whose research lies outside the binary episteme of "us" versus "them," moving toward a more fluid and diverse (dance/performance) scene, in which we enjoy the varied and innovative ways in which dance artists are articulating the body, regardless of background and race.

I am certain as long as we have organizations like Dance/NYC, to facilitate and support new and imaginative contributions to the field of dance, and continue to create educative opportunities for our dance institutions and presenters, we will successfully achieve a more equitable environment in New York and on a global level. In the words of one of my personal heroes, José Esteban Muñoz, "Concrete utopias can also be daydream like, but they are the hopes of a collective, an emergent group, or even the solitary oddball who is the one who dreams for many. Concrete utopias are the realm of educated hope."

# ROLE OF FUNDERS IN ADVANCING IMMIGRANT ARTISTS

## Active Listening

Adriana Gallego

The actual work of diversity, equity and inclusion is situational, and by nature, necessitates a collaborative, customizable approach based on the needs of each community at any given moment in time. There are tactical approaches that can activate corrective measures in real time, while coexisting with strategies that deserve sustained investment of time, currency and education to change systemic discriminatory behavior and conditions.

The qualitative data analysis of the study "Immigrants. Dance. Arts." makes transparent the articulated needs of immigrant artists as it relates to diversity, equity and inclusion. There is a call to action for reciprocity among stakeholders (makers, audiences, funders), intentionality in bridging the resource gap (financial, real-estate, services, education), and a holistic understanding of the unique social, political, environmental, economic and cultural conditions that shape the daily lives of artists, their families and communities.

With these findings in mind, how can a funder's approach to artist support influence the spheres of cultural and artistic production in a manner that leads all of us toward mutual understanding, in a manner that values creative thinking and that renders solutions which are indeed conducive to better living for all of our communities?

Perhaps how we define the meaning and goals of our work must itself remain open to fluctuations and shifts in how the spheres of arts and cultures are cumulatively mapped, so that our ongoing efforts remain agile enough to respond to and, better yet, anticipate emerging initiatives in art making, culture, policy, funding and overall development. Such a modicum of self-awareness can help funders better perceive and decipher changes in the conditions that host our environment as time goes by.

For the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC), this processual model began with active listening, a value that inspired our formation. The Association was born in dialogue among Latinx arts and culture workers during the late twentieth century Culture Wars, in response to a need for self-determination, capitalization and advocacy. Thirty years later, in harmony with our origin story, NALAC continues to evolve in conversation with our inter-generational, trans-disciplinary, pan-ethnic Latinx communities, who live a spectrum of migratory and non-migratory experiences. With every conversation, NALAC has scaled our portfolio each step of the way to introduce services, training and funding to individual artists, build regenerative capacity for organizations, develop research initiatives, and deploy advocacy and policy work at the much broader institutional and systemic levels.

Most recently, we unveiled a new grant initiative in response to articulated needs of our constituents. The launch of NALAC Pods reflects our commitment to evolve and develop alongside our communities.

Throughout the years, we observed growing networks of NALAC alumni, grantees and members self-organizing around activities that foster community building, refine leadership skills, polish aesthetics, sharpen critical thinking, amplify exposure, encourage advocacy and promote messaging in support of Latinx arts, culture, and equity. This complementary funding hybrid engages NALAC's fellowship in a different and more significant way from being recipients of programs to being the driving force behind policy change and advocacy efforts.

The advent of many of these movement building efforts are in response to inequities affecting Latinx arts and culture workers and their families. Otros Dreamers in Acción (ODA) are NALAC members based in Mexico City where they build networks and opportunities for the mutual support and empowerment of deported youth in Mexico. The organizers—many of whom grew up in the United States and were forced to return to Mexico—have created a community space called Poch@ House where deportees in Mexico can gather, find services and create. Through transnational arts and culture organizing, the Poch@ House: Transnational Art project will work with deported artists in Mexico and Mexican-American artists in the United States to advocate for rights and protections for those living on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Right alongside the border, Dance in the Desert's origin story began many years back as a dreamwork of NALAC alumni Yvonne Montoya to uplift and examine a codification of Latinx Southwest aesthetics. Today, as a NALAC Pod, Dance in the Desert 2019 returns as a weeklong choreography retreat in Tucson that will provide a critical space to nurture a network of Latinx choreographers and dancers in Arizona, while centering local expertise.

Such vantage points have afforded NALAC a clearer glimpse into how the production of arts, the practice of cultures and the forming of our communities are in ceaseless conversation with our evolving social policies. In many ways, the environments that uphold our artists and our institutions as well as the challenges they encounter, are seldom defined as stable. They unfurl through a sequence of events whose shorthand for the past is history and whose future is an endless series of course-corrections. Our social challenges mirror the people who face them and, unsurprisingly, change through time as we do. It is nonetheless inherently possible that our work, ideas and imagining belong to a significantly vaster platform of communication and interaction, where our creative propensities are able to circulate and exchange freely in ways that learn from different models and recombine to solve something we did not know how.

## Democracy and Dance: Supporting Immigrant Dance Groups

Rocío Aranda-Alvarado

The Dance/NYC study, *Immigrants. Dance. Arts.: Data on NYC Dance 2018* identified 205 immigrant dance organizations, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the kind of work being done across New York City.

The focus of this new study, *Advancing Immigrants. Dance. Arts. 2019–* purposeful in focusing on immigrant dance artists and dance workers—specifies a look at groups that have been traditionally under-resourced and marginalized. The way that the term “immigrant” is broadly defined allows for many who identify with the immigrant movement to be considered as part of the broader goals. In the end, taken together, the studies reveal the continued pattern of racism and discrimination that is built into definitions of culture, government funding and philanthropic patterns overall. This points to significant learning that needs to be done in each of these sectors. The academy, and the public and philanthropic centers all can become significantly more aware of these issues.

**“Among dance genres identified by the immigrant dance workforce studied, 47% of respondents primarily stated modern, contemporary, and/or postmodern dance genres as their main practice. The next most popular genres identified were, in this order: folklore and traditional dance forms.”**

Significantly, these reports explored the profound influence of immigrant dancers and dance workers on this field of expression in New York City. This influence is deeply marked by the geographic diversity of the immigrant dance workers population. The survey findings of the newest Dance/NYC study showed that 34 different countries of origin were named among those responding to the questionnaire. Significantly, the largest group was born in the United States, at 18%. This is an important statistic because it helps to underscore the connection between new immigrant groups and those born here whose families made the journey first. It also helps to illuminate the fact that, while there is an assumption that those with foreign sounding names are all foreign-born, there is a large population of US-born children of immigrants

who continue to feel a close connection to immigrant populations. The majority of respondents also identified as non-white. Thus, the numbers show that New York's immigrant dance workforce is more racially and ethnically diverse than the larger foreign-born non-profit and fiscally sponsored dance workforces overall.

Among the reports and studies, possibly the most interesting findings relate to culture itself and how this is both malleable and defined.

*Immigrants. Dance. Arts.: Data on NYC Dance (2018)* notes that

**"Fusion refers to the melding of a folk/traditional form with contemporary or other forms and is a topic of interest for the Task Force as a genre that may be unique to immigrant dance makers."**

The more recent report also details the cultural areas with which the immigrant dance force identifies. The majority, or 47%, focus on contemporary dance, with folklore and traditional dance in second place, at 14%. This serves to reinforce the fact that traditional forms and folkloric inspiration continue to hold a significant place in the NYC immigrant dance workforce. These findings, taken together, reinforce the importance of diversity in the cultural sphere.

The category of fusion seems important. Among the groups studied in the 2018 report, there was specific intentionality around the fusion of folk and contemporary forms and this was stated in their organizational missions. This way of working seems unique to immigrant dancers and choreographers. The mixing of traditional forms of dance with modern and contemporary forms makes for unique artistic practices that reflect a cultural vanguard that is unique to our urban center. Interesting questions related to this and posed by the study include the consideration of significance and meaning of folk and traditional forms to various kinds of audiences, including new immigrants and subsequent generations of US-born populations.

**Folk/traditional and multidisciplinary groups represent the largest shares of the immigrant groups studied, followed by dance, fusion, and ballet groups.**

In terms of the interpretation of differences among organizations as they are categorized by genre and type, I suspect there is a similarity among musical groups that are presenting, educational, service and etc. organizations. There is an authenticity that the mainstream seeks from the foreign-born. This makes folk and traditional forms most appealing to audiences seeking authenticity and to those hoping to identify forms they know from "home." A similar finding is reflected in the new study, that finds that immigrant artists and dance workers are less able to access audiences in an authentic way when they feel they have been invited to fulfill an unspoken or undefined quota. Further, some artists have felt underserved when their artistry is presented as part of a larger "othered" grouping without real attention to the uniqueness of their work and its cultural origins.

**"Funding from public agencies and private philanthropy is a critical source of resources for immigrant dance artists. The survey found that a majority of immigrant dance artists and workers seek funding for their work. More than half of the respondents affirmed that they had applied for funding from government (54%), private foundation grants (52%) and individual donors (54%)."**

Immigrant dance artists and workers were found to depend heavily on contributed income. Disturbingly, federal support for immigrant dance organizations is smaller than for all dance organizations overall. This points to some education around these cultural forms that can be done in the public sector. Wide dissemination of this kind of data on immigrant populations would be important in making the case for supporting this work, emphasizing the relationship between local populations and cultural production. The newer survey points to the genuine need for support in various areas that include affordable development space for artistic practice, affordable presentation space, living wage for one's labor, affordable healthcare, affordable training, and affordable legal assistance, among other areas. In terms of the needs, perhaps the most important

finding concerns the realities faced by immigrant danceforce workers with undetermined visa or documentation status. Everything is more difficult and costly for those facing these issues. Funders need to be aware of how deeply these issues affect immigrant artists. Even if artists are not directly affected themselves, mixed status families are increasingly common, with stresses being shared among those with and without a work visa or proper documentation.

**"The immigrant dance workforce studied is just as or more diverse than the City's foreign-born population in every ethnic and racial category, encouraging the application of intersectional and racially explicit frameworks to programs for and by immigrant dance artists."**

The finding on race and ethnicity of the immigrant dance workforce is promising, especially given the exponential growth of US Latinx communities, which is now close to 20% of the overall population, and which reflects the increased immigration from Mexico and Central America. While Latinx artists are largely underrepresented in most American media, the New York City dance field has potential to serve as a model for the inclusion and integration of immigrant Latinx artists and expand the purview of Latinx narratives and experiences portrayed in cultural productions. It points to an important place where support and access to resources can be improved.

**"Primary activities through 2020 include targeted leadership training, networking and convening; a directory of online resources; and quantitative and qualitative assessment of the landscape of immigrant artists."**

Finally, the activities that Dance/NYC hopes to undertake through 2020 point to the needs in the field overall. This and previous studies conducted by Dance/NYC on the state of the immigrant dance workforce continually confirm the need for more programs led by immigrants. Related findings point to the importance of supporting immigrant workers in the dance education sector as well as the value of mentorship and training for immigrant dance artists throughout all points of their careers. These findings underscore excellent places for both public and private funding interventions. Focusing strategically on leadership, network support and deep assessments, this series of reports acts as a roadmap for philanthropic enterprise in the immigrant dance community. For funders to take on this work is crucial in making culture a stable part of daily life. One excellent model is work being done in two cities, Memphis and Oakland. Reports on the joint work of funder groups in these cities highlights how a focus on people of color and immigrant groups has deeply stabilized and enriched the cultural scenes there. Individual program officers may consider several questions or issues when thinking about their work, including how supporting immigrant artists helps to support other immigrants by extension in the broader community or how focusing on support for the undocumented among cultural workers helps to stabilize organizations and families.

# DANCE EDUCATION FOR IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

## Journey

Dian Dong

I am a 4th-generation American born Chinese and the Associate/Education Director of Chen Dance Center. Together, over the last 40 years, H.T. Chen and I built an organization that has served the Chinatown community and the larger New York City dance community while also creating a home for new generations of artists to find creative opportunities and hone their craft. We co-founded the Chen Dance Center to provide community children and families in Chinatown with access to arts training and to provide 'moving' experiences in contemporary dance.

H.T. Chen has been described as "a choreographer with the instincts of a sociologist." He was trained in traditional dance in Taiwan before attending the Juilliard School and then NYU for a masters degree in dance education. As a first generation immigrant, H.T. Chen was moved by the stories of hardship and determination of Asians in America. There were few, if any, productions that addressed the experiences of this country's Asian immigrants. As a result, H.T. has created works about life in Chinatown—from the street vendors to the garment workers, Vietnamese boat people, Chinese strikebreakers in the North Adams shoe factory, Angel Island Immigration Station, the building of the Transcontinental Railroad, the cultural gap and assimilation of immigrants, and the Chinese who settled in the American South. All of his works are grounded in American modern dance with an Asian American aesthetic, blending East and West, a product of his story and carrying on the American tradition of immigrant innovation and the blending of two worlds.

In the 1970's and 80's, the main industry in Chinatown besides restaurants was the sewing factories. Newly arrived immigrants, male and female, could find work where language was not an obstacle. For nearly 40 years, Chen

Dance Center has made its home a historic building in the heart of NYC's Chinatown. The first 20 years in the building are fondly remembered as the "bad old days" when we taught and rehearsed in unheated studios and shared the space with the homeless. Over the years, Chen Dance Center gradually transformed the former P.S. 23 at 70 Mulberry Street, 2nd floor from a run-down school building into professional studios and an intimate black box theater for dance.

Since 1984, Chen Dance Center's dance studios and intimate theater have provided creation and production support for emerging choreographers through its two signature series: Newsteps and Ear to the Ground. Both series specifically support choreographers of Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander descent. The organization has become a three-pronged, comprehensive arts services organization with a school, theater and professional company. H.T. Chen & Dancers has been recognized with a Bessies' Citation, NYS Governor's Award, NYC Mayor's Award for Arts & Culture, the Martha Hill Dance Fund, and by the Organization of Chinese Americans. In 2009, Chen Dance Center was named as one of the Ford Foundation's Diverse Arts Spaces and went through a series of renovations and expansions.

With the establishment of Chen Dance Center, we forged a nontraditional path, atypical of career choices made by our Juilliard peers at that time. We instinctively chose a path of community service through the arts as opposed to seeking employment with a large established dance institution. But we were clear in our resolve and mission in ensuring that future artists of the community would have access to the same caliber of arts education and training that we had. Today, some of these same established, larger institutions are now offering scholarships to students of color, some of whom studied at Chen Dance Center.

The Chen Dance Center School began serving primarily service workers and their families in the restaurant, grocery or garment industries. It was important that the school provide a noncompetitive and nurturing environment to study dance. It was never about pageantry or trophies. We believed that dance empowers the individual physically, emotionally and spiritually; one becomes a better person for having studied the arts seriously.

The investment in learning is manifest in the dancers' carriage and grace in life. After many years following this mantra, we are seeing second-generation students whose parents studied at Chen Dance Center when they were young.

The Chen Dance Center School (est. 1980) has always provided below market rate classes with professional instructors and currently serves 200 children year-round, ages 5–18, through ongoing classes, as well as another 380 community children through a 22-week free after-school dance program, and a 30-week early childhood dance program in collaboration with P.S. 42. Our collaboration with P.S. 42 was after a search for the right educational partner, who would allow us to conduct a program that we felt was lacking in the community.

The after-school movement classes provide students with the creative space to find their voice as movers and the physical work needed to support child development and learning. The curriculum is inclusive and sensitive to students with special needs. The participating students commit to the full 22 weeks, and good attendance is required. P.S. 42's in-school and after-school programming are taught by senior teaching artists from Chen Dance Center's faculty. The curriculum incorporates best practices from the New York State Art and Learning Standards and creates a movement foundation grounded in modern dance practice.

Providing the students with opportunities to expand their interest in the arts and integrate students into the artistic community at Chen Dance Center, is something the organization strives to accomplish. P.S. 42 students receive free tickets to see shows at Chen Dance Center, or have special opportunities to work with professional artists in the form of taking a master class, participating in a residency performance, or attending a rehearsal. Some of the students also receive full scholarship to continue their studies year-round at Chen Dance Center.

H.T.'s commitment to establishing a home-base in New York Chinatown has allowed the institution to stay connected and remain true to its immigrant roots, but it is not without stigma in the larger dance community. Critics have expressed concern the institution would be viewed as amateur, for being located in an ethnic community away from many of the larger dance institutions. Our decision to be immersed in our own community also resulted in loss of support from funders. Additionally, H.T. has had to compete with the expectation that his work will not fit neatly into a traditional or commercial or stereotypical understanding of "Chinese Dance."

While the dance company aims to continue to support both immigrant and American born minority artists, and remain a space for artists of many countries of origin to come together, the visa process has become increasingly difficult with the company impacted by ever-tightening restrictions and barriers to immigration. This can pose problems with company cohesion and scheduling tours and future performances, when you are unsure whether you will be losing a company member due to their Visa status. Overseas artists' experiences and training provide another layer of cultural dialogue to our work and brings together a multi-cultural and inter-generational dialogue, that despite the challenges of working with international artists, is essential to the progression of the arts.

We have always walked between two worlds and two cultures, but understand the universal truth that the arts connect us to our humanity, spur dialogue and can bridge divides. We have used this concept and this medium of the arts to address cultural concerns both in our community and in the larger world. We have used the arts to advocate for issues of equality in our community including gender equality (or that the arts are frivolous or only serve a rigid and narrow purpose or definition.) Over the years, we have found proven success in ongoing dialogue within the community, families and community members, paving the way for future generations of artists.

## We Have What We Need

Parijat Desai

For many years, I defined my dance education thus: "began *bharata natyam* and *kuchipudi* at age five, did jazz in high school, modern in college, postmodern in grad school, contemporary in...." But with this description, I was leaving out my earliest and potentially most profound experiences with dance as a child in an Indian immigrant community in 1970s Texas. Those experiences shaped me more than I acknowledged and are having a major impact on my work now.

For nine nights each fall, Gujaratis and their friends in Houston came together in high school gyms to "play" *Garba* and *Raas*, circle dances that originated in Gujarat, India. During the festival of Navratri, people of all ages dance together in circles and concentric circles. I recall my childhood excitement, and the feeling of freedom doing swinging steps and claps with cousins, friends, aunties, uncles—large numbers of people migrating a little forward, a little back, and ultimately round and round.

During college, I conducted field research in rural Gujarat. I looked at how dance, clapping and singing in a circle was a regular part of social bonding in villages and how performing groups formed in some communities.

In recent years, witnessing distraction, division and hate nationally and internationally, I've come to feel our ancestral dance traditions that draw people together are vital, necessary. And I've sought to share what I know.

So after 15 years of pursuing a creative and performance process primarily based on my formal training, I turned to what I knew in my bones. With the heading "Dance In The Round," I began offering dance workshops open to anyone in practices I'd grown up with. I attempted to create a space where new people could learn the steps of *Garba* and *Raas*, and partake in that wonderful collective experience I remembered.<sup>17</sup> I've chosen to share the practice widely because people need and want to come together in an embodied way, particularly in this moment when our leaders are spouting divisive rhetoric and enacting inhumane policies.

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<sup>17</sup> Even in Gujarati communities, Navratri has evolved today into a more youth-oriented, competitive space, often with dancing in lines. Hence I emphasize inclusion, and circle and concentric circle formations.

## COMMUNITY DANCE

*Garba* and *Raas* are examples of the kind of inclusive community-based dance that exists in many cultures. As we consider the idea of "dance education," it's important that we acknowledge practices that occur outside formal studio or classroom settings and recognize how vital these traditions are to human development. We can and should support community dance in its various manifestations: social or worship-related events, community classes and arts programs that send artists to work with youth and seniors.

Dance events and practices happen in various cultural and immigrant communities in NYC and serve various functions. They are outlets for individual and community expression and help us activate and release energy. They are vehicles for transmission of culture—including dance and music skills, language and food. Community and/or social dance events encourage participation among people of all generations, so they benefit people of multiple ages and abilities, versus only young and nondisabled people. Artists often welcome people of other backgrounds to participate, so supporting them means supporting not only particular ethnic groups but the broader NYC community.

These activities led by immigrant dance artists may not be part of the circuit of subsidized dance studios, and learning may take place in different ways. But they are creating important inclusive spaces for dance. And it is important to note – it is just as expensive to produce this kind of community dance activities in NYC, as it is for all dance artists. To support dance in immigrant communities, stakeholders like NYSCA, DCA, and Dance/NYC can offer space grants/subsidies and funding to individuals and groups who arrange community dance events. Funds can go to skilled immigrant dance artists who lead such events and to musicians who accompany, as well to artists who offer training in their community-based traditions.

## ARTS IN EDUCATION

I have taught in New York City public schools as a teaching artist with City Lore, which "fosters NYC's living cultural heritage through education and public programs." I've seen how valuable it is for young people—especially kids of color—to be taught and encouraged by a Brown artist who makes her traditions accessible, opening up new worlds, and in turn making the unknown feel familiar. South Asian and Middle Eastern students, and immigrant children in general, often feel "foreign" or "other" especially when they first enter a school. It can be extremely validating to have their experience reflected in the official school curriculum and by the people leading that instruction. ("Hey, I've seen that step before!" "My mom listens to music like yours!") It's not only children from the particular culture being taught who benefit. There are overlaps in our traditions, dances and rhythms. Often grooves resonate across cultural lines and motivate even seemingly resistant kids.

I have also worked with older adults through a program run by India Home, supported by LifeTime Arts, offering dance along with gentle qi gong, yoga, and theater games. Dance tailored to the needs of older adults is invigorating, and gives them an opportunity to awaken aspects of themselves which may have been dormant. I also witnessed opportunities to challenge linguistic and religious divisions within the group through dance.

Because the traditions I share are communal—versus classical—they feel familiar. Who hasn't danced or at least talked in a circle? They have a built-in accessibility to them. In structuring these practices into educational settings, we can support outcomes like self-esteem, confidence, health/well-being, interaction and communication.

Senior centers do not necessarily have appropriate and accessible spaces for dance, and there is need for more instruction time. Organizations like City Lore, India Home, and LifeTime Arts pay artists well to share traditions we've inherited and our unique approaches to them. Given all the benefits to the populations they serve, it is critical that funders support organizations that offer age-specific dance education.

## DANCE & COMMUNITY ACTION

Dance artists I know are working out how our tools—movement, rhythm, games, somatics—can support movements for justice and give advocacy organizations greater impact and visibility. In the most recent iteration of Dance In The Round, I am sharing dance with social justice organizations, reframing dance as tools to support leadership development and advocacy.

As dance artists, we are re-educating ourselves about what is valuable in what we do. In so doing, we are learning that we already have what we need to create change in the world—in our deepest, most joyous forms of expression.

# APPENDICES

## Datasets

Full datasets can be found online at [Dance.NYC/IDADATA2019](https://Dance.NYC/IDADATA2019)

## Survey to immigrant dance artists & dance workers

Surveys in English, Spanish, and Chinese are available online at [app.surveygizmo.com/builder/build/id/4558328](https://app.surveygizmo.com/builder/build/id/4558328)

## Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Conference Program

The Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Conference program agenda, speaker bios, and event details are available at [Dance.NYC/IDAC](https://Dance.NYC/IDAC).

## Resources

Dance/NYC and its immigrant dance arts task force has identified service organizations and government entities that provide the most up-to-date and useful resources at the intersection of immigration and dance in the metropolitan New York City area as identified by Dance/NYC and its Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Task Force. It is not comprehensive, and Dance/NYC welcomes information about additional resources. Please email [immigrantartists@dance.nyc](mailto:immigrantartists@dance.nyc) with suggestions.

Learn more about these resources at:

[Dance.NYC/equity/immigrant-artists/resources](https://Dance.NYC/equity/immigrant-artists/resources)



IN ALLIANCE WITH DANCE/USA

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