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Africana Institute for Creation Recognition and Elevation

REFLECTIONS ON THE PISAB WORKSHOP JANUARY 12-14, 2018



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The Travelers – An Introduction

Prof. S. Ama Wray

Associate Professor of Dance
Claire Trevor School of the Arts

I am glad that you are here, skeptic or not, I am excited. Thank you for picking up this document or opening this PDF. My name is S. Ama Wray, and I'm delighted in the opportunity to share a few short essays on the experiences of students, faculty, and staff who took part in the first "Undoing Racism" Workshop. Delivered by [The People's Institute for the Survival of Racism and Beyond](#), the workshop was produced by AICRE – [The Africana Institute for Creativity Recognition and Beyond](#), an interdisciplinary research entity based at the University of California, Irvine. The Co-PI's of this emerging institute are Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Tiffany Willoughby-Herrard, and me.

Why do we need to undo racism? Well, because I am optimistic that with education all things are possible and that for the least among us, in this world at this time, opportunities should be in place to enable us all to contribute to bettering our world. Currently, the deep structures that govern our many intersecting worlds mostly fail to recognize the humanity in the least among us, or to support the many to succeed. So, for me, I see a purpose in being part of dismantling the impervious and insidious ways in which racism permeates all of our lives and reduces humanity to something that is a preserve of the few. Racism is not what nature intended, but it is what mankind (gender intended) has constructed.

After being subjected to a very public racial slur at the hands of students on campus in 2015, I found myself at a loss as to how to handle it effectively. It was reported to the relevant offices, and a general assembly was drawn together to give the student body, as a whole, some insight into [micro-aggressions](#). This exercise was a genuine attempt to build awareness about the impervious everyday nature of racism that goes on unceasingly. However, sitting in that audience along with my other colleagues, I would sooner have had the earth open up, be consumed by it, or turn up in Timbuktu, never to be seen in Irvine again.

Well, since that wasn't an option, I lived through what was, in truth, a well-put-together PowerPoint presentation. It showed images, statistics, situational videos, and anecdotes of other "black" women being insulted and picked out by "white people" because of their hairstyles not conforming to "white" and therefore "right" standards.

So, I sat there, approving on the one-hand of the analytical modeling, but on the other, I was sinking, feeling intense, profound discomfort and personal exposure. My [galvanic skin response](#) was palpable. All around me I felt and silently exchanged with students' and faculty's own intermittent emissions of simultaneous embarrassment. The irony of this episode was that the student in question, who created and distributed the distasteful image of me, chose not to come to the presentation. Was anything ultimately gained other than me wearing public shame (since I was the only female faculty "of color," it was blatantly about me) and fueling further anxieties about social interactions between people of different "racial" backgrounds? After the presentation, no one asked any questions, and no interactions ensued. We all just filtered out of the space and headed back to our classrooms. No one dared to look at me as I herded out with them, my shoulders hunched forward and my gaze firmly downcast.

As the regular rhythm of life unfolded as before, I saw an opportunity to take an Undoing Racism workshop with the People's Institute of Survival and Beyond through a dance organization in New York, known as [Urban Bush Women](#). Both the Dean of CTSA and the Office of Inclusive Excellence

assisted by resourcing me to take part in a 10-day workshop in the summer of 2016. The experience was phenomenal for me, significantly improving my understanding of how racism affects all of us adversely and immensely, including the people who perceive they operate outside of its sphere. No such life is possible on this planet at this point in human history.

Taking part in the workshop made this deduction abundantly evident on a personal, institutional, cognitive and emotional level. Along with others, I saw how the insidious nature of racism reigns supreme over any of the other "isms" and phobias that plague society. In other words, racism is the mother/father of them all. This is why attending to race-based education in a range of ways will lead us to promising lands, plains where we prioritize making elevation possible for those that have been denied, shut out and reduced to stereotyping propaganda.

At the end of the NY workshop, as full as we all were with the new insights, literacy, and energy to activate change, we were charged with two ideas. First, to ask ourselves, what kind of gatekeeper we are, since as educators – we are all gatekeepers of one kind or another; and second, how to start this work in our own "backyard."

My backyard is UCI, the institution that I work for and that has afforded me great opportunity to grow as a scholar. But it has also been the ground upon which I have witnessed both micro and macro-aggressions personally, in the lives of students and colleagues of "color," especially within the closed spaces of faculty exchanges and hiring processes.

I am from the United Kingdom, a place that formed the language in which I write, a language that was used to subjugate most of the world first as an imperial force, subsequently as a colonial, post-colonial and now almost sacrosanct digital power; the architecture of racism is in the very language we use and is in all spheres of human activity. It is therefore essential to recognize that this language will continuously be used to hide, obfuscate and deflect the injurious nature of this deadly societal disease.

In the following pages, you will read eight short essays, using this language, giving insight into the experiences of us (students, faculty, staff, international visitors and community members) that took part in the two and a half-day workshop. We are The Travelers. Read carefully. Better still, read between the lines, between the commas and the colons. Take your temperature, feel your pulse. Let your insight or resistance rise to the top, acknowledge and deliberate your cognitions of the function of invented ("man-made") race-based hierarchical systems to inform you of where you are on your journey; your propositions and defaults are your current guides. See both your advances and your deficiencies; these cognitive seeds await nutrient soil in which to be planted, nurtured and harvested to yield a future where sunshine and replenishing rain falls for everyone.

Prof. Jennifer Fisher
Associate Professor of Dance
Claire Trevor School of the Arts

One of the highest compliments you can get these days is to be called “woke,” the term used to indicate that you are “awakened” to problems relating to historical and persistent racism. To be woke is to understand the issues and work against prejudice and unconscious bias. It means that you aren’t knowingly contributing to injustice. But being woke is an ongoing process, not the past-tense verb it seems to be. Understanding the complex, intersecting, layered issues that surround racism takes continuous effort and a mind seeking new information and understandings. I deal with these issues through a dance lens in my research and teaching, and it always helps to have my perspectives and knowledge base widened through new materials and events.

The “Undoing Racism” workshop offered at UCI in January this year proved invaluable in ways that a lecture or reading or conference cannot always be. This two-and-a-half-day workshop seemed unique in my experience. I was engaged, challenged, kept thinking, and in the end felt heartened by a campus-wide interest and investment in the topic. I could tell that the 30 or 40 years the People’s Institute has been developing and offering the event has helped to refine it for maximum impact. Three facilitators led various exercises, elicited personal “sharing” stories from participants and talked about their own experiences. They made lists, revealed history, listened, and generated discussion, also offering strategies for the future. They encountered mostly willing and enthusiastic participants, and when there was occasion grandstanding or defensiveness, they dealt with it respectfully and masterfully, striving to make all feel welcome, while maintaining their focus on how racism affects us all.

The combination of methods for this workshop is in line with my own “embodied knowledge” focus, in that it was not a standard PowerPoint lecture format (though this format worked well a week or so later at UCI, when the ACLU’s Jeffery Robinson offered a two-and-a-half hour related lecture, which added lots of history to the Undoing Racism weekend). It’s unusual to have a mixed UCI group sitting in a circle for so long (administrators, professors, students, and a few community members), sharing an educational experience, their personal reactions, and their institutional experiences. It was a gift to have the time to reflect, contribute, and listen. It differed so much from meetings and short workshops where people drop in, look at their screens till a speaker arrives, then drift out to other important places. People came and stayed, giving a whole weekend to an important, difficult topic.

You could feel a transformational energy on all days of the workshop. For me, the emphasis on community and institutional change sank in. “You are not responsible for fixing the entire world,” goes one aspect of the Jewish concept, *tikkun olam*, “but you are not free from trying.” Many people seemed to be encountering ideas about institutional and individual racism for the first time, or perhaps just gaining insight into how white privilege has kept some of us insulated from its realities. As much as I have encountered these topics before in many ways (often embodied in dance and theatre), it furthered my understanding to participate in various exercises and hear personal stories, even when the disagreements and complexity of ethnic identification took over at one point. But it was all revealing, and the facilitators handled questions and protests well. It was a space that asked for engagement, welcomed it, and held ideas for the future.

Universities do well to contemplate what their students, the curriculum, and institutional practices look like today, and how they might change to reflect new realities. A constantly widening process needs to occur, and understanding systemic racism and institutional bias seems crucial. A university

is about knowledge and progress and change, but how might it reflect only those with a certain kind of privilege? How can it keep up with engaging a wider world and the backgrounds of all students? This workshop—plus the papers arranged in a mini-conference by Dr. S. Ama Wray, and the extraordinary Robinson lecture the next week—worked to enlighten us and guide those efforts, to change hearts and minds from the evidence. One of those events would not do, though the Undoing Racism, offering its extended, effective format, provides a focal point to start progress in a key way. My suggestion is that it be offered frequently, even required, because it's better than an online training, an afternoon workshop, or a single lecture alone. They are all fine, but a cluster of opportunities is a better approach.

In the dance department just after the workshop, a related dance/theatre performance took place, another way to tease out understandings of the issues at hand and make a lasting impact. Each school and discipline might want to arrange their own discipline-specific event that ties into undoing racism or they could liaise with the arts school to collaborate on performances that unfurl issues across campus. As W.E.B. DuBois predicted, “the color line” remained a prominent topic of the 20th century, and followed us into the 21st. Those of us who attended the Undoing Racism workshop have a deeper understanding of what that means.

Fatuma Ramudzi
Undergraduate Student, Sociology
UCI School of Social Sciences

Attending the PISAB Undoing Racism Workshop held at UCI was a complexly enlightening experience. The two-and-a-half-day workshop was mentally stimulating, soul replenishing, and warmly fulfilling. The PISAB members and speakers at the workshop were very insightful, kind, and unparalleled. The way they were able to facilitate difficult conversations, navigate their way through confrontational disruptions, and unify the group spiritually through love/personal narratives/laughter/rhythm was awe-inspiring. My observations and experience with each of the speakers revealed to me that it is the encounters and exchange of energy that you share with others that bridges the gap and inherent mistrust that institutional and structural racism have conditioned in people.

As a womxn of color who is excluded from the privileges and power allocated to white people through culturally mediated and sanctioned racism, I tend to distance myself from white people or approach conversations/encounters with them critically and skeptically. Although I have valid reason to do so, I sometimes shut myself off from engaging in those heavy topics with them—to avoid confrontation or being offended—or enter a conversation with an immediate biased view of their character/opinions. This can be counterproductive in that it hinders me from developing close relationships with white people and utilizing those potential problematic situations that I avoid as educational opportunities. For this reason, I really enjoyed how Margery Freeman emphasized the importance of including everyone in the conversation: whites, African-Americans, the API community, Latinx people, etc. and how she made it a point that everyone suffers from racism—not just people of color.

According to what was said in the workshop, white people suffer from racism in that they prevent themselves from having meaningful and multicultural relationships/experiences when they choose to act upon racist ideologies or perpetuate violence and hate towards people of color. Prior to this workshop, I never really considered that white people can also experience negative effects of racism because they are the ones that primarily benefit from it. However, the social construct of race and systemic racism have drawbacks for all of those involved and impacted. Racism segregates. Racism promotes self-hate. Racism kills. Racism is a plague that has infected and tormented the hearts and attitudes of our predecessors and current generation. It has served to establish a racial hierarchical structure and taint human nature—I believe it is in our humanly nature to love, but it's a corruptive world that teaches us hate and forms pessimistic attitudes. The workshop has ignited a fire in me and an eagerness to develop my knowledge more and immerse myself into difficult conversations with an open-mind, kind smile, and loving nature. It's important to hear the thoughts and ideas of everyone when it comes to race/racism, even when those thoughts and ideas can seem irrational or biased. Some may argue that those thoughts and ideas are the ones that really need to be heard, so that others can educate those minds and lead them to the truth.

Apart from this, I found the PISAB speakers' definition of race to be quite interesting and incredibly clarifying of my own experiences with race/racism at home, school, work, etc. The definition of race that was presented to me and the group at the workshop was: "A specious classification of human beings created by Europeans which assigns human worth and social status using 'white' as the model of humanity and the height of human achievement for establishing and maintaining privilege and power." According to this definition, 'white' is a standard and bears no cultural significance or tradition. It is simply a standard that was created by white men to subjugate people of color and establish themselves as the superior population. Prior to this workshop, my personal definition of

race was quite generic—a social construct created to divide people based on the color of their skin. The PISAB workshop’s definition is much more in-depth and precise. Since the workshop, I’ve thought of this definition when observing or analyzing race-related issues as well as applying it to my conversations about race/racism. Specifically, in a course that I’m taking this quarter (winter 2018), I used this definition when speaking to my classmates/peers about what factors shaped our racial identity and the ideology of racism. During our discussion, my classmates were very conflicted with how to define race and what factors shaped their racial identity or experiences in the U.S. Specifically, students that were presumed to be white, but had a different cultural experience than “white America” were the most conflicted. While they acknowledged that they were white, they didn’t want to identify as that because of their cultural experience as middle-eastern/Muslim womxn, to be exact. However, the very ability to choose what they want to be or what they want to be recognized as reflects their privilege as white womxn. I felt the need to make this point in class and support my argument with the definition provided to me from the Undoing Racism Workshop. After presenting the definition of race to the class, I explained that whiteness is a standard and anyone who fits the mold or criteria of being white is WHITE, regardless of what their ethnicity is. Being white has nothing to do with what language you speak, what music you listen to, or what food you like to eat. Being white simply means having the “correct phenotype” —acquiring power and privilege that people of color are excluded from because of the characteristics that are deemed superior/favorable (e.g. European features, fair skin, etc.).

Prof. Michael M. Green
Associate Dean of Undergraduate Student Affairs
Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science
The Henry Samueli School of Engineering

I found the workshop itself to be both inspiring and challenging to my previously held views on racism. In particular, gaining understanding the distinction between prejudice/bigotry (traits that can be exhibited by anyone regardless of background) and racism (a system that propagates white supremacy) was indeed eye opening.

As suggested by the workshop facilitators, I discussed my experiences with the Dean of my School. Since my Dean is Gregory Washington, it was obvious that I had little to teach him about racism — Gregory has experienced it first-hand, and a major figure at UCI with regard to increasing diversity and inclusion in a genuine way. However, he was interested in hearing about my experiences, and it spurred an interesting conversation — the first of many, I hope.

My experience has been that the faculty in my own department (EECS) are overall quite supportive of diversity & inclusion activities, but struggle with knowing what specific steps to take in that regard. This is probably due to the nature of our fields of study. But if we are given clear guidelines and procedures, we are eager to do our share in these activities.

Coincidentally I've been working with another Associate Dean and some staff on looking at how we might improve the participation rate in undergraduate research in Engineering. Inspired by my experience in the workshop, and aided by the new Compass tools available at UCI, I was particularly interested in the participation rates in research of first-generation and low-income undergraduate students as compared to the overall undergrad population in Engineering. I found that first-generation and low-income students are rather underrepresented in undergraduate research. Presenting this data to my colleagues resulted in some interesting discussions about how we might provide a more welcoming atmosphere vis-à-vis undergraduate research to these students, and we will be trying some new ideas beginning this fall.

Dorothy Licorish
Graduate Student, Psychology and Social Behavior
UCI School of Social Ecology

When I first arrived at the PISAB workshop, I came in with a naive expectation of how the days would unfold. My perception of racism encompassed overt actions of abuse and hatred towards a specific group of people. By the time I left, I became aware of how complicated this issue is and how it affects each one of us individually in our daily lives. Racism is a complex mechanism that cannot simply be explained by blatant actions of prejudice and discrimination on the individual level. It encompasses actions that take place institutionally and the internalized racism experienced by those who have been oppressed. As a result, racism can be present in ways that are subtle yet menacing. It was heartbreaking during the workshops to learn about the different ways that racism had effected each participant and how some may perpetuate these ideas without even realizing it. As a mixed person of color, I have experienced the discomfort in different situations due to the color of my skin. Alternatively, I have experienced some of the privileges that come with being a lighter skinned individual. This has given me an edge up on life by being able to “blend in” to the status quo. Racism allows for hierarchies that separate individuals according to baseless ideas and in turn allows different opportunities to people based on their skin color or features. These devastating effects of racism are based on the historical consequences of centuries where white people have been represented in superior positions.

It was especially poignant, when Maria Bauman illustrated an urban city and the different forces that can make it incredibly difficult to appropriately function and prosper. On a systemic level, racism reaches almost every institution and industry, widening the disparities between the majority and minorities. This stretches from the way media organizations can take advantage of people of color to differences in health care. As a substitute teacher, I have personally seen the discrepancies between schools less than 5 miles apart. The contrast between two different schools I visited was especially stark. From the pristine campus to a contrary school literally infested with cockroaches, it was obvious to me, within the school system, that schools serving mostly minority populations are at a disadvantage. It is the result of systems entrenched over centuries, promulgating slow and ineffective progress. They are offered less advanced placement classes and much fewer extracurricular opportunities while receiving their education in sub-par facilities. This is simply because the funding that goes into a school depends upon the economic prosperity of the surrounding neighborhood. White neighborhoods statistically have more income due to the economic advantage within white communities. I have come to see that this economic advantage is, at least in part, due to a history of legalized and systematized discrimination against minorities for economic and educational opportunities.

To compound matters, on an individual level, implicit biases cause widespread unconscious racist behavior and attitudes. As was shared in the workshop, an anthropologist will tell you that race is a social construct, not related to blood line, history or culture. There are no inherent traits or characteristics associated with different races. Many children are taught that they should ignore race and that everybody is created equal. As a result, children may grow up learning that with hard work you should be able to achieve anything you want in life. This can create the presumption that differences in economic, educational or occupational standing among minorities are within personal control, as opposed to multiple external factors. Furthermore, many people of color question their own intrinsic worth based on these perceptions. As mentioned in the workshop, there is tendency for some who have personally experienced racism to internalize these attitudes and distance themselves from members of their own racial group. I have witnessed this within some of my own

family members, who have tried to separate themselves and encourage younger generations to do the same. This is a result of the fear of consequences in representing an “undesirable” stereotype.

In order to attack these biases, the entire system has to change. Despite these devastating consequences, many who do not personally experience racism simply turn a blind eye. There is a widening gap between white communities silently ignoring racism, while black, brown and other communities of color continue to live in fear and distrust of institutions. In general, it is my experience that people fear bringing up these salient issues as they recoil from the potential of being assigned victim or perpetrator in discussions. This social anxiety is detrimental to the colossal objective of “Undoing Racism”, because awareness is the first step in combating any problem. The real tragedy, as I have learned, is that inevitably everybody suffers from the blight of racism. In order to combat racism, we must think big picture, take on multifarious holistic approaches, and be unafraid to confront our inherent biases.

Zayda Sorrell-Medina
Urban Planning and Public Policy
School of Social Ecology

Although I did not attend the entire PISAB workshop activities, the activities that I was able to participate in increased my understanding of race and race relations. I was pleased to see a diverse range of individuals attend the program, including students, staff, and faculty across several disciplines. As a trained social worker and community organizer, it is always refreshing to be in a room of intellectuals and people thirsty for self-growth and understanding of the world around them. **I am happy to report the following net effects of attending the PISAB training which including:**

- (1) I now have a more refined understanding of race and race relationships.
- (2) I was able to meet many new people in the university across several disciplines and establish new professional relationships.
- (3) I had the opportunity to assist with the development of the program evaluation plan.
- (4) I met Elizabeth Koppe from the School of Social Sciences, and from establishing a relationship with her, I am now assisting the DIRHA program with their program evaluation.
- (5) I am currently working on a research project with one of the attendees of the workshop, Professor Rudy Torres.
- (6) The program enhanced my motivation to produce a play in Pittsburgh fall 2018, titled "Beyond Climate Change", a play that sheds light to the disproportionate impact of environmental injustice on marginalized communities. With my interaction with one of the presenters, who is a professor of theater in the UK, I was able to concretize my ideas.

There is a strong need for this diversity training at the University of California, Irvine considering the current social and political climate of our nation, which is tainted by inequity, xenophobia, and injustice. Certainly, as a nation, we have come long ways. However, in my reflections I realize that there are some realities that are still troubling. For example, just a week before the PISAB I met with an UCI administrator who is high in their position, to share the nature of the training and its intended impact. The administrator asked me quite innocuously, what is institutionalized racism? The administrator went on to say, because if you asked me if I am racist I would say no. It troubled me that this administrator, who is a person of European descent and who is running an entire school unit, is not aware of the social phenomenon of how discriminatory or otherwise inequitable policies, protocols, and practices, or lack thereof, become embedded in the professional ethos of an institution, thereby creating what is sometimes called or referred to as institutionalized racism and discrimination. It is troubling when people in possessions of power, and especially those with facets of their identity that pertain to the dominant culture, do not recognize their privilege or power. My broader analysis of this case example leads me to infer that there is a need for the PISAB for Deans, Vice Chancellors, and Provosts. For these aforementioned reasons, I champion the PISAB training and would like to see it return to not only UCI, but also other UCs across the state.

Lauren Etter
Graduate Student, MFA Dance
Claire Trevor School of the Arts

More days than not, I engage in conversations about race, inequality, and privilege with members of my cohort, professors, friends and family. Some of these conversations are more challenging than others, and those are the moments I lean in and stay open-minded. I try to learn all I can from those in spaces that are not dominated by white people, and I try to listen more than talk. My thesis work here at UCI will be centered on these dialogues—do other dance artists feel that racialized dialogue in our field is difficult? Why? What can be done to make these dialogues more effective? I hope that through conversations with artists with a vast range of backgrounds and beliefs, I can shed some light on what we are most afraid of, what our obstacles are, and how we can better tackle them. Central to this approach, I'm learning, is avoiding blame, guilt or judgment. Instead, invitation and acceptance will generate a stronger, collective movement toward change.

I came to UCI with a passion to approach my role as a dance educator with responsible sensibility to my students. This is two-fold for me: 1) delivering material in a safe and healthy way for the physical bodies in the room, and understanding that all bodies are structured differently, and 2) encouraging a culture of inclusivity, accessibility and compassion. As I began the process of shaping my MFA thesis ideas, I was torn between following one of these two paths. The first, teaching healthy dance, would be easy. The latter, questioning what I see as elitism of an art form that I love, scared me. That fear convinced me to choose the more challenging path, and the PISAB workshop has given me the reassurance and knowledge to continue. As our inspired trainers put it, I am choosing to be a "critical lover" of American concert dance and its institutions for the sake of progress.

As a white person, I try to be thoughtful about how I engage with the issue of racial oppression. This issue looms large in countless arenas, and the world of concert dance is no exception. I struggle with how I can responsibly address the exclusive, elite, and both implicit and explicit racist culture of concert dance in our country. I try to see the ways in which I am complicit in that exclusion and where I can do better. What do the leadership and student body of schools and organizations I choose to work with look like? Is the student body represented in the faculty? What pieces of dance history do I choose to deliver to my students? What am I teaching them is valued in the dance community with my language and expectations? How does my privilege effect my relationships with my students? In the dance world in particular, there is inflated value placed on ballet training, which comes from a White European tradition, over other styles. Part of being a conscientious educator is encouraging balanced study of not just ballet and modern, but jazz, hip-hop, flamenco, and other traditions. It is my responsibility to teach young people I work with that one style is not more prestigious than another, and that one body type or skin color is not preferable over another.

One of the most revelatory concepts introduced to me at the workshop was the idea that it's not just people of color who are suffering from racism in the US. White people, too, have something to gain from the undoing of this racial classification of humans and the systemic injustices that result. We have lost our humanity and our unique cultural identity. We are defined only by our political and social freedoms, rather than a sense of shared history and tradition. As part of the PISAB workshop,

all of the participants were asked to prepare a “cultural share,” something that gave us joy or exemplified how we grew up. Unlike many of the people of color, who shared memories or songs that celebrated their ethnicity, I struggled to find something that shaped my cultural identity. That has led me to learn more about my family’s heritage and history and has strengthened my familial relationships. Realizing that beyond the desire to do the right thing in working toward the end of racial oppression, the possibility of exploring who I am and finding joy in that identity is revitalizing.

I am grateful that the beginning of my time as a graduate student is being shaped by my experience with the PISAB workshop, and that it has opened up opportunities for unique and meaningful relationships across racial and hierarchical lines. Successful anti-racist movement toward freedom and equity, such as that sparked here at UCI by PISAB, will be founded by dialogue built on trusting relationships and in multi-racial community. I am humbled and invigorated by this opening to listen, learn, and do better.

I found the conclusion 'because I am white, therefore I am racist' to which the group was guided to arrive, problematic. While it had face validity, it was not logical and could not be arrived at independently without the psychological preparation which the group were exposed. Here is my problem - the conflation of structural institutional racism with individual goal directed racism.

Structural Institutional Racism: That the American socio economic and capitalist system was built on the back of African slaves, true. That without industrial slavery, American capitalist system will not have thrived and become the dominant world economy which it became, true. That Anglo-Saxon Americans and sundry 'white' people benefit from this socio-political system which deliberately excluded the slaves and their descendants. indentured 'white' labourers became free and their offspring became working class with seamless movement into the middle class with the freedom to become whatever their personal industry or enterprise enabled them. African slaves and their descendants who were born into slavery were not afforded such opportunities even after emancipation. The putative inferiority of the 'Negroid race' was given legitimacy through convoluted pseudo- scientific and philosophical theories justifying their subhuman status and treatment as distinct from the superior status accorded to the Caucasoid race.

This structural and institutional reorganisation of society I see as institutional racism which benefits white people and disadvantages African Americans. The conduct of all socio economic and cultural transactions were guided by written and unwritten codes designed to maintain white privilege and power over african americans. Any citizen with power, exercises such power on behalf of the state and is constrained to operate within institutionally frameworks prescribed by the codes.

Individual goal directed Racism: So, the question is, are there instances where there are white citizens who are morally repelled by racism and who seek to nurture a more just society in which race is not a negative determinant of opportunities for African Americans in their sphere of influence? I will say, yes. And as long as one can answer this question in the affirmative, I will contest the proposition that all white people are racist even while operating within institutionally racist organisations or societies.

It is therefore more appropriate to rephrase the conclusion as:
Because I am white, I am privileged. My position of privilege can predispose me to racism unless I make a conscious effort to avoid racist practices inherent in my position of privilege which is culturally mediated and sanctioned.

Prof. Tara Rodman
Assistant Professor of Dance
Claire Trevor School of the Arts

How do we teach race, racism, and racialization in the classroom? It's a question I've wrestled with since the beginning of my graduate education and on into become an assistant professor at UCI.

I'm a performance historian; I think about how theatre, dance, and performance in everyday life create real social meanings, dissolving the supposed boundary between stage and "reality." "Representation" is, on some level, all I think about. And so, my general approach over the past 6 years has been to design syllabi that highlight minoritized voices and bodies, giving space to those who have been historically (and currently) excluded from our classrooms, our theatres, and our canons. For example, this past winter, in a class on Modern European Performance, I booted August Strindberg (an important innovator of both realism and expressionism in drama, and an obdurate misogynist) to make room for Josephine Baker, an African American actress and dancer, whose wildly popular (and deeply complicated) performances in France made her a key figure of inspiration in the 1920s. Precisely because representation matters so much in theatre and dance, more diverse representation on our syllabi is of crucial importance.

As I sat through the PISAB workshop, however, I began to identify a lopsidedness in my approach. I was so focused on trying to ensure more diversity on my syllabi. But what ended up happening in the classroom is that we only talked about race on days when we encountered artwork by someone belonging to a group that has historically been racialized. On the days when we read plays or watched the dancing of artists who were white, we talked about other things—gender, sexuality, politics, all sorts of other very important things. But we didn't talk about race. And that, in a nutshell, is what it is to be white.

At some point during the workshop, I began to reconsider my approach—especially because I'm aware of my own positionality, as a white woman, when I stand up in the front of a class. I decided my next class would be one called Performing Whiteness, as a way to begin to mark that which goes unmarked in cultural production in the US.

What's "Performing Whiteness"? Well, on the one hand, it's much of what claims canonical status—and that's no accident. It's Arthur Miller and it's Samuel Beckett. It's George Balanchine, it's Martha Graham, it's Merce Cunningham. It's *Oklahoma*. We'll spend time rethinking canonical works that seem to not be about race, precisely because they operate under the screen of whiteness. But the point of the class isn't to demonize artists or works simply because they enjoy the privilege of whiteness. That would get boring quickly. Instead, we'll try to figure out how that screen works, and how it accrues force. We'll also look at consciously constructed performances of whiteness by people of color—acts of assimilation, of passing, and of disguise.

Representation of racialized playwrights, dancers, actors, performers is still, and always will be, crucially important. I'm still committed to diversifying my syllabi—an ongoing project. But this class is an effort to spread out the burden of talking about race. It is an invitation to my white students, and to myself, to acknowledge that race is about "us" too. And it's crucial to cite: I'm not inventing this wheel—there is an entire field of Whiteness Studies, with incredible scholarship being done within the discipline of Performance Studies. But the PISAB workshop crystallized for me the necessity of talking about the two together. So many of the activities were exercises in exploring this double—the experience of racialization and the experience of whiteness, because it is only in

recognizing how “marked” and “unmarked” work hand in hand that we can grasp the precise logic of race as a system of oppression.

ON THE AMERICAN DREAM

America is in mourning. As residents and citizens we grieve over the apocalyptic nightmares that obscure the American Dream of freedom and equality. Politicians have joined academic prophets who admonish us that our societal stratification has created irreconcilable chasms between individuals and groups. Our limited faith in magic allows us only to read the fate of America in the liver of a beast ravaged and slaughtered through fear, insanity, and hatred. We are all in pain, and from this divided space, we rage against ourselves and each other, struggling as we nourish our hunger for real justice, only to encounter more fear and intolerance.

In order to clear more space for ourselves, we have mutilated our faith in unity and debased our capacity for compassion. We can't even seem to keep pace, with the latest victim of our racial hatred, the most recent scapegoat for our economic woes, the evil morality of this or that group, or the most recent mass shooting.

We have a fundamental impatience with monumental work, and a short memory which works against our desire to reconcile ourselves with our sometimes noble, sometimes disgraceful past. And now we seem to want to close the door on our future, as we listen to the bitter political prophecies of a dismembered and distorted body politic. The stigma and the pain of racialization are not embedded in policies such as immigration, or health care; they are merely symptoms of a society weakened through the degenerative disease of racial intolerance. An immigrant society that continues to designate and degrade the arrival of others baffles the best intentions of American Democracy.

In the arts, as in education, the values we learn help to shape and evolve the future in ways that make it crucial to acknowledge and promote the diversity that characterizes American identity nearly two decades into the 21st Century. We need the arts to help us in the unending task of re-imagining and re-inventing our democracy.

For in the end, we all share a fundamental closeness to one another, which was established through the constitution of our American body politic. Fracturing and forgetting that closeness will damn us to the hell of racism more certainly than a century of our struggles continuing to establish a more perfect union.