

Speaker 1:

Truth. I'm wondering if you could share with us your thoughts on what anti-racist teaching means to you.

Speaker 2:

Absolutely. And thank you so much once again for the invitation and I'll just get to the point. Um, what anti-racist teaching means to me, as it relates specifically to African dance is, um, the way we try to situate our work is looking at the history and the master narratives that have been presented in the world about people of African descent and in African people. So for example, um, there is this idea that Africa has no history because a lot of the history isn't documented. So you would find some of these ideas, um, echo by, uh, prominent scholars like Hagle. And, um, you will see that this narrative has been created a very racist narrative, um, a narrative that was created as a rationale for colonialism and enslavement. So that's like one part of the work is recognizing what that master narrative is, right. And recognizing that within the European and the Western construct, if something isn't documented, then it's not important.

Speaker 2:

And therefore you don't have a history. And Africa has this rich, rich history of oral tradition, and that's how we're situating our work because African dance falls under, um, an oral tradition. And then the second part of that, um, as we think about these master narratives is also, um, the experience of African diaspora for a people. So, um, specifically the transatlantic slave trade. So we know that, um, mostly people from the west coast of Africa were trafficked to the Americas and that group of people, which I often refer to as African diaspora, people who were scattered throughout the Americas, there isn't another narrative that they don't have a history because they were cut off from their family structures and culture and history. So we're situating dance within that. Um, particularly looking at it as an oral tradition that people of African descent, no matter where they ended up on the diaspora in north America, south America in the Caribbean, there's this tradition of always sort of maintaining sort of the African extended through our arts that is very clearly illustrated through the arts and in particular.

Speaker 2:

And we're interested in that, that tradition and how it's preserved and how that tradition speaks that to these dominant ideas that people of African descent don't have a history. And when you make a claim that profound, um, you're basically saying a group of people have not made contributions to the world. They have not. Um, they have not completely come into there to themselves as a whole. So, um, we recognize that as being deeply, deeply racist. Um, but we use African dance as a way of continuing this oral tradition that hasn't been counted within this Western and Eurocentric construct of what history is and what it means to document history. So that's how we're situating our work

Speaker 1:

True. That's, that's really powerful and a, a really interesting, um, and important perspective about recentering the person, you know, the angle, the entry point from which you're looking at history, right? Because then it begins to, um, highlight different components. And when you start with the people, you know, history, you know, was there and these traditions were already there including that. And so I really appreciate that perspective on MTV says teaching through dance, Shani, I'm wondering you want to add something. Do you have a different thought or something you want to contribute to? What does anti-racist teaching mean for you specifically around dance?

Speaker 3:

Sure, absolutely. I, um, I'm thinking about the ways in which, uh, truth is talking about this master narrative that's, that's rooted, um, and your central, your centric aesthetics, right? And so how this plays out first, like in our bodies, right? Mentally, physically, even psychologically the impact that it's had on us. And so what it means for me, especially as a dancer and as an artist who has trained particularly here in the Americas, um, where, um, most of the curriculum around dance and what we're learning is rooted in that. And so for me, it's the taking a stance, being able to take a stance, being able to send her my work around African and black folks from the diaspora centering those voices, sintering, um, the narratives of, um, African and black people across the diaspora. Right? And so it's also this, um, this agency that is created to turn back into our bodies, right?

Speaker 3:

To realize different sensibilities that we have, that we may have learned that was different in terms of how we're, um, kind of valuing our own, um, ourselves inside, inside of whiteness or inside of white excellence, that, that becomes the standard within all of this. But this practice of, um, you know, anti-racism in, in the body is really about for me, um, turning to, um, the body, the mind and the soul back to, to the roots and, and us creating our own spaces, um, to be able to, um, to liberate ourselves right outside of this, the standard of whiteness outside of this, this white gaze. And so that's kind of what I would add to it. It plays out a lot in dance in the field of dance because the master narrative is, um, the forms of dance, the techniques that are valued, right. That, you know, ballet is at the top, you know, and I loved ballet.

Speaker 3:

I had to train a lot in ballet, but, um, but it plays out in terms of one, um, us, um, using this word as it resistance in higher education, to be able to debunk some of these ideas about even technique, right? So west African dance, as well as other dancers of the Aspen African diaspora, um, has been through a journey of trying to, um, to, to fight its way to find its way into the institution is as viable, uh, techniques. Right. Um, and, and it kind of, um, you know, the master narrative suggests that there is no technique. There is no form inside of west African dance inside of hip hop, just as, um, truth was talking about. Um, but there is no history. And so what we get to do is to be able to teach people and to get closer to that history. Um, and so to go back to that and be able to, um, just make visible, um, the very, um, the, you know, the knowledge that comes from, uh, from the continent and the diaspora as well.

Speaker 1:

That's, that's really interesting because actually, um, in others sessions of this podcast in the last season, we talked a lot about anti racist teaching, not being only against something, but for something. And what you just described, both of you is that anti racist teaching dance and African dance in particular is both working to disrupt dominant ideas about dance and the discipline of dance and facilitator returning to like one soul to one's body. And so I see this, the dance between what you're against and also what you're for, um, in what you both have shared. So as parks, the question of what does this look like when you teach this way in your classroom? And I wonder, um, maybe Shani, if you'd be willing to get us started, like, what does it look like if we were sitting in your class or in your classroom right now, what anti racist teaching through dance and manifesting as

Speaker 3:

Yes, it manifest as, um, this mutual ground, right? This mutual space that we don't see, we're talking about, like master narratives in and manifest them that I'm not all knowing, right? Like I'm not, you know, there there's a mutual ground here. There's a reciprocity between my students and I, right. There's this idea that we're all experts, right. In our own knowledge in our body brings so much knowledge to the space, no matter where you're from. Um, just even into culturally speaking. So it looks like for me, like a circle, um, you know, where there is a, it's a communal, um, aspect to the work, and there is a call and response that is directly related to, you know, um, African ways of being right. Um, that's right there in the oral history. And so, you know, for me, um, it, it also looks like me being able to facilitate, um, others abilities inside of their bodies.

Speaker 3:

It looks like there were valuing different aesthetics, right? And there were valuing different sensibilities, not focusing so much on our eyes or even our intellect, but allowing the aspects of our soul, um, allowing like even inside of the music, right. Hearing the drums and how intrinsic that can be allowing our bodies to really like open up and to be open to these other sensibilities and, and from me and truth. And I as well, um, being able to facilitate this experience, um, can be really transforming inside of west African dance for students and for us now. Um, and so, um, that's, that's what I was saying in terms of, um, us noticing other aspects and how it plays out a little bit and what we call the studio. Right?

Speaker 1:

Yeah. Truth. I know you teach a lot with, with shiny. You want to add to like what that looks like for you or from your perspective, um, how we manufacture.

Speaker 2:

Yeah. Um, absolutely. Um, actually Shawnee and I were having a conversation the other day about basically in higher education, we're always talking about how do we create more inclusive spaces? How do we help different populations feel more included? And when I was telling Shawnee, I feel like when you go to an African dance class, that's a master class and inclusion, and I'm going to break down exactly why you get there no matter who you are, everybody has to make a contribution. If you come in in a wheelchair, somebody is going to hand you a bill that you're going to be using. If you're a little baby, they're going to put you also drums. They got to give you a tambourine, right? You win. When we're having class, you see people across and I'm talking a little bit more about the community oriented African dance classes.

Speaker 2:

But I think a lot of the lessons can be translated into higher ed education. You see people who are, um, youth to elders. I mean like 75 year old women still taking dance class. Do you see women who are pregnant? Everybody who comes in the room is acknowledged for their personhood. And that's fundamental to the experience. And then also as Shani was saying, in terms of the bodily experience, um, African dance is done in harmony with the drummers. So once again, getting back to the African aesthetic, it's not like you just come to class and you do what you want to do. And you just feel so free because you hear the, like, the drummer holds all the rhythms and the drummer is telling you what to do next. So you're constantly, and then the drummer is literally reading your body the whole time to know.

Speaker 2:

And so you create this synergy between the dancers and the drummers, right? And that's another aspect of, of this interdisciplinary or this interdependence that happens in the experience that is of high value. Um, in terms of thinking about like, how do you create these collaborative experiences and that also Shawnee referred to the circle, which is a really important part of African Indian. So at the end we circle up and we come in and we all do our own expression, our own take on what you learned. And no one gets a free pass. Like you can't just be like, okay, I'm gonna stand back on the circle time. Like, it's serious. Like if you do not come into the circle, it's, you know, it's not really, it, that's what the experience is all about. So those are just some examples of how we can take some of those values from African dance, right? Those values that make people, um, feel seen valued, um, honored in their body type, um, and in their abilities. Because when you go to some of these community classes, there are people who've been dancing for years and people who've just started dancing, but there's a way that space is held for anyone who comes in. So to me, that is what, um, excites me, energizes me about African dance. And I try to bring that to higher ed whenever I have the opportunity to teach within the higher ed context.

Speaker 3:

I just wanted to also add with that, how that's so different. Um, and why it's so important is because as a dancer, as you're training, like for instance, I went to like a right as a dancer. And so sometimes we're trained the complete opposite. We're trained to be remote, right from the emotions to pull back to not fully express ourselves tonight, even lean into the space where you're being moved by music, um, or even seeing other people in the space just to see someone in the space and to be able to make eye contact and to feel that exchange of energy is sometimes discouraged and, and looked down upon in some parts of the field. Right. And so this is why this space is so, so important in terms of including all of ourselves right inside of

Speaker 4:

That's so beautiful. Uh, thank you. Thank you both for providing that perspective. And, and I, I can, I can really relate to what the, both of you are saying. Um, despite not being a dancer myself, like by, by, by practice. Um, I do have a musical background and specifically I've, I was a drummer. Um, and, and, you know, thinking back to just my experience in music, it very much is this like collective experience. And it's a very visceral, very emotional experience to the point where like, I'm not going to lie sometimes when we would perform, I would be crying during the performance because it just got to my core. And it's, it's almost like this, um, w which one of you referenced this, that it's like making, making knowledge visible in some form, you know, you feel it, you express it, you convey it in some way.

Speaker 4:

And in both of you, what I pick up on the, both of you alluded to is like, there's a lot of intentionality about what's taught that the process is also like very, very focused. And then, you know, just really focusing on that communal experience, um, something, um, in, in Shawnee, uh, what, what you shared, um, is a perfect segue to our next question. Actually, something that fascinates me is just as human beings, how we're in this constant state of evolution, you know, every day we're S we're changing on a second to second basis on a cellular level we're changing. And so I'm really curious to know how the, both of you have evolved over time and, uh, Shawnee, you know, this is the first time that we meet, but I I've, I've read a little bit about your work, and it's really quite fascinating how your experience in the American dance festival, you know, really exposed you to, uh, just your professional growth, uh, you know, meeting and studying with, with, uh, some very influential teachers in different spaces as well. You visited MIT, you were at duke as well. And then in truth, I mean, you're, you're, you you've been

nationwide worldwide, you know, you've been in different spaces. And so I'm just curious to know how have the, both of you come to teach and express and share the way that you do. And I'd like, uh, truth. Could you kick us off with that question, please? Thank you for that question.

Speaker 2:

The bottom line is that African dance changed my life. I was six years old when I took my first African dance class in an afterschool program. And the way that I felt in my body, the freedom that I felt at six years old left, quite the impression on me. So later middle school, high school years, I was really into like modern and more ballet and jazz. And I was really interested in, like, I wanted to be an Alvin Ailey dancer. That was like my idea of like, what it meant to be a dancer, um, which they do draw from, um, African dance forms. But, um, you have to have a very strong foundation in modern jazz and ballet. Um, obviously that did not happen in my life, but it just shows that there was a point where I did study ballet modern and jazz, but it was something about when I got to college, I got reintroduced to African dance and it just clicked for me in that moment.

Speaker 2:

And from there, that's where I felt like that was home for me as a dancer. Um, the doors that have opened for me have, have been limitless in the sense that I have been able to perform, um, at the time, um, with my African dance teacher and her dance company. And, um, then I had gone on to teach several years later and, um, and Shawnee and I were able to take our students to Senegal. And while we were there, we perform, um, at Ecolab disarm blaze, which is a really famous dance school there. So it has opened multiple doors for me, but I, I want to say the main thing that African dance has done for me is created that, um, that intervention in terms of helping me, um, to speak back to that master narrative that we were talking about in the beginning of this conversation, it gave me a space to, um, develop myself in my fullness and to appreciate my history and my culture from the African continent. And what does that mean as an African diet eSport person and how do I make meaning of all of that? And it created a space, not just an intellectual space, but an embodied space for me to discover who I am and to feel affirmed in that environment.

Speaker 3:

And, um, thank you truth. This is interesting to reflect on, um, how, you know, the journey, um, that, that Scott and me here. And, um, I was thinking about as you were talking truth about the Alvin Ailey school of bands, uh, one summer I, um, I did the eight week program in New York city when I was a young, young dancer. And actually at that time, I'm going to tell you, I was scared of west African dance because the circles that that truth is talking about, where is this? It's, it's an expectation that everybody participates. It frightened me. Like I was really nervous to have to go into the circle to dance, like, you know, to the point where I might rely story out to the bathroom, or like try to get away. You know, I knew it was coming up. It was like a big thing.

Speaker 3:

Um, but that, when I looked back at it, that has really contributed to just my transformation as an artist, me learning how to create my own language, um, in my body, me being free, you know, to be able to move in front of people and for them to be able to witness that. But in terms of like, um, you know, how I came to teach this way, I had a lot of models. Um, that one in particular, there was a, um, a man who taught west African dance at the Ailey school that summer who brought in, um, dreams this poem by Langston Hughes. And it was so interesting because here we are in a dance class and we recite this poem

dreams at the end of every dance class, hold fast to dreams, you know, uh, for a dreams go, is this whole point. And so, um, I think in terms of looking at, um, you know, different elders and the mentors that I've had and how they use the space of the studio has really influenced how I, how I teach.

Speaker 3:

Um, in that particular instance, you know, he's talking about everyday things, you know, he's talking about dreaming, he's talking about how we're treating people. Um, you know, that, that everybody, like I said before is on a mutual ground. And so right away, uh, dance became a reflection of, of, of life and, and I could express life and what I was experiencing, you know, in the dance. And I began to see that particularly in the west African dance class, despite of my fear, um, you know, around, around the circle in particular. But I think also it's in the thinking of it because, um, having these spaces, um, where I felt affirm, I talked before about training in ballet, um, as a young dancer, having to like, you know, practice and getting rejected because my body and the way that my body looked like I had big size, I had a swayed back and I remember practicing a lot to try to get the sweat out of my back.

Speaker 3:

Um, and so that dichotomy of me trying to fit in, and then me feeling like home in these other spaces where I'm talking about really spoke volumes to me in terms of, um, the spaces that I created students or even bodies to come into and how important it is for people to feel like you see them, um, for my students to feel like they're heard, um, for them to feel like they belong. Right. And so that was just really influential to me as well as kind of being born out of this, uh, black arts movement out of the black liberation movement, which is really defining, you know, whiteness in ways and really being radical about, um, creating our own spaces, uh, for, for liberation.

Speaker 4:

Thank you. Thank you both for your answers. Um, I I'd like to expand and, and uplift a note that you mentioned Shani that's, uh, that's that the, both of you in this process create a new language. And I love that. Um, and in, in a way I imagine that it helps students speak perhaps in a way that they didn't think that they could before or express themselves in a way that they knew that they couldn't before. And it's, it's made me think that knowledge, and I'm even beginning to like, deconstruct these ideas, these Western, you know, Eurocentric constructs about how knowledge is viewed in just one way, if it's not written, it's not valid, um, and how knowledge creation and expression is. So multi-dimensional, um, I think in, in my experience with music, I think it's, it's uplifted me in moments where I've been at my worst, and it's also enhanced my life in times when it's just, it's been full of happiness, you know, and it's there there's no one size fits all approach, you know, it's just, it's so multi-dimensional, and so I'm just curious to know from, from the students that you both teach, what's their experience and how do they respond to the approaches and the process and the experiences that you both convey and share, um, Shani would, uh, would you like to kick us off with that question?

Speaker 3:

Sure. Um, you know, truth and I have dived in, um, a lot around, um, receiving student feedback, especially, you know, during this time where, when we were taking students to Senegal to really like, um, look at the Atlantic slave trade and the impact that, that, you know, economic, global production had on us even now and why those sites are so, um, you know, important. And so through that process, particularly thinking about that with students, engaging in west African dance, um, in the studio, but also this other historical, um, intersection with their own identities, we found that there was so much identity

exploration across the board for students, and they began to, uh, one was some students, um, this knowledge that we're talking about, right. That is so crucial, um, to be affirmed and to be valued, that's coming out of the African, uh, the knowledge, the new knowledge that's produced, but the knowledge has already come out of west Africa in particular, um, in the experience of African and black diaspora.

Speaker 3:

And so for some students, it validated that it gave them a sense of worth, right. And then for some other students, um, you know, it, it, it, it was a call really to look at like how we're all responsible, right. How we all played a part, or maybe how our ancestors played a part in that. And, um, us being able to just really investigate that. Um, so for the most part, it's been a very deep exploration for students. Um, this is different though, like when I was teaching 10 years ago, 11 years ago, like west African dance, predominantly white institution. I had students say some crazy things about, you know, west Africans, like what they thought their, their, um, perspective on the continent period. Right. And, um, and, and I won't repeat those things, but I'm sure you can imagine. And so what it allows us to do is to be able to, um, introduce like, first of all, positive representations, because our representations of the continent and in west Africa are very limited, you know, to what we see in the media.

Speaker 3:

And, and sometimes it's not even accurate, like at all. And so, um, students begin to see, oh, oh, wow, okay. That's not true. Okay. You know, and be able to, to make distinctions, um, and, and to, to see the culture, to experience the culture. And oftentimes, um, that is a transformative experience, as well as a space. Like I talked about, that's a safe space, that's a brave space for them to connect their own history. Right. And their own ancestry, which really like it's fruitful inside of that environment. So we get to learn about Columbia, or we get to learn about, you know, even from your Mexicans, you know, the sin, it's just, it gets to be such an intercultural experiences where we're all looking at kind of also where we came from.

Speaker 4:

Yeah. Truth. Feel free to hop in. Thank you, Shani for,

Speaker 2:

Uh, thank you. Um, that, that, that was great. Shiny. Um, and just to pick up where Shawnee left off, um, to give an actual story and an example. So basically the way that we created our class spring of 2018 was that we, um, the trip to Senegal happened during the spring break. So we had about maybe like five or six weeks to prepare our students in mind, body, and spirit for that experience. Right. So we did a lot of cultural competence for them before they even got to Senegal. They had to re they all had research projects related on the culture, the history of Senegal. Um, we had them do a lot of team building in terms of building trust with one another, before getting to Senegal. So we were really intentional about like, preparing them for that experience, because it was important for us to not show up from, um, elite, small, predominantly white, liberal arts institution, without our students having done the reflective work, we can't control everything that they're going to say, but we wanted to put in that investment.

Speaker 2:

And that was important to us once we got there to Senegal, I think maybe on the second or third day was really the, um, the essence of the trip was going to the, the slave Dungeons. And you have to, it's literally an island. So it was really a whole day journey getting there. And, um, and, and like I said, we've

been preparing our students for it. Um, psychologically, intellectually, we have been reading about it. Um, our students are anticipating it, but when we arrived, what they didn't anticipate was that the people who live on the island make their living by what they sell to tourists. Um, that industry sustains the island. So we're coming in thinking, we're going to have this really deep, profound engagement with history, but what you come in contact with before you even get there, it's the real material circumstances of Sinica leaves people there.

Speaker 2:

And that lesson in itself is really profound because we, no matter how well-intentioned our agenda was to, to have that experience in the slave Dungeons, we had to first confront what was real today, right. And we had to make that a part of the learning experience. So even before we went into the slave Dungeons, we were reflecting. And one of the questions we were reflecting on is we wanted them to think about how does it feel to be a witness to historical trauma, right? And so our students have the experience. They went into the slave castles. Fast forward. We get back to campus. The core of the class was to take that experience and translate it Arctic artistically into choreography. So we were, co-constructing a production piece together based upon our experience, but we had to unpack all of that. We had to unpack the present, right?

Speaker 2:

We had to unpack the history. And as we started to think through what we wanted this piece to look like, um, as Johnny stated, our students were really fixated on identity. And what we noticed is that, as we were thinking through the storyline of the choreography, the students of color started to think in terms of these characters, like the students of color would, would be the ones enslaved and, and with the white students, be the ones who would represent the slave master. And we got caught up in this conversation. And I think attorney point for me as an instructor was how do we transcend those roles? Those very predictable roles in, in what we were trying to help our students understand is that we're all responsible for telling this story is not about portraying a character. It is about us trying to have integrity with sharing the story of voices in the history of people who have been silent.

Speaker 2:

You are a storyteller, you are not necessarily a character. So what we were trying to do is try to get them the transcend out of this white, black binary, which wasn't elevating our thinking. And when we did that, something really powerful happened, particularly. I mean, the students of color, um, most of them, um, had were of African descent, descent, um, one family from Jamaica, the other half family from Haiti. Um, so one was Puerto Rican and black, and they were having these identity breakthroughs a lot. But the white students in that moment, it was really profound for me that they realize that I'm responsible for this history. I got embodied this history. I am a storyteller. It may, I now understand my role in it. And one of the students said something I would never forget. Cause she had been studying colonialism her whole four years.

Speaker 2:

And she said, that's the first time I felt implicated in my work. And she was a senior and it blew me away like, because she was tasked with the challenge of embodying it. And I think that's what the power of dance performance choreography and all those different pieces can do is that you remove that veil of intellectual reality. You need the intellect, but when you begin to embody it, it becomes more than what you're studying. It becomes who you are. Right. And you begin to take responsibility for what you're



learning in ways that are, are difficult to do when there's too much of a, when you're too far removed from that history,

Speaker 1:

I really appreciate your description. That was a really wonderful example, making come to life, what you both have been discussing. And, you know, I had goosebumps as you were talking because I could feel the elevation of the learning. You were aiming for the students to engage in, you know, and that it takes some real intentional effort emotionally, intellectually, um, with the body, right. To move from the characters, as you were seeing to the, to viewing it as happening over there. And I'm trying to like, just tell you about that thing versus I am part of the story and I'm a vehicle from which I'm gonna share the story. I'm gonna live the story. I'm gonna embody the story and the responsibility that comes with that. Um, that's not easy work that you all were doing. That that sounds really amazing and powerful transformational, but also hard work, like really hard work on your behalf as instructors and on the students be, have as, as engaging in learning and teaching each other.

Speaker 1:

So I'm curious if you would share with our audience, I'm sure that they're as, um, inspired by the conversation we're having and by what you all have said, um, what advice might you give to someone who wants to offer that to their students or someone who wants to engage in that way in their teaching? Um, anti-racist teaching either broadly or someone who wants to rethink how they're doing their art teaching, um, from an anti-racist lens, I'm wondering what, what, what, what advice might you give that can help them get closer to transcending the conversation towards a level of, of, of engagement that really moves students now, what they know, but how they know it. Um, I don't know if, uh, one of you would be willing to, to share some thoughts on that. Both of you will be willing to share some thoughts on that. Johnny, what do you think?

Speaker 3:

Sure. Although, um, just as you were saying that I was thinking that, um, it's useful to let go of what we know or what we think we know right inside of these spaces. Um, I think as a, as a professor, it's always the pressure of having to know everything, even with this, uh, in this journey of taking students to Senegal and the questions that come to us, there's this expectation, but I there's this other piece of being human. Um, and knowing that we don't know what we don't know. Right. Um, and that these other aspects, like true, just talked about, that's going to touch us unexpectedly that we'll just have to roll with. Right. And trust, trust our knowing really. So it's about trusting also what we know already. Right. Um, I wouldn't say that. I would also say to like, be embodied, like no matter what, you know, you're teaching or what you're doing like to consider the body inside of it, consider our body, especially during this time post, well, I'm not even going to say Laura post pandemic, but you know, doing this global pandemic, um, considering our bodies really sitting in our bodies really, um, being embodied in terms of noticing what comes up for us in our bodies, how does this, how does my body feel right when I'm with this person, what is it?

Speaker 3:

What's the energy there? What's the vibe of this place. And also kind of like vibe, same with like-minded people like finding the community, finding the village, right. Finding the collective in terms of there's other people I truth. And I write, like, I, I didn't even know she was a dancer. I was on the panel. Um, I was on her, um, hiring committee, so to speak and I was like, wow, she's a dancer also. Okay. We're

thinking the same theme, you know, we're, we're dreaming about some of the same thing let's get together. Uh, you know, and we're seeing that across the board, even with scholars of people creating collectives. Right. So, so the importance of like finding ourselves in other people and working with them coming together and that happened and, and, and community, um, I'll leave it there. I'll leave it there, dance, dance In the living room and the shower and the bathroom outside, you know, put on some music and allow the body to feel good. That is okay. Right. Find something that's pleasurable and feel good and dance. Y'all

Speaker 2:

Beautifully stated Shawnee yes. Dance, dance, dance. In terms of offering advice on anti-racist teaching or those who want to incorporate more, anti-racist thinking into the arts. Um, I would say it reminded me something of the late great Toni Morrison. Uh, she, I mean, she has just really been a source of so much inspiration for me. She said, and I'm not going to say the quote correctly, but I hope I capture the essence. She said, I've done everything I can to not produce work within the white gaze. And beyond that, she said, because there's so much imagination that she can unlock because of that. You know? And once again, when we're talking about the white gaze, we want to pay attention to it. It comes from this legacy of colonialism of control and domination, right? So we're not necessarily talking about white people, right. We're, we're talking about, um, in a piston mythology that has dominated the thinking of, um, various marginalized groups.

Speaker 2:

And it's important to kind of call that out. That it's not about the person it's about how these ideas have, um, dominated us, but haven't limited our imagination. Right? And, and, and while we're doing anti-racist work, it's not about anti white people, right. It's looking at these constructs that prevent us from unleashing our radical imagination, right? It's not about people. We're looking at this legacy that has a limited, the way that we think about the world, about the way that we treat each other. Right. And the way that we get to liberation as Belle has teaches us is through a practice. And we practice this through dance, right? It's not the only way, but this is the way that resonates with us. And we hope to share it with other people because they may not know that the body is a place that will allow them to step more into their radical imagination.

Speaker 2:

So I would say, um, no matter what you're teaching, um, be transgressive, you know, bringing in different disciplines and points of views, allow your students to move, give them multiple modalities for how they want to express their learning. Um, think of education without any limits. Right? And because of the way that education has been constructed within the Western world is very cerebral is very much, you know, you're sitting at a desk, we forget about the body. Don't forget about the body. The body has a story. It wants to tell the body, and that's what dance, that's what I've learned through dance. My body has something.