

My efforts in the areas of equity, diversity, inclusion, belonging, access, and anti-racism include fostering an anti-oppressive classroom, initiating and supporting institutional action, and consistently engaging in critical reflection alongside my students and colleagues. As a professor at Converse University, I am truly privileged to teach in an institution that values DEI. Our department has monthly meetings where students, faculty, and staff are invited to join in conversation. Recently, these meetings have challenged inclusivity in casting, season selection processes, recruitment strategies, and more. We share leadership between student-led and faculty-led sessions, and actively engage our students' questions, implement their ideas, and increase transparency in the decision-making process. This student-centered approach to DEI is intentional, and has built trust in our department in a really exciting way.

My perspective on DEI is constantly rearranging as I continue to learn and grow, but I can irrefutably state my commitment toward action. I am committed to cultivate culturally inclusive, responsive, and safe learning environments and activities through cultural humility, and to abide by racially equitable policies. I am dedicated to being at the forefront of this movement to foster educational environments founded upon respect, equity, and access. Throughout my four years of teaching in higher education, I have been intentional about decolonizing the curriculum and valuing dance technique from a variety of cultures, carefully decentering the Western practices of ballet and modern. This systematic acknowledgement of multiplicity is a major factor in which institutions I choose to align myself with. I acknowledge that I still have things to learn, as we all do, but I am committed to my efforts in earnest.

I also know that words are important, but they are not enough. I share with you the following actions I have taken as well as future commitments to change:

- I created a universal pre-screen dance tutorial with a space-friendly combination to be used by high school seniors for their virtual and pre-screen college auditions. This video gave students from all socioeconomic situations access to a free, quality dance combination that they could learn from home, so their audition packages would be competitive with students who have the financial means to hire dance teachers to make pieces for them and access to large spaces where they can record dance combinations.
- I joined an MFA Collective at the beginning of Covid, where in addition to offering free virtual dance classes for students to safely experiment with the online learning platform, we regularly convened to have discussions around dismantling racism in the dance classroom. We shared our experiences with race as educators, distributed and discussed relevant dance scholarship, and collaborate with dance educators at NYU Tisch, University of Maryland, Rutgers University, UNCG, and the University of Milwaukee-Wisconsin to learn from each other's experiences.
- I participated in the Safe/Trans Zone Trainings offered by the Office of Intercultural Engagement.
- I have included in my course syllabi language and resources reflective of the values and stance articulated in this statement.
- I regularly teach non-western and social dance forms (primarily jazz and tap), and am intentional about centering the history and cultural relevance of these dance forms in the studio and in online assignments. I ensure my delivery of this material is authentically vernacular and that my predecessors are appropriately credited, working to reverse common western stereotypes and colonial practices.
- I regularly begin class, rehearsal, and meetings with name and pronoun introductions, and make sure my students know how to best inform me if their preferred name or pronouns change mid-semester.
- I avoid standard language ideology (white language supremacy) in my classroom by allowing students to respond to assignment in multiple formats, including audio recordings and artistic outcomes.

- I consistently question our season selection process, making sure we are choosing material that is fully representative of race, gender, and sexuality. Our students are beautifully diverse, and the material they perform should be as well. I also ask the hard questions in casting meetings, always tracking whether our choices are fair and equitable across the department.
- I will stand behind my students, when they witness or are victims of injustices, and pledge to guide them to resources that will help lift their voices if the need to report misconduct or grievance arises.
- I have asked my colleagues and students to hold me accountable to these practices, and will continue to do so as long as I am employed in an educational setting.

While I find these actions and commitments important, my students are more interested in the classroom they walk into every day and what I am doing to make them feel safe, allow them to share their identities, and encourage them to use their voices. As a white cisgender woman, I acknowledge my social location as well as my positional power in the classroom and fight to dislocate that power as early as possible. To this end, I have incorporated contra-power and inclusivity statements in my syllabi for the last three semesters, and plan to do so indefinitely. These statements are in simple language, and one of them reads:

Inclusivity:** Black Lives Matter in this classroom. Pronouns will be respected, and hateful language will not be tolerated. When you are in this classroom you will operate from a place of respect and inclusivity. If you take issue with these views or feel there is a problem at any point in the semester you are welcome to email me to set up a private discussion regarding matters of respect and inclusivity. **This classroom is, and will always be, a safe space and a brave space.

I read this statement out loud to my students on the first day of class. I believe my stance on inclusivity is just as important to include on “syllabus day” as the course calendar and attendance expectations, arguably more so. This is a small but intentional practice I’ve developed to ensure my students know they are safe and respected.

I heavily reference peer-reviewed literature around decolonizing the classroom, and when Ben Spatz published “Notes for Decolonizing Embodiment” last year, my perspective was once again shifted by this culturally sensitive, non-binary scholar. In their article, Spatz suggests that embodiment must play a central role in decolonization, particularly because of the body’s involvement in racial and other postcolonial issues we face today. They question whether the anatomical body can be separated from the experiential self, and how one can use the body as a tool for decolonization. Later in the article Spatz issues a warning to white people, arguing that white bodies are the corporeality of coloniality, and they become a present, physical construct by which “otherness” is defined. I am so moved by this knowledge, and have been consistently working to heed this warning as a movement instructor and practitioner. I recognize that because I am white, I have a responsibility to examine myself and my practices, and *actively* and *constantly* work against the structural and cultural violence I am descended from.

Outside of culturally sensitive pedagogy, research is my most important tool for manifesting social change. My research explores “art for social change,” and works to embody cultural and structural violence on the theatrical and concert dance stage in an effort to amplify marginalized voices. A recent project addressed injustices present in the Prison-Industrial Complex, and advocated for the abolition of incarceration as it currently exists in the United States. This work, entitled *Released*, was the culmination of three years of ethnographic research at Benevolence Farm, a social services organization in Graham, North Carolina. This piece feels more relevant than ever, as the United States continues to publicly wrestle with racial justice and equity within our police and prison systems. Many of my research interests revolve around social issues, and I approach these sensitive topics with the both the attentiveness and aggression they require. I am grateful to have a voice to add to these conversations, and I intend to use it well.