

I. Artist's Statement

I dance. It is as essential to me as food and water. I discover my life force in the connection between music, spirit, and movement. The intersection of art and activism is where I land, finding immense pleasure and value in both. Dance is a visceral and beautiful art form. It lives and breathes as a purely aesthetic practice. It exists as a form of entertainment, providing simple joy and serves as a mode of personal, exploration, experimentation, expression and exaltation, both physical and spiritual. Yet, when combined with a social and moral quest, it has the power to change both the individual and the world. Transcending language, education, and circumstance, dance speaks directly to the soul, inviting action and transformation.

I am an interdisciplinary artist and activist, working primarily as a choreographer, writer, and dance educator, with experience in directing, performing, and design work, as both a costumer or stylist and jewelry designer. With a combination of rigorous academic research and a deeply personal emotional practice, I explore where the trauma of individual experiences—both personal and institutional—reside in the body and manifest in the world. I work to answer the following question: How does exploring the creative and emotional elements of seemingly unfixable problems create imaginative pathways to solutions and enlightenment?

My current work focuses on bullying, historic erasure, discrimination, harassment, and the myriad of other forms of abuse that run rampant in the dance world, particularly the “rarified” world of ballet. Though the effects of this toxic environment have been studied in relation to the individuals harmed, my writing and physical explorations illuminate the relationship between the lack of diverse representation in leadership and the bullying that occurs—in and out of the studio—during an artist’s formative and professional years. This choreographic and academic inquiry seeks a solution that addresses the problem at the institutional level in order to move towards a more equitable industry with greater representation of all populations in the profession.

II. Presentation of Practice

Semester 1/2 Film Project: *No Dominion*

This short dance film (the music runs 5:36) physically illustrates the distance that isolation creates in the heart and soul of an artist. This personal isolation, set against the backdrop of climate destruction, the racial reckoning, and the political upheaval of the current world, is particularly painful to performing artists in theatre and dance.¹ These artists are experiencing a complete loss of identity due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The shuttering of theaters, prohibitions against performing, the loss of training venues, and the daily isolation and depression of the lockdown is devastating. Using the Dylan Thomas poem *Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night* as the jumping off point, composer Matthew Richter and his band *autodealer* created an electronic score combining spoken word with a pulsing beat which I used as a driving force to explore both the trauma of this time and a possible pathway through it.

I like to go into rehearsal having created several questions for myself, with a series of ideas that I want the dancers to explore physically and a clear idea of the trajectory/narrative of the piece. I refresh this each rehearsal and also email notes and ideas to the dancers in between.

My inquiry for this work focused on whether or not our humanity exists in our ability to touch each other; physically and emotionally. Have we forgotten, in our COVID-related isolation, how to do so? Where does the pain of that isolation reside in our bodies and how does it feel to fight through the fear, depression, rage, and other strong emotions that may arise?

I started with my own journaling process and identified the following: The sense of being trapped by circumstance and, also literally, in our spaces and because of that, in our minds. That trapped feeling led me to explore the idea of being disassembled: our sanity, our routine, our culture. I played with the word itself; though it evokes chaos and the idea of breaking apart, the fact that there is something that was at least at one time assembled is also important. Is it civilization? Does the disassembly actually mean the destruction of civilization on a personal and a societal level? Going back to choreography, how do we

¹ "COVID Response."

create such a multilayered world on film in a restricted space on a limited budget with just two dancers? Though I am not sure we answered all of these questions in the film, I was able to come up with a technique that mimicked a crowd of dancers (while not jeopardizing any COVID-related restrictions for physical distancing) thus adding to the unease and intensity of the piece.

In addition to addressing the overriding themes of fighting depression, hopelessness, and literal rage of the moment, I wanted to play with gender expectations and fluidity. Both of my dancers identify as queer and avoiding a clichéd romantic duet was important to me. With this caveat, our exploration for the rehearsals leading up to our final rehearsal prior to filming focused on touch, both of the self and by the other. We started by identifying the ways that certain ideas and emotions express themselves in our bodies and where they live. This discussion continued throughout the rehearsal process. Where do you hold fear or anger or pain or grief? How does it manifest; trembling, contraction, expansion. Do you recognize it first in your head or your heart? How can you initiate movement from that place? How can you let it go?

My personal journey mirrors this particular dance a bit. I am always afraid of physical contact, remnants of a less than supportive upbringing and a short violent marriage. Touch often hurts or feels like a violation. At first, this time in isolation felt safer. I could let my guard down a tiny bit. Yet as COVID-related physical distancing protocols have continued, the isolation has become almost unbearable, amplifying the intensely lonely space that I usually inhabit. This piece of choreography illustrates that journey. I'd like to think that maybe in answering the choreography questions, I can find some compassion for myself. Choreography is interesting: sometimes one knows what the inquiry is at the start, and sometimes the work itself reveals it. This piece has traveled both of those paths.

As I continue my graduate studies, this personal approach to trauma will be augmented, though not entirely sublimated, by external research. *No Dominion* served as a jumping off point to approach choreography with trauma and internal work at the forefront of the piece, which is a new choreographic path for me to embark upon. Future work will take advantage of additional resources, research, and

exploration. I was able to work much more specifically with dancers' somatic memories in rehearsals for the Blue Couch Ballet, my second piece which will be edited at the end of January.

In any dance production, especially one that deals with issues much deeper than aesthetics and pure movement, casting is essential. I knew that the two dancers cast had to have both technical skill and emotional depth. Both Darby and Ryan are graduates of AMDA, the performing arts college where I teach, and working professionals. Ryan graduated before I joined the faculty. He is a member of Los Angeles Contemporary Dance, works with many other local choreographers, and creates his own work. This is our first project together, though he has often taken my classes. Darby was my student and is now one of my favorite dancers to work with. I often hire her as an assistant or dance captain. She is very intelligent and approaches work both aesthetically and intellectually. She is also very attuned to my process and knows where I am heading, even if I am not articulating it clearly. Annie (my assistant) was the last person that I brought on. She is a wonderful contemporary dancer, choreographer and teacher. She comes from an acting background and, since I always keep storytelling foremost in my work, I felt confident that she would help me keep a clear narrative.

My casting choices highlight an additional issue; the diversity of the team, and how it mirrors the power (im)balance in the intersecting industries of dance, film, and theater. I always hire with diversity of gender, ethnicity and identity forefront. I do not have a checklist or any strict guidelines, but I am very clear that an all-white cisgendered company and crew is not representative of the world we live in and therefore should not be how I cast or crew a project. The demographics of the people that I brought onto this film was queer (both dancers and my assistant), Latino (Ryan), female (me, Darby, Charlene, Annie) and WOC (Charlene is Chinese). The production team, all hired by Matt, consisted of white, cisgendered men, with the sole exception of the lighting designer's assistant (female). We cannot address change in the industry until we change who is making the hiring decisions. People hire their friends and within their circles.² Shifting the balance has to be a conscious effort. It is awkward and uncomfortable to raise these issues. I certainly did not feel that I had the standing to do so here; perhaps I should have.

² Lesser, "Artists Become Famous through Their Friends, Not the Originality of Their Work."

The shoot day ran well. The power imbalance came into focus again in the editing process. While on the whole, it was a positive experience, it definitely shifted from a project that I had helmed to one that “the dudes” (as they were referred to by Matt Clay) were in charge of. Until women have equal representation in the field, the default will always return to the boys’ club atmosphere that is so comfortable to, and well-established by, the boys’ club members themselves.

The film was released on Monday December 14. I have started to apply to festivals and look forward to getting it out to the public.

[Link to Film](#)

Film Credits:

Music and Production: Matthew Richter (autodealer),
Director: Bradley Bentz
Choreographer, Casting, and Costumes: Nancy Dobbs Owen
Dancers: Darby Epperson and Ryan Ruiz
Director of Photography and Editor: Matthew Clay
Lighting Design: Adam Earle
Makeup and Hair: Charlene LeFever

Shot at The Los Angeles LGBT Center’s Renberg Theatre, Hollywood CA, 2020

Edited in Hollywood, CA. 2020

[Link to Photos](#)

All Photos taken and edited by Charlene LeFever

Shot at The Los Angeles LGBT Center’s Renberg Theatre, Hollywood CA, 2020

Edited in Hollywood, CA. 2020

III. Critical Reflection:

Dance is both a universal language and an intensely personal one. The idea that one can change society through choreography seems to me to be both full of hubris and simultaneously the most natural thing in the world. I have structured my research to take both of these aspects into consideration, beginning with big ideas and broad strokes, then focusing on narrowing it down; -not to minimize the effectiveness nor scope of the change intended - but rather to make it specific to each individual affected by the abuses that I address.

I am focused on two different ways to effect change as an artist: one is the direct message of the piece; the second is the manner in which it is created. Though I do not always have total control over either, as dance, theatre and film tend to be collaborative endeavors, my mission is to create work that is socially relevant in a manner that aligns with my goals of increased equity in the dance industry.

My thesis is predicated on the idea that for the dance industry to attain equitable representation for marginalized groups, change must be made structurally in the institutional leadership and socially in the culture in which dancers are trained, hired and treated as professionals. This evolution is circular; we need to take lessons from society as a whole, refine them and then reflect those lessons back on to society, pushing against it in the places where we have managed to go further.

I think that in order to recreate the world we live in, we must look to the past. I want to reconstruct the dance world, so I started with a literal approach. My research began with Eric Foner's *Reconstruction, America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*³ and Eddie Glaude's *Begin Again, James Baldwin's America and its Urgent Lessons for Our Own*.⁴ The Reconstruction Era and the Civil Rights Movement have numerous lessons, mostly in failure, but also some glorious successes, that we can learn from. I augmented this reading with essays by W.E.B. DuBois from the collection of his work edited by Dr. Philip S. Foner.⁵

³ Foner, *Reconstruction America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*.

⁴ Glaude Jr, *Begin Again, James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons For Our Own*.

⁵ Philip S Foner, *W.E.B DuBois Speaks 1890-1919*.

The questions that these great thinkers pose about remaking a just society can and should be extrapolated into the dance world. How do we make art in a manner that changes society? How do we remake institutions so that they honor those who have come before and those who are working now? How do we make sure that the history we are following is true and not distorted through the lens of the more powerful? Foner goes into a lot of detail about Shadow or Secret History, which is defined by the Collins English Dictionary as “a version of historical events which differs from the official or commonly accepted record and purports to be the true version.”⁶

“Distortions of fact and misreadings of the historical evidence not only hampered its progress but also contributed to, even fostered, a purposeful misunderstanding of the period.”⁷

With these questions in mind, I watched several lectures. Karida Griffith⁸ gave a brilliant workshop, emphasizing the importance of understanding the backdrop of history when one discusses dance today. One take away from the lecture series is that the entirety of the Black experience serves as a literal backdrop for any issue that occurs in dance, whether it is a comment made by a teacher or choreographer, the roles and styles dancers dance and how welcoming communities are to dancers who do not fit into the Euro-centric mold. This conclusion is supported by two lectures given by Theresa Ruth Howard. The first, *The Deconstruction of the Anatomy of Culture and Leadership in Ballet*⁹ was filmed at the Dutch National Ballet in 2019. The second, *Dark Muse: Balanchine and Blackness*,¹⁰ was filmed at The Museum of Fashion Institute of Technology in March of 2020. Though the subject matter of both videos differed, there were underlying themes of representation, abuse, self-actualization and expression. She poses a similar question to my own: “If dancers, especially women, had more agency, would there be more [female-identifying] leaders?” In the Dark Muse lecture, she goes into the shadow history of ballet. Just like political history, social history and racial history, dance history is passed down through a white lens. Artists are finally starting to speak out about the ingrained injustices of the industry. By uncovering,

⁶ “Shadow History Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary.”

⁷ “Reconstruction.”

⁸ Karida Griffith Walker, “Racism and The Dance World: From Historical Context to the Current Climate.”

⁹ *The Deconstruction of the Anatomy of Culture and Leadership in Ballet - Positioning Ballet 2019.*

¹⁰ *Symposium | Theresa Ruth Howard “Dark Muse.”*

in a systematic way, the shadow history of marginalized populations in the arts, we can rebuild or reconstruct a more equitable and representative industry.

This is the background against which I started to create *No Dominion*. When approached to create this choreography, I realized that I had the opportunity to both create socially relevant work and to do so in a manner aligned with my ideals. We knew that we wanted to make a statement about artists dealing with the COVID crisis, but I was able to expand the scope of the inquiry to also include climate change, and social upheaval while bringing attention to mental illness brought on by the stress of the current situations. My cast and creative team was diverse in every way and we worked together in a respectful and collaborative fashion. I was also intrigued by the inclusion of poetry, as I had already begun planning on incorporating it into my final project. Though I did not have control over the production team, which was not diverse, I do feel that, on the whole, the project was created in an inclusive manner.

Trauma and abuse are inexorably linked. While work highlighting the current crisis differs from my thesis in that the trauma that people, particularly performing artists, are dealing with as a result of the climate crisis in general and the COVID crisis in particular is not intentionally inflicted, it does reside in the body in a similar way. I was able to start my choreographic exploration of trauma in the body with this piece. I will be continuing that study going forward. I am influenced by the work of Akram Khan and of Ohad Naharin, both contemporary choreographers who deal with the body with a very visceral, rather than aesthetic approach, and by Crystal Pite, who addresses both the personal and the societal in her large-scale works.¹¹ Naharin's Gaga technique was not necessarily derived with the intention of letting go of trauma, but for freeing the body of anything holding it back, so it is extremely helpful in releasing points of pain and tension. An additional layer is added when I bring in evidence (which, as of this writing, I do not have on record) that some of the choreographers who are most influential in creating this type of work are also abusive and creating additional trauma in the process.

¹¹ "Company."

Going forward, my choreographic exploration will be augmented by academic and scientific research. I will be anchoring the beginning of this the study with four books: *My Grandmother's Hands, Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* by Resmaa Menakem,¹² *Creativity and the Performing Artist, Behind the Mask* by Paula S. Thomson and S. Victoria Jaque,¹³ *The Body Keeps The Score*, by Bessel Van Der Kolk, MD,¹⁴ and *Trauma and Recovery : Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* by Judith Lewis Herman.¹⁵ There are countless supporting articles and lectures on the subjects, which I will be taking advantage of as well.

There are two choreography projects on the horizon which will focus on this body based, trauma releasing approach. I am currently working on a Zoom choreographed, independently shot dance movement study, exploring trauma and shame as held in the body. Working with three dancers, music by Bach and editing it on my own, I am creating a very female centric mini-film exploring our ideas of self in a period of time where we do not have outside validation. We have opened each rehearsal with a somatic memory exercise. The first few were based on exercises from Menakem's book, the latter few I created on my own. I continue to use poetry as inspiration, focusing on Audre Lorde,¹⁶ Laiwan,¹⁷ Sylvia Plath,¹⁸ and Mary Oliver.¹⁹ I will augment their work with some younger current female and queer poets, Kae Tempest,²⁰ Amanda Lovelace,²¹ and Sri K²² for this particular piece. These are very different artists, with very different messages, backgrounds and stories, yet the power of a female voice resonates through them all. Poetry serves as an inspiration for the first piece, but will be an important element of my practicum, which is a study of improvisation and film work, combined with poetry, music and silence. This will all culminate in my portfolio choreography project, which will dramatize the relationship between bully, victim and witness in the hierarchy of the dance world in conjunction with a written thesis outlining a pathway forward.

¹² Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands, Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*.

¹³ Thomson and Jaque, *Creativity and The Performing Artist, Behind the Mask*.

¹⁴ M.D, *The Body Keeps the Score*.

¹⁵ Herman, *Trauma and recovery : aftermath of violence from domestic abuse to political terror*.

¹⁶ *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde*.

¹⁷ Laiwan, *Tender*.

¹⁸ Sylvia Plath and Hughes, *The Collected Poems Sylvia Plath*.

¹⁹ Oliver, *American Primitive*.

²⁰ *Hold Your Own Kae Tempest*.

²¹ lovelace, *Break Your Glass Slippers*.

²² K, *Because You're Made of Stardust*.

IV: Integration and Reflection on the Performance Creation Group Study:

The Fall 2020 Performance Creation Concentration Study Group was an amazing, enlightening, and simply delightful experience. We met on three Tuesdays; November third, December first, and January fifth. Lead faculty was Devora Neumark and the student co-facilitator was Gabriel Thom Pasculli.

The first session focused on the following two questions:

- What differences – and similarities – are there between creating acts of performance about justice and creating performance that enacts justice?
- How can performance help define what justice is; and what's at stake for artists in that process as change makers/thought leaders?

To answer those questions, we explored the following four words--Justice, Reparations, Reconciliation and Performativity--coming up with both working definitions and with examples of work illustrating each that we found in the outside world. I had a breakthrough around the concept of 'Reconciliation,' particularly the second definition from the Oxford Dictionary: "the action of making one view or belief compatible with another,"²³ and how it applies to the restructuring work that needs to occur in the dance industry. The Shadow History of dance, particularly in regard to BIPOC dancers and creators, must be reconciled with the prevailing written history before there can be any movement towards a reconstruction of the industry. This reckoning is absolutely essential in order to move towards a state of justice for those who have been and who continue to be erased due to prevailing white supremacy and bias in the industry. The same method can be used to reconcile the history of women and LGBTQIA dancers and creators. Reconciliation can lead to reparations, it can lead to justice, it can lead to a new approach to making and creating art. But, there are no shortcuts. Just like in the current political disaster in the United States, unity cannot come before accountability.

We also discussed performative art that has substance, using the following definition: "Performativity is the power of language to effect change in the world: language does not simply describe the world but may

²³ "Reconciliation Definition - Google Search."

instead (or also) function as a form of social action.”²⁴ We contrasted that with the current more dismissive use of the word, where performative is used as a pejorative in reference to Instagram influencers and celebrities.

The artistic director of Dance Mission in San Francisco has taken the lead in the substantive version of the word. Krissy Keifer is a long time dance activist and has started a reparations program at her school and theater.²⁵ In contrast and as examples of the pejorative are the many “Black History Month” festivals and “Women’s Work” festivals that may have BIPOC performers or superficially feature women, but where the institutional power is not ceded. For example, I watched the Het Nationale Ballet’s Dancing Diversity Concert.²⁶ While the dancers were a beautiful rainbow of diversity, the choreographers were, with one exception, cisgender white men. The music featured was that of cisgender white men. This reminded me of the *Femmes* festival produced by Les Grands Ballets Canadiens,²⁷ a program celebrating women yet choreographed by men. It sparked outrage in the dance community, but the resulting changes did not do much to solve the problem. The act of performing racial, gender and other aspects of equality occurs over and over in dance (and elsewhere). The outward facing presentation is one of diversity and/or intersectionality but the foundation holding it up remains that of the white patriarchy.

The second session continued with separating the idea of performative art from art which actually creates change. After a joyous “meditation” led by Sonyka Francis, in which she invited us to revel in Black female sexuality by watching two videos starring Megan Thee Stallion,²⁸ Thomas asked us how we see the idea of “speaking change into the world.” We focused on the difference between individual and institutional change, which is directly related to my own studies. Devora suggested the book *Art as a Social System* by Niklas Luhmann,²⁹ which was to be my third big read for the last two weeks in December, but which I have pushed to next semester. Once again, there are numerous supporting articles to read on this as well. The idea that he posits is that you cannot directly change the world

²⁴ “Performativity.”

²⁵ “Reparations – Dance Mission Theater.”

²⁶ *Dancing Diversity [FULL LIVESTREAM] - Het Nationale Ballet & Black Achievement Month.*

²⁷ “The Problem With Les Grands Ballets’ Male-Choreographed ‘FEMMES’ Program Goes Beyond Fairness.”

²⁸ Patrick and Carling, *Megan Thee Stallion - Body [AMA Performance 2020]*.

²⁹ Press, “Art as a Social System | Niklas Luhmann Translated by Eva M. Knodt.”

through art. You can only change the institution of art, the way that art is made and then you can press against society as a whole. It is that pressure that does actually create change after all. I have been playing with this idea of pressing out against the world in my casting, in my creative output and in my discussions with colleagues and students.

We actually spent much of our time during the second meeting discussing my film, [Too Many Bodies](#), as an example of how art can be used as a social force. I believe this film pushes against an either/or definition of art as an instrument of change. The message and the outreach of the film was designed to inspire social movement AND the production itself was done in a socially forward manner. Finally, as an aside, I said that dance films can make you think with your body. The statement really resonated with me, and I will continue to bring that idea into the entirety of my portfolio.

This final study group was just a lovely experience of sharing work. G1 Ian Bond led the opening mediation. He entered with the statement that “It is just enjoyable to think about the ways our bodies move.” I feel as if, for maybe the first time in my career, I have started working from that place of curiosity about movement, focusing on the feel of it rather than a perfectionist idea of what it should look like. The rest of the session had a similar vibe, following the question, how does it feel, rather than leading with the intellectual questions. Everyone shared, mostly collaborative pieces, which was joyous. Devora shared an as yet unpublished series of conversations which spoke to who creates and presents art.³⁰ What really stood out to me was the work that Sonyka Francis shared³¹. She confronted racism in a provocative way by creating a strip tease focused on America and the Jim Crow era ban against Blacks eating ice cream, set to the Star Spangled Banner. It was really rude and sexy and “disrespectful” in any traditional sense. It was also incredibly compelling. There are so many avenues with which to address inequality, inequity, and shadow history. The fewer barriers and judgements one places on the artistic expression, especially when those judgements are generated from a perfectionism imposed by the very institutions that one is trying to tear down, the greater the possibility of engagement and ultimately, change.

³⁰ “Amplifying Presence: Conversations with BIPOC and Racialized Artists, Curators and Cultural Workers about Equitable Representation in Public Art,.”

³¹ Akynos Shekera, *Akynos in IceCream*.

V. Annotated Bibliography:

Foner, Dr. Philip S., W.E.B. DuBois Speaks, Speeches and Addresses 1890-1919
New York: Pathfinder, 1970

A collection of essays by W.E.B. DuBois. 1. Is Race Separation Practicable? (May, 1908) and 2. Race Prejudice (March 5, 1910). Both essays, each over 100 years old, resonate directly with the restructuring of today's society particularly in terms of the "separate but equal" language of race separation and perceived ideas of superiority. The following questions were addressed:

1. Is the old status of acknowledged superiority and inferiority between the white and (B)lack race in American longer possible?
2. Are the race differences in this case irreconcilable?
3. Is racial separation practicable?

This collection of essays, with foundational questions in regard to race and race relations is essential to keeping my work grounded in reality.

Glaude, Eddie S. Jr. Begin Again, James Baldwin's America and It's Urgent Lesson For Our Own. New York: Random House, 2020

Written by the James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University, this book follows the journey of James Baldwin and his intellectual and emotional confrontation with racism, heartbreak, and redemption. He then follows Baldwin's lead and bears witness to the current era under Trump. It is a mix of history, memoir and biography all connected to social commentary, fueled by an underlying and justified rage.

This book gave me an unexpected pathway into my studies. The way that Glaude travels back and forth between the past and present, connecting racial struggles of the past to the present through the vision of an artist was a perfect launching point for my studies.

Griffith, Karida, Racism and The Dance World: From Historical Context to the Current Climate (lecture series), Portland, 2020

Griffith has put together a fantastic series of videos and workshops specifically focused upon bringing the discussion of race into the dance studio, for students ranging in age from very young to college. Ms. Griffith emphasizes the importance of understanding the backdrop of history when one discusses dance today. According to Griffith, the entirety of the Black experience serves as a literal backdrop for any issue that occurs in dance.

Ms. Griffith has such an engaging and real world approach to teaching about Black history and connecting it to the actual students in the room. I found her idea of a backdrop of racial history extremely compelling and relatable.

Howard, Theresa Ruth. Dark Muse: Balanchine and Blackness (lecture) : New York, 2020.

Theresa Ruth Howard spoke at The Museum of Fashion Institute of Technology in March of 2020. She focused on the Shadow History of Ballet, including early plans for NYCB, which included equal numbers of Black and white dancers, but with some horrifying caveats such as masking the Black dancers, the influence of Black Dancer and choreographer Kathryn Dunham on Balanchine and the appropriation of Black Culture, renamed "Americana".

Ms. Howard's multiple lectures and writings are essential to understanding the Shadow Histories of Black dancers and Black creators. Her conversations are brilliant, thought provoking and always lead to numerous other sources.

McNamara, Brooke.

Bury the Seed, Poems for Releasing More Life Into You. Boulder: Performance Integral, 2020

Feed Your Vow, poems for falling into fullness. Boulder: Performance Integral, 2015

I read these poetry anthologies and took part in the Nine Poems to Enliven Your Days Program over email. Brooke's poetry is created to support introspection and is very body centric. I have used it as a sort of a jumping off point for my own poetry exploration.

Menakem, Resmaa. *My Grandmother's Hands. Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*. Las Vegas. Central Recovery Press, 2017

This book details the trauma of systemic racism on bodies: Black bodies, white bodies and police bodies. Dr. Menakem weaves together research, history, and action to address the intergenerational trauma of white supremacy on everyone. He gives body centric exercises after each chapter, as well as a clear wrap up. It is a combination of memoir, academic tome and practical guidebook to racial healing.

The exercises and “rememberings” at the end of each chapter proved a brilliant guide to working with trauma in my second piece this semester. The somatic memory meditations led me and my dancers to much deeper and more revelatory experiences in each rehearsal for my second piece.

Move, Social and Cultural Documentary Series, Netflix: 2020

This documentary series profiles choreographers around the world, highlighting their diverse backgrounds, mentors, hardships and their artistic philosophies. I watched episodes 1, 2, and 5 on Jon Boogz and Lil Buck, Ohad Naharin and Akram Khan respectively. I focused on the mind and body connection that the latter two choreographers cultivate and how that affects their aesthetic, messaging and personal practice.

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