What does REPRESENTATION & RACIAL EQUITY have to do with me?

Representation and racism shape who is seen, trained, cast, valued, and heard in dance, not just who appears on stage. When Eurocentric standards dominate curriculum, pedagogy, auditions, and performance, Global Majority dancers face exclusion, invisibility, and harm, while programs lose artistic and educational breadth.

Your voice matters! You Matter!



Self-reflect by acknowledging your own biases and educating yourself and your peers on the inclusive terminologies and the different levels of racism.

Reflect on how you can help improve representation and prevent racism in your dance setting. How can you be a better ally for others?

Support your peers by calling attention to acts of racism in your school or company. Reach out to a teacher or admin staff you trust when you need help to do so.

Whether you are a dancer or dance teacher, we each have a role to play in advocating for cultural diversity in dance.

The IADMS Bulletin for Dancers & Teachers

IADMS International Association for Dance Medicine & Science

INVITATION FOR SELF-REFLECTION
Towards Racial Equity in Dance

Representation

Can you or your dancers see yourselves in the curriculum and learning resources at your teaching environment?

- **Can you see yourself or your dancers in the visuals where you dance or teach?** (e.g., photos in studios and changing rooms)?
- **Does the role model discussed in class resonate with you or your dancers?** (e.g., Do they look like you or your dancers?)

Reporting Procedure
If a racist incident happen...

Take a moment to reflect, if a racist incident happens in your dance setting:

- **Do you and your dancers know how to report a racist incident?**
- **Is there a named person** (e.g., teacher, pastoral lead, or safeguarding officer) **that dancers know they can approach?**

Implicit Bias Check

Implicit bias is an unconscious attitude against a specific social group. Being aware of your own biases is a first step towards inclusivity and racial equity.

- **Do you hold the same expectations for dancers in your environment?** If not, what factors influence your adjustments to those expectations?
- **Take a test at PROJECT IMPLICIT for a self-bias check.**

Inclusive Production

Cultural appreciation creates inclusive production or performance. It is a mindful adoption of cultural elements into dance-making and casting.

- **How are productions and casting decisions made?**
- **Do they reflect your realities?** Does your role require you to change your natural appearance to look like a different racial or ethnic group through makeup or aesthetics alteration (e.g. hair color, skin color)?

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Levels of Racism in Dance



1 Internalized Racism

- You believe ballet is the only “real” technique and see your own dance style as less serious.
- You try to change your hair or body to fit a Eurocentric ideal.
- You get a lead role but wonder, “Was I just the diversity pick?”

2 Interpersonal Racism

- A teacher touches your hair and says it’s “greasy” or “frizzy” in front of everyone.
- Your work is called “too aggressive,” “too urban,” or “lacking grace.”
- You and another Black dancer are put in a corner to learn from a video while others get live coaching.

3 Institutional Racism

- You’re told to wear pale pink tights and pointe shoes that don’t match your skin.
- Ballet and modern are required for graduation; hip-hop and African diasporic dance are low-credit electives.
- Stage lighting washes you out or makes you invisible because presets are built for light skin.

4 Structural Racism

- Competition judges award routines in ski masks, exaggerated “hood” characters, or mock cultural wear.
- Funding and grants go to Eurocentric institutions; community groups for diverse dance styles are shut out.
- Dance history textbooks erase Black, Asian, and Indigenous pioneers and ignore cultural appropriation.

— Taking action at every level —

- **Teachers:** Call ballet and modern one technique among many - grade West African, tap, and hip-hop with equal weight.
- **Dancers:** Avoid adjusting your body to conform to one stereotype; train for alignment, strength, and injury prevention.
- **Directors/teachers:** Publish audition rubrics and give dancers their scores so skill - not tokenism - is visible.

- Set a zero-tolerance policy: anonymous reporting, suspension, and bias training for microaggressions.
- Give objective, biomechanical feedback (e.g., “arm at 45°”) - not coded words like “aggressive.”
- Rotate front, middle, and back lines every class; never segregate dancers in rehearsals.

- Update dress codes: permit skin-tone tights, undergarments, and shoes; stock multiple shades.
- Equalize credits: let advanced hip-hop or West African dance fulfil core technique requirements.
- Train lighting crews on multi-melanin design; run a lighting check for dark complexions in tech rehearsal.

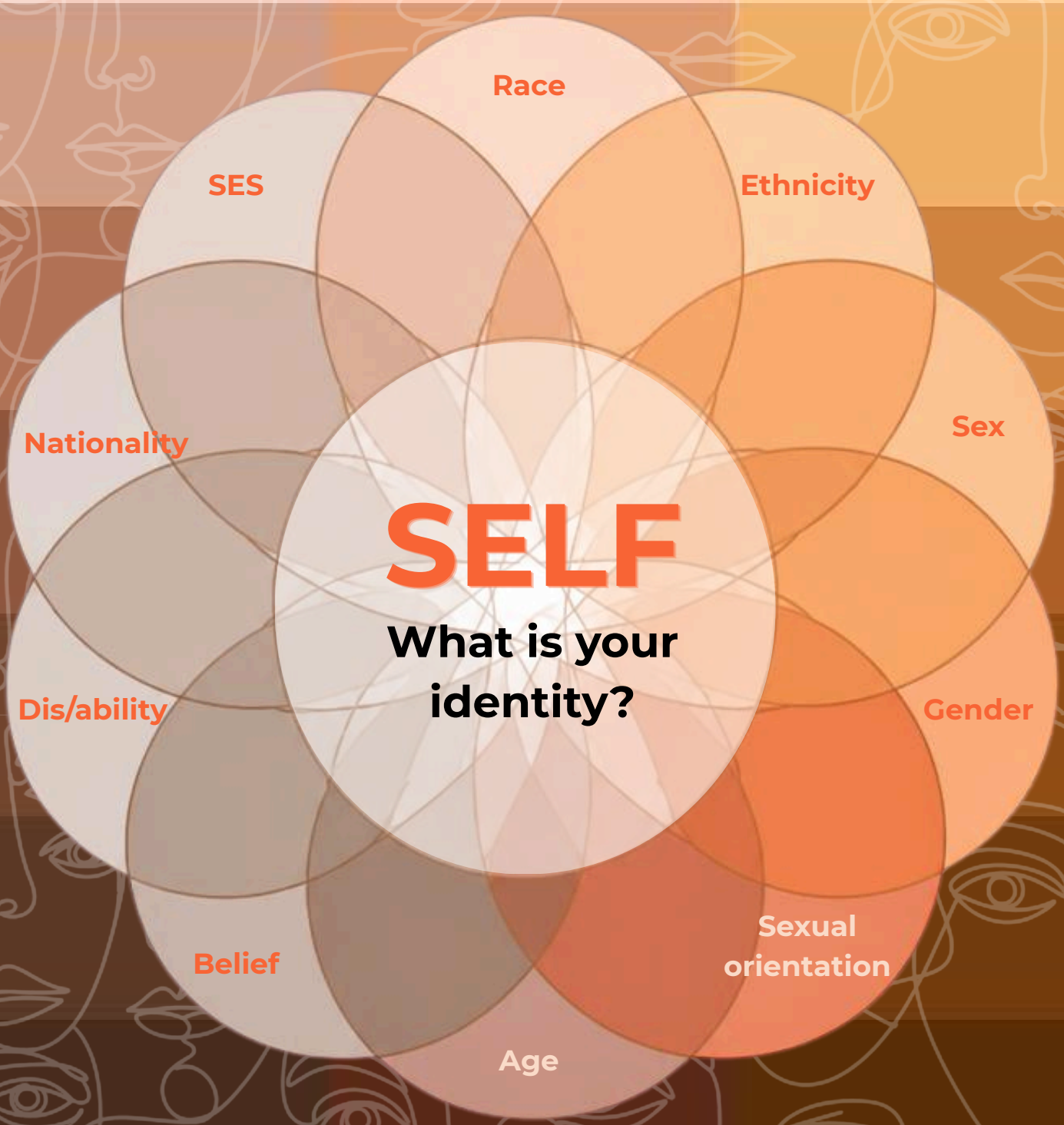
- **Competitions:** Disqualify or deduct points for blackface, minstrelsy, and uncredited appropriation; train judges.
- **Studios:** Redirect a set percentage of workshop or showcase profits to free youth dance programs in under-resourced communities.
- **Teachers:** Name the originators - Katherine Dunham, Frankie Manning - when you teach jazz or contemporary floorwork.

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IDENTITY INTERSECTION

*Refer to next pages for **"Key Terminologies"** and **"Glossary"***



I identify as_____.

Learn about the different types of identities (e.g., race, ethnicity etc.). Fill in the blank to find out about the intersection of your ***self.***

My name is_____.
I was born and raised in_____.
I now dance or teach dance in_____.
People see me racially as_____.
I hold a passport issued by_____.

KEY TERMINOLOGIES

Terms for specific groups

Identity

Race
Physical traits or look; also a social construct.

Ethnicity
Cultural traits, (ancestry, language, practices, beliefs)

- Arab
- Asian
- Black
- European/ White
- Hispanic
- Latinx
- Indigenous
- Mixed/Dual heritage

Sex
Biological traits

Gender
Socially constructed role, behavior, or identity

Sexual Orientation
Sexual or emotional attraction to another person

- Female
- Male
- Intersex
- Cisgender
- Transgender
- Queer
- Nonbinary
- LBGTQ+/ LGBTQI

Age
Time passed since birth or chronological age.

Belief
That shapes your way of life, purpose, and action

Disability
Long-term physical or mental impairment

Nationality
Country of birth or citizenship

SES
Socioeconomic status (income, educational, occupational, social status, and class.)

I am from; I am...
Self-identified, how you see yourselves

You are from; you are...
Perceived, how others see you

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI)

Concepts A-Z

Your intersecting identities and how others perceive them place you within different social groups. These groups sit within social hierarchies that shape how dancers may be **stereotyped** (grouped according to simplified assumptions about their identities), subjected to **prejudice** (perceived or judged in a particular way), and **discriminated** against (treated unfairly because of those prejudices).

A
- **Ableism**
- **Access/Accessibility**
- **Accomplice**
- **Ageism**
- **Ally/Allyship**

B
- **Bias**
- Confirmation bias
- Implicit bias

C
- **Colonialism**
- Neo-colonization
- **Culture**
- Cultural appropriation
- Cultural appreciation
- Cultural competency

D
- **Decolonization**
- **Discrimination**
- **Diversity**

E
- **Essentialism**
- **Equality**
- **Equity**
- **Ethnocentrism**
- **Eurocentrism**
- **Exclusion**

G
- **Gaslighting**
- **Generalization**
- **Global Majority**

H
- **Harassment**
- **Hazing**
- **Human rights**

I
- **Inclusion**
- **Intersectionality**

M
- **Marginalization**
- **Microagressions**

N
- **Neurodiversity**
- **Neurotypical**

O
- **Oppression**

P
- **Phobia**
- Homophobia
- Xenophobia
- Islamophobia
- **Prejudice**
- **Privilege**
- **Pscyhological Safety**

R
- **Racism**
- Internalized
- Interpersonal
- Institutional
- Structural
- **Representation**

S
- **Stereotype**

T
- **Tokenism**
- **Trauma**

GLOSSARY

Identity

Race & Ethnicity

Race: Refers to physical differences that groups and cultures consider socially significant.

Ethnicity: Refers to shared cultural characteristics such as language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs.

Arab: People of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA), refer to person's specific country of origin (e.g., Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, Israel) whenever possible. American with Arab ancestry may identify as "Arab American".

Asian: People of Asian ancestry. Asia is divided regionally, into South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. It is appropriate to use the terms "Asian American" (in US) or "Asian Canadian" (in Canada). The older term "Oriental" is primarily used to refer to cultural objects such as carpets and is pejorative when used to refer to people.

Black: People of African ancestry. "People of African Origin" is a more accurate term. Other term, "African American" should not be used as an umbrella term for people of African ancestry worldwide because it obscures other ethnicities or national origins in African continent. It is outdated and inappropriate to use the terms "Negro" and "Afro American".

European/White: People of European ancestry, the term "White" or "European" is appropriate. Adjust the latter term as needed for location, for example, "European American," and "European Australian". Use of the term "Caucasian" is discouraged because it originated as a way of classifying White people as a race to be favorably compared with other races.

Hispanic/Latinx: "Hispanic" is not an all-encompassing term; it often refers to Spanish speakers, while "Latino" may be preferred by those from Latin America, including Brazil, where Portuguese is spoken. "Latino" is gendered ("Latino"/"Latina"), with "Latin@" and "Latinx" used as gender-neutral or nonbinary alternatives.

Indigenous: Groups of people who lived in a region before colonization, have deep ties to their land, keep their own cultures, languages, beliefs, and ways of organizing society, and work to maintain their identity as a non-dominant group. It is most appropriate to use the names that they call themselves. In general, refer to an Indigenous group as a "people" or "nation" rather than as a "tribe."

Mixed/Dual heritage: Refers to individuals whose biological parents come from two or more different ethnic backgrounds, and who may navigate multiple cultural, national, or racial identities through their family lineage. This experience extends beyond race to include intersecting elements such as language, tradition, and religion. As with all identity terms, individuals should be allowed to self-identify and choose the language that best fits them.

Sex, Gender & Sexual Orientation

Sex: The characteristics and traits of biological sex.

Female: With "XX" chromosome, also refers to woman or girl.

Male: With "XY" chromosome, also refers to man or boy.

Intersex: Individual who exhibits sexual characteristics of both sexes.

Gender: Socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for different genders.

Cisgender: A term used to describe people who exclusively identify with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.

Transgender: Both an umbrella term including many gender identities and a specific gender identity that describes those with a gender identity that's different from the gender or sex assigned at birth.

Queer: This nonbinary gender identity and term describes someone with a gender that can't be categorized as exclusively man or woman, or exclusively masculine or feminine.

People who are genderqueer experience and express gender in different ways. This can include neither, both, or a combination of man, woman, or nonbinary genders.

Nonbinary: Also referred to as "enby," this is a gender identity and umbrella term for gender identities that can't be exclusively categorized as man or woman. Individuals who are nonbinary can experience gender a variety of ways, including a combination of man and woman, neither man nor woman, or something else altogether. Some nonbinary individuals are trans, while many others don't. Whether a nonbinary person is also trans typically depends on the extent to which that person identifies, even partially, with the sex and gender assigned to them at birth.

Sexual orientation: a person's sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the behavior and/or social affiliation that may result from this attraction. Some examples of sexual orientation are lesbian, gay, heterosexual, straight, asexual, bisexual, queer, polysexual, and pansexual (also called multisexual and omnisexual).

LGBTQ+/LGBTQI: The acronym for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, questioning (or queer), intersex + other gender variants. This is the most inclusive, all-encompassing term for the gay community, including those with non-cis gender identities.

GLOSSARY

Identity

Age
The amount of time that has passed since an organism's birth; that is, an individual's chronological age.

Belief
A system of spiritual beliefs, practices, or both, typically organized around the worship of an all-powerful deity (or deities) and involving behaviors such as prayer, meditation, and participation in collective rituals. Other common features of organized religions are the belief that certain moral teachings have divine authority, and the recognition of certain people, places, texts, or objects as holy or sacred.

Disability
A lasting physical or mental impairment that significantly interferes with an individual's ability to function in one or more central life activities, such as self-care, ambulation, communication, social interaction, sexual expression, or employment. For example, an individual with low vision or blindness has a visual disability.

Nationality
Legal status of belonging to a particular country or nation attained by by birth or naturalisation.

SES (Socioeconomic status)
Encompasses not only income but also educational attainment, occupational prestige, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class. SES encompasses quality-of-life attributes and opportunities afforded to people within society and is a consistent predictor of a vast array of psychological outcomes.

GLOSSARY

EDI Concepts A-Z

A

Ableism: Discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities.

Access/Accessibility: The elimination of discrimination and other barriers that contribute to inequitable opportunities to join and be a part of a work group, organization, community, or services.

Accomplice: Encompasses allyship but goes beyond to advocacy. An accomplice uses their privilege to challenge existing conditions at the risk of their own comfort and well-being. Whereas an ally might work to make changes on an individual level, an accomplice aims to tackle injustices such as racial injustices on an institutional level. They aim to alter the structures and policies within society that place marginalized groups at a disadvantage.

Ageism: The tendency to be prejudiced against older adults, to negatively stereotype them (e.g., as unhealthy, helpless, or incompetent), and to discriminate against them, especially in employment and health care.

Ally/Allyship: People who recognize the unearned privilege they receive from society's privileging of Whiteness, male gender, Christianity, heterosexuality, ableism, and other identities and take responsibility for advancing equity. Allyship is defined and determined by the community an ally is advocating for, rather than self-defined.

B

Bias: Partiality, or an inclination or predisposition for or against something. Motivational and cognitive biases are two main categories studied in decision-making analysis. Motivational biases are conclusions drawn due to self-interest, social pressures, or organization-based needs, whereas cognitive biases are judgments that are contrary to evidence, and some of these are attributed to implicit reasoning.

Confirmation bias: Seeking out or only noticing information that reinforces our existing beliefs.

Implicit bias: An attitude, of which one is not consciously aware, against a specific social group, also known as implicit prejudice or implicit attitude. Implicit bias is thought to be shaped by experience and based on learned associations between particular qualities and social categories, including race and/or gender. Individuals' perceptions and behaviors may be influenced by the implicit biases they hold, even if they are unaware, they hold such biases. Implicit bias is an aspect of implicit social cognition: the phenomenon that perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes can operate before conscious intention or endorsement.

C

Colonialism: Some form of invasion, dispossession, and subjugation of a people. The invasion need not be military; it can begin—or continue—as geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban, or industrial encroachments.

Neo-colonization: The control of nominally independent countries, usually developing countries, by powerful developed nations through indirect economic, financial, and cultural means rather than direct military or political rule.

Culture: A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors and styles of communication.

Cultural appropriation: Theft of cultural elements—including symbols, art, language, customs, etc.—for one's own use, commodification, or profit, often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture. Results from the assumption of a dominant (i.e. white) culture's right to take other cultural elements.

Cultural appreciation: Recognising and respecting cultural practices without exploitation or appropriation. It involves learning and engaging in meaningful exchanges to promote understanding and connection.

Cultural competency: The ability to collaborate effectively with individuals from different cultures; such competence improves experiences and outcomes in various disciplines. One can commit to the process of lifelong reflection to be aware, responsive, and accountable to the communities one is serving or working with.

D

Decolonization: The active resistance against colonial powers, and a shifting of power towards political, economic, educational, cultural, psychic independence and power that originate from a colonized nation's own indigenous culture. This process occurs politically and also applies to personal and societal psychic, cultural, political, agricultural, and educational deconstruction of colonial oppression.

GLOSSARY

EDI Concepts A-Z

D

Discrimination: The unjust and differential treatment of members of different identities (such as age, gender, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, immigration status, language, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status). This unjust treatment favors certain groups over others, restricting opportunities for other groups. Identities can be actual or perceived; for example, a person may be discriminated against for a perception of disability or other marginalized status. At the individual level, discrimination may manifest as prejudice involving negative, hostile, and injurious treatment of the members of marginalized groups. At the institutional or structural level, discrimination may manifest as operating procedures, laws, and policies that favor one group over another.

Diversity: Involving the representation or composition of various social identity groups in a work group, organization, or community. The focus is on social identities that correspond to societal differences in power and privilege and thus to the marginalization of some groups based on specific attributes—for example, age, gender, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, immigration status, language, disability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. There is a recognition that people have multiple identities and that social identities are intersectional and have different salience and impact in different contexts.

E

Essentialism: Assumptions that everyone belonging to the same social group have the same lived experience.

Equality: Treating everyone the same way while assuming that everyone starts out on equal footing with equal opportunities.

Equity: Working toward fair outcomes for people or groups by treating them in ways that address their unique barriers.

Ethnocentrism: The tendency to believe that your own ethnic group is centrally important and measure all others using the standards and customs of your own.

Eurocentrism: Describes an excessive focus on the cultural contributions and achievements of European societies, often at the expense of recognizing the richness of other cultures. This perspective is particularly notable in educational contexts, where curricula have historically marginalized non-European traditions.

E

Exclusion: The act of deliberately leaving out individuals or groups out of social, economic, educational, or organisational opportunities.

G

Gaslighting: A form of manipulation and psychological control. Victims of gaslighting are deliberately and systematically fed false information that leads them to question what they know to be true, often about themselves. They may end up doubting their memory, their perception, and even their sanity. Over time, a gaslighter's manipulations can grow more complex and potent, making it increasingly difficult for the victim to see the truth.

Generalization: The process of deriving a concept, judgment, principle, or theory from a limited number of specific cases and applying it more widely, often to an entire class of objects, events, or people, which can lead to mischaracterizations and stereotypes

Global Majority: Also known as people of the global majority (PGM), a collective term that encourages those of African, Asian, Latin American, and Arab descent to recognize that together they comprise the vast majority (around 80%) of people in the world. Understanding the truth that Whiteness is not the global norm has the power to disrupt and reframe conversations on race.

H

Harassment: A form of discrimination. It happens when someone experiences unwanted offensive or humiliating comments or behavior.

Hazing: Any activity associated with joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers individuals, regardless of their willingness to participate.

Human rights: Rights to which all human beings are inherently entitled.

I

Inclusion: An environment that offers affirmation, celebration, and appreciation of different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences, thus allowing all individuals to express their whole selves (and all their identities) and to demonstrate their strengths and capacity.

Intersectionality: The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect—especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups—to produce and sustain complex inequities.

GLOSSARY

EDI Concepts A-Z

M

Marginalization: Where a person, group or concept is treated as inferior; to put or keep (someone) in a powerless or unimportant position within a society.

Microagressions: The everyday verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights, snubs or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

N

Neurodiversity: A term used to acknowledge that everyone has different brains. This can manifest in many ways, perhaps in how people might process information, communicate, behave or function day-to-day.

Neurotypical: A person or group of people with similar mental or neurological function to what is considered typical or 'normal'.

O

Oppression: Occurs when one subgroup has more access to power and privilege than another subgroup and when that power and privilege are used to dominate the other to maintain the status quo.

P

Phobia

Homophobia: A strong dislike or fear of homosexual people.

Xenophobia: A strong dislike or fear of strangers or foreigners.

Islamophobia: A strong dislike or fear of Muslims.

Prejudice: Personal adverse and preconceived beliefs, opinions or thoughts about a group based on their skin color or race.

Privilege: One or a set of unearned benefits given to people owing to their membership in a specific social group relating to aspects of their identity. Those aspects can include race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and religion, as well as privilege related to wealth and class.

Psychological safety: The ability to freely express opinions, take risks, and be oneself without fear of negative consequences.

R

Racism

Internalized racism: Occurs when a racial group oppressed by racism supports the supremacy and dominance of the dominating group by maintaining or participating in the set of attitudes, behaviors, social structures and ideologies that undergird the dominating group's power.

Interpersonal racism: Occurs between individuals. Once we bring our private beliefs into our interaction with others, racism is now in the interpersonal realm.

Institutional racism: Refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. Creating advantages for one group while disadvantaging other racial groups.

Structural racism: The normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics, historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal, that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color.

Representation: Equitable representation is fair and proportional inclusion of people from diverse backgrounds across characteristics such as race, gender, disability, class, sexual orientation, and more within institutions, organisations, and public life.

S

Stereotype: A standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment.

T

Tokenism: The practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from under-represented groups in order to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality within a workforce.

Trauma: The trauma of racism refers to the cumulative negative impact of racism on the lives of people of color. Encompassing the emotional, psychological, health, economic and social effects of multigenerational and historical trauma, trauma of racism relates to the damaging effects of ongoing societal and intra-social-group racial micro aggressions, internalized racism, overt racist experiences, discrimination and oppression within the lives of people of color. When repetitive and unresolved, these experiences rooted in racism can create severe emotional pain and distress that can overwhelm a person's and community's ability to cope, creating feelings of powerlessness.

Disclaimer:

Definitions are adapted from the references listed below. This list is not comprehensive; it is intended as a guide and introduction to key terminology relating to cultural diversity, representation, equity, and inclusion in dance training and performance settings. We recognize that language in this area continues to evolve, and we invite the dance community—teachers, dancers, and organisations—to treat this glossary as a starting point for learning, reflection, and discussion, and to explore the references and resources provided for deeper understanding.

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