



INVISIBLE

Imprints of Racism

Hip-Hop – Spoken Word – Dance – Dialogue

August 14, 2018

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Executive Summary

INVISIBLE: Imprints of Racism was held on Tuesday, August 14th at 6:00 p.m. at the Northside YMCA in Milwaukee, WI. The event included a dance and spoken word performance by the Boston-based troupe Beheard, followed by a facilitated discussion lead by the Zeidler Center for Public Discussion. The event honored the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination.

Subsequent to the performance, participants broke into small circles to discuss the performance and the topic of invisible imprints of racism guided by Zeidler Center trained facilitators. The participants were asked the following question for a structured round of answers:

"What's an experience in your life that came to mind while watching this performance?"

Participants were then invited to participate in Connected Conversation prompted by the following questions:

"What motivated you to attend the performance and was there anything that surprised you?"

"What's a scene in the performance that was particularly striking to you and why?"

"What's at the heart of the matter for you in discussing the issues the performance brings up?"

"What in the performance challenged your opinions or viewpoints?"

"What questions remain for you?"

"What new questions do you have about the performance itself?"

During the first round, many participants relayed stories about their childhood, about first learning of racism in general, or experiencing racism personally. Several groups discussed image, beauty and hair as an experience of race, with experiences ranging from childhood throughout adulthood. Most of the groups also discussed the topic of inclusion, exclusion and colorism. In addition, participants discussed how those issues came out powerfully during the performance for them. Another theme that emerged underlined stories related to responses, or lack thereof, to acts of racism. Some participants also reported that the presence of violence as well as police brutality within the performance echoed personal experiences in Milwaukee.

During the Connected Conversation, conversations fell generally in two areas: discussion about the performance in itself, and further discussion around the themes that emerged during the first round. Groups spent significant time discussing the meaning of the performance and how it resonated with them, as well as their feelings about art in general and their purpose for

attending the presentation and discussion. In continuing their discussions of Question One topics, participants spoke about color, blackness and whiteness. Participants also spoke about fear and hopelessness when it came to racial issues, but several others also spoke about feeling hope for change and for the future.

Participants' Parting Words carried similar themes to both Question Round One and Connected Conversations. Participants spoke about their general feelings towards the performance and discussion. They used words such as connections, differences, empathy and love. Participants discussed their happiness and thankfulness regarding the event. Participants also stated their plan and purpose moving forward, in an effort to increase their knowledge and learn more.

Questions about this dialogue may be directed to:

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Analysis

Question Round One: *"What's an experience in your life that came to mind while watching this performance?"*

Childhood Events

Most participants shared stories about their childhood, including first personal experiences of racism and stories from school or other events that affected them early in life. Some participants spoke of first learning about slavery and encountering stereotypes, racial slurs, overt racist acts, and naivety. Stories ranged from experiences of drinking from the "wrong" drinking fountain, witnessing children asking to "pet" family members, being told they were not able to become a ballerina, and losing family members to violence.

"They told me, 'No, we don't hang out with black girls.' I was shocked and hurt. In my opinion in any walk of life racism will show up."

"My family moved to the United States when I was a child. We lived in Miami, and then Chicago. I was taught to fear black people. We only saw -- on the news -- that black people were criminals."

"When I was young, around 6, I learned the raw effects of racism. My mom and dad dressed me in a rain coat and hat on a sunny day when I went to school so that the rotten tomatoes thrown at me by the white kids wouldn't stain my dress... These memories came back to me during the performance, making me want to cry- it was very emotional for me."

"So, at the age of twelve I kissed a girl [who was not white] I and my family turned on me and ever since that experience I have been analyzing race."

Image/Beauty

Participants discussed race, image and beauty, which were often closely related to childhood events. Some participants reported needing to learn to appreciate and understand their beauty while growing up, especially regarding their hair.

"My father had been relaxing my hair since age 8. You see this image of beauty and you just want to fit in as a kid. I am still fighting these same issues as an adult."

"It was a very emotional journey about my hair. I need to write a memoir. Braids, up dos, what a wreck of a life. I need to go back and respect my hair—it was good hair. My goal is accepting my hair, appreciating what and who I am. Yet I find myself apologizing."

"It is tough for me living here in the states in this skin. I am from Jamaica where it is 99% black. I felt sadness about how blackness was portrayed in the piece."

Inclusion/Exclusion and Colorism

For some participants, inclusion, exclusion and colorism came through powerfully during the performance and appeared throughout their lives. Several participants shared personal experiences of feeling outside or in between races or skin-colors, as if they did not fit in anywhere. Other participants recalled incidents, either personally or with family and friends, in biracial relationships or being from another religion where they felt or witnessed racism or exclusion.

"I couldn't fit in with the white or black kids at my Lutheran high school when I first started school. Later I was challenged to talk properly, not like the kids in my black neighborhood. Later when I returned to a mostly black school my friends told me I talked and dressed like a white kid."

"My friend in school once asked me if I was adopted because I don't talk like the other black people."

"I experience antisemitism, but I don't wear it the way black people wear their skin."

Responses to Acts of Racism

Another theme that emerged during the first round was stories of responses, or lack thereof, to acts of racism. For some participants, the performance brought forth stories of how they have acted or would want to act to foster inclusion and growth. For others, the performance reminded them of instances in their life, whether previously or that day, of struggling when witnessing racial incidents unfold and being unsure or hesitant to act.

"I was on the football team in college... [The coach] said that we know they're not going to get jobs when they graduate. He was referring to my black teammates ... I feel terrible because I didn't confront my coach or tell my teammates about what I was thinking and feeling."

"One struggle I have is to give up space better, allow other people to talk and learn to listen better. I'm trying to be better about that."

Violence and Police Brutality

A theme that was captured in the performance and resonated with the participants was violence and police brutality. Some participants expressed that this part of the performance was one of the most powerful parts and that they understood it the best. Other participants shared stories of targeting in their own lives or seeing violence and police brutality in the media.

"I understood some of the dance performances, like the part of police killing black and brown people and the ways that black and brown children are taught to put their hands up and say, 'Don't shoot!'"

"We looked at police violence against black and brown people, and we also looked at black on black violence. These two types of violence were at the heart of the piece: people being tossed around, almost like rag dolls."

"I watch a lot of television and news and I see the brothers on the street handcuffed, I can't help but get angry by my experiences."

Art, Feelings and its Role

Finally, participants also spoke about the performance in general and the emotions that it invoked within them. Participants noted the value of art in relaying emotion, teaching and building bridges. Some participants experienced powerful emotions in response to the presentation even though they did not experience racism or exclusion within their life.

"I'll say that the performance was incredibly powerful. The whole thing. For me, because of who I am, my life and identities, I haven't experienced a lot of pain. So, this highlighted the disparity. Performances like this seem to be the way to touch people, through the physical expression of dance. I think the best way to touch people is through art."

"Sometimes we enter into conversation through different forms, trying to understand ourselves and others. I'm not artistic but art can be very important in building bridges."

"The words that came to mind were loneliness, deprivation, separation and loss."

Connected Conversation

Connected Conversation: “What motivated you to attend the performance and was there anything that surprised you?”; “What’s a scene in the performance that was particularly striking to you and why?”; “What’s at the heart of the matter for you in discussing the issues the performance brings up?”; “What in the performance challenged your opinions or viewpoints?”; “What questions remain for you?”; “What new questions do you have about the performance itself?”

During the Connected Conversation, conversations fell generally in two areas: discussion about the performance in itself, and further discussion around the themes that emerged during the first round.

Art, Dance, Meaning

Participants spent significant time discussing the meaning of the performance, parts of it that resonated with them, and their feelings about art in general. When discussing art, participants spoke of liking dance and storytelling.

“Can’t hide from a feeling from a performance.”

“Art crosses color barriers.”

“‘Artists are here to disturb the peace.’ I like that quote. The dancing tonight was phenomenal. I came to see the dancing but look what I’m leaving with. It takes courage to dance.”

“I love storytelling. Deep down I’m just an artist in disguise.”

Dancer Perspective/Explanation

Participants posed several questions for the performers who joined them, including the mechanics of putting the performance together and how they felt about parts of it. Performers shared their experiences and feelings in return. Overall, the participants felt very grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the performance and invest in it.

“What would be the biggest compliment to you as a performer? Being asked to come back and do more. Being told that the performance was great but that the discussion was even better.”

“I hate my character of white privilege while playing the mistress of the slave owner and it hurts my soul with every performance. My being in that particular piece is the most challenging for me.”

"We all genuinely love each other in this dance company. We come as a pack so doing this type of performance and with this subject matter is hard. We have to shut off our discomfort to get the message across."

Performance Parts

Every group discussed which part of the performance resonated with them. Participants noted several different parts, including the balancing man, the part about slavery, flying, the parts depicting struggle, and the post-performance dialogue. Participants shared being emotionally moved by the performance, as well as difficulties in understanding it and certain parts that made them uncomfortable.

"The part that got me most worked up was the part about slavery. The struggle and pushing of African American dancers."

"A powerful one for me was when the dancer was rubbing their arm... like they were trying to, but couldn't, take off their skin."

"The pushing bothered me and made me a little uncomfortable."

Purpose for Attending

Participants also shared their purpose for attending the performance and discussion. There were some young participants from school groups, people who were interested in the topic, or people who just happened to come by the presentation and ended up being moved by it.

"I belong to the youth group, Urban Underground. We bring young people together to talk about racism and other forms of social injustice, and we work for social justice in our communities. All four of us belong to this group."

"I was eager to see this performance because I had heard about it and I love modern dance."

"I wanted to learn more about the ways that racism occurs in Milwaukee, expressions of both visible and invisible racism."

In addition to discussing the performance, groups also continued their conversations from Question Round One, including sharing firsthand experiences with racism and their perspectives on racial issues in a more systematic way. Participants spoke about color, blackness and whiteness. Participants also expressed fear and hopelessness when it came to racial issues, but several others also expressed feeling hope for change and for the future.

Racial Imprints, Personal Experiences

As with Question Round One, participants disclosed stories to their groups about their personal experiences with racism. Participants spoke about implicit bias, bias due to events, and instances when others do not think before they speak or act. Some participants revealed their efforts to “hide” their background, or put on a different hat, when race became an issue in their life and others relayed stories about friends and family members and their struggles with confronting racism.

“I experienced something similar. A white person came up to me and said, ‘What tribe are you from?’ My tribe is Boston, it’s Massachusetts. I’m so sorry. Not all African Americans who are tall and slender are from Africa. You can’t make that assumption.”

“I’m in an anti-discrimination group that is growing. I’m happy that people are uncomfortable. I can’t be racist, but I can be prejudiced, and I am, against my own people. I’m so confused I don’t know how to feel. It’s systemic and our people are killing ourselves.”

“Milwaukee is very segregated and tough for young people. Hearing it is a bad place to raise a child is a difficult pill to swallow. We have to show youth that it is possible to be successful.”

Whiteness Assessment/Perspective

Part of the groups’ discussion of racial imprints and experiences specifically focused on whiteness and the perspectives and portrayals of white people. Some participants relayed feelings that some white people can be afraid and or feel guilt or deep resentment of them. Others expressed seeing whites as allies in moving forward. White participants spoke about feeling their “whiteness” and about recognizing their power to influence.

“The naturalness of responding and shutting down. A white male walks in at work and I feel deep resentment— I’m never going to be you—be like you—getting to move ahead.”

“The role media plays... it presents women, African Americans and others in certain ways. You have to resist that. In my experience some white people want to resist and others don’t. I recognize my power as a white woman is to influence.”

Fear, Helplessness and Hope for Change

Finally, participants expressed hope and fear in their discussions about racial imprints and race relations in general. Some participants recognized their own hopelessness to affect change and their fears of interacting with different races. Other participants acknowledged the greater societal fear of addressing racial issues and having difficult conversations about them.

"My dad told me not to tolerate ignorance. If I say something untrue, it is your job to correct me! Be strong and say what you mean."

"Correct with wisdom. Be respectful. There are no quick fixes, we have to walk it together."

"I question myself as to if I am doing enough to curve racism, am I speaking up enough and I realize sometimes I am not so I challenge myself to do more."

PARTING WORDS

During the Parting Words, participants spoke about their general feelings towards the performance and post-performance dialogue. They used words such as connections, differences, empathy and love. Participants discussed their happiness and thankfulness in observing the performance and taking part in the discussion. They also stated their plan and purpose moving forward, in an effort to increase their knowledge and learn more.

"Stay encouraged. Every day it's so easy to feel discouraged."

"I feel a little more love. My voice does matter. We need to find each other- all the people who want this."

"I'm going to be more impatient for something to happen- speak up, write letters to the editor. Take action."

"Keep using my artistic expression as an outlet. And encouraging others to use theirs."

"Thank you for your vision, hard work and creating a space. We have to be intentional in creating the space. Hearing stories humanizes us; creates a better sense of community."

ANNEXES

Question Round One: *"What's an experience in your life that came to mind while watching this performance?"*

Childhood Events

- For me, the PTSD poem. The story that comes to mind is about me and my twin brother. We were like day and night. My mother was a good woman, but our sister really was in charge and she was really strict with us. My brother was always in the streets while I was more serious and stayed away from that. My sister tried to bring him in from the street but couldn't and he got shot and died. He was a knucklehead. Even my strict sister could not save him.
- It's hard to start each performance because as a performer I'm reliving past events which are also current. There's pain in history and it's hard to see things happening again. I experienced many of the painful things that are part of our performance when I was young. I was playing in a park as a kid in downtown Boston – the Boston Commons – and I approached a White kid and he said he wasn't allowed to play with "you all." I had to think about what that meant. I wasn't sure if it was because of stigma from his parents. It was hurtful because I approached him with open arms and I felt outcast. I've had many other experiences as an adult. This is a tough subject to talk about. There are many layers, not just skin tone and race. There are many isms and separations. At the end of the day when the sun comes down and darkness settles in, everyone's the same...that's what we see.
- An experience I thought of is when my dad took me and Matthew to my first protest. I think it was about gun violence. The marching in the performance made me think of that.
- This affected me later in life because I was really young when it happened, so I didn't know much about racism and why it was happening. We were getting a dog and were in the elevator going down to get it and there was a little girl on the elevator who said, "can I pet him" (facilitator note: the "him" referring to the African American youth circle participant whose statement this is). My dad was super cool... he knows a lot of stuff and he would have probably gone off if he'd been there. I mean, how do you see me as a dog?
- I went to a non-denominational church. My older sister was on the dance team, but I didn't get to dance. I wanted to hang out with the other kids, the boys, sons of the minister included. They told me 'No, we don't hang out with black girls.' I was shocked and hurt. In my opinion in any walk of life racism will show up.

- I learned I was Polish in school because they made fun of my name. And my family was at a zoo in Japan. We were the only non-Asians there. We suddenly realized that all 300 other kids at the zoo were staring at us. People are afraid of what is different.
- I enjoy modern dance; still, I found it hard to understand the dance. I knew that it was about race relations. The performance was complicated; it reminded me of our own family. My family moved to the United States when I was a child. We lived in Miami, and then Chicago. I was taught to fear Black People. We only saw -- on the news -- that Black people were criminals. We need to go further to overcome racism. Hard to work out the challenges related to achieving racial injustice.
- I appreciated the spoken word during the performance. I understood that the dance is about racism. I enjoy ballet. I wanted to be a ballerina and was told that I could not be a ballerina because of my race and body type. I have the book about Misty Copeland, the first Black Ballerina.
- When I was young, around 6, I learned the raw effects of racism. My mom and dad dressed me in a rain coat and hat on a sunny day when I went to school so that the rotten tomatoes thrown at me by the white kids wouldn't stain my dress. Another time I was drinking from the white only fountain and my dad saw me and shouted to me that black kids can't drink from that fountain. These memories came back to me during the performance, making me want to cry- it was very emotional for me.
- I grew up in Mequon and when I was 16 years old my twin sister and I volunteered as tutors in Milwaukee. We loved tutoring and looked forward to it. One day a young black man in the neighborhood told us that it's too dangerous for us to keep coming there. We had no idea, but he was concerned, and we had to stop coming.
- I experienced all of those things in my childhood. One serious loss and separation was when I was bitten badly by a dog as a child. I had to stay in the hospital for a long time, so I was separated from my mom. I had boards strapped to my arms and I was tied to the bed. Growing up there was also a lot of deprivation with my family. The adults in the home did not pay a lot of attention to kids and violence. I would often spend time in the closet by myself.
- While watching the performance it made me think about a time when I took a road trip with my family. We stopped to eat and there was a white family there. The little boy yelled "Dad, the niggers are here!" My mom had to explain to me what happened.
- It is always intense for me when I perform but especially when we visit places that are more historical than Boston. I think of the 4th grade when I was first taught about slavery and the scope of slavery. I went home to talk to my parents and they told me our ancestors owned slaves. I wondered, "how is that possible?" It's hard to talk about.
- For me it is a domino effect between my family's views and actions that will affect me for the rest of my life. True Story: Growing up in the Midwest I had friends of color and we played together in our neighborhood. So, at the age of twelve I kissed a colored girl and my family turned on me and ever since that experience I have been analyzing race.

- Growing up in the south I had neighbors of several different racial backgrounds such as African Americans, Somalia's, Whites, etc. We didn't know the difference they were our friends and there was no color. When my family moved to Maine it was different (all white).
- My son is 13 years old. When he was 5 years old, I remember being at a carnival. A white lady was there with her young daughter – about the same age as my son. Our kids started mingling with each other when I heard the girl ask her mother if she could pet him. Now, I know my son don't look like a monkey so I'm wondering where the girl would get that idea from. The girl's mother looked at me and said she was sorry, but I wonder what are you teaching your child? I was crazy and couldn't believe what I was hearing. My wife heard it and was on fire at the woman. That was 8 years ago and look; Racism is still here. It isn't going nowhere. It's alive and we're still the same. Parents are responsible for the behavior of your child.
- I grew up in a mostly white community and was never confronted with racism until I went to college. This was the first time it happened, and it made me feel very uncomfortable that I grew up the way I did – not really understanding racism. I'm here tonight because I want to learn more about it.

Image/Beauty

- First piece—origin. Certain topics coincide with piece—everything I talked about—strong Black father. My father had been relaxing my hair since age 8. You see this image of beauty and you just want to fit in as a kid. I am still fighting these same issues as an adult.
- Your first comment about the light—the hair. I am from a small town in Northern Michigan. I was an exchange student in India. It was my first time sharing with others so different from me. I learned about lightening cream that was used and caused physical and emotional damage. This performance evokes something really small but impactful. It allows one to act from a deeper part. I want the same for my students. From them I learned "We don't need you to save us".
- I live and breathe diversity. I am a pro Black person. I am thinking of the PTSD and the hair conversation. As a little girl, I dreamed of long blonde hair. I was given perms in my hair. White people don't know the pain—the burn. Then I had straight hair—using the iron. I just got diagnosed with a disease—and I think it may be caused by things with my hair. I tried using a wig but now I don't—just have very short hair. It was a very emotional journey about my hair. I need to write a memoir. Braids, up dos, what a wreck of a life. I need to go back and respect my hair—it was good hair. My goal is accepting—my hair; appreciating what and who I am. Yet I find myself apologizing.
- The piece was beautiful, but I don't know if I want to talk about my personal experience. I was born with this skin and I will die with it. It is tough for me living here in the states in this skin. I am from Jamaica where it is 99% black. I felt sadness about

how blackness was portrayed in the piece. That's why I want to help give kids the tools they need to be successful.

Inclusion/Exclusion

- It brought up a lot. I don't know where to start. I'm first generation American. Both of my parents are from Mexico. The movements in the dance, especially the running in place reminded me of my experience. Spanish is my first language. I learned English in 1st grade. My family would describe me as American, but I'm not accepted as American by others and in Mexico I'm not seen as Mexican either. My clothes and how I walk make me the "other." I'm not accepted in either country. After church with my family at Country Buffet when we were in the line to pay I spoke with my mother in Spanish and there was a lady who was also in line and was really pissed that I was talking in Spanish. "Other" automatically separates us. My father is really smart and qualified with a crazy work ethic. He grew up on a farm and now has 3 properties and he's a manager. His accent is why people hold him back... he has so much to give. I'm 25 and I'm asking myself "What does it mean to be a man?".
- The performance talked about colorism. That made me think back to my growing up in the South until I was 12. I hated my darker skin because of all the bad comments people made. I thought "my own race hates me". And my grandma said whites were better than blacks. So I didn't fit into either (race). "I grew up without an identity." The colorism pops up every day. "I'm in the wrong color skin."
- The performance particularly touched me in the spoken word part about not fitting in with both sides. I went to a predominantly white grade school. There I was bullied for my skin color. I even permed my hair because I wanted to fit in. But I still ended up coming home to mom and crying. Then I thought things would improve when I went to a diverse high school. But no. I was told 'why are you talking white?' The part of the performance where they said "you can't speak a color" really fit. I still struggle. I know I'm beautiful, but it hurts.
- "I couldn't fit in with the white or black kids at my Lutheran high school when I first started school. Later I was challenged to talk properly, not like the kids in my black neighborhood. Later when I returned to a mostly black school my friends told me I talked and dressed like a white kid. This did not make me feel good, so I would talk more black after that around them."
- The last piece is wrapped around love. Love shouldn't be a barrier. I have a friend whose story was just like the speaker – He was white and married a black girl. They didn't always have the support of friend and family, but they stayed together.
- I'm Jewish and not going to compare religions. I experience antisemitism, but I don't wear it the way black people wear their skin. I think we all want the same things – a roof, safety, fun...People talking about differences makes me sad.

- My friend in school once asked me if I was adopted because I don't talk like the other black people. I explained to her that I was black but was from Kenya and English is my second language that I studied. How do you explain that to someone, so they learn that there are many different cultures and colors around the world? I think people have an idea and a mold that they want people to fit into and if they don't fit into their mold, they have a difficult time understanding. People don't educate themselves so that they understand different cultures and different languages. It takes some time to get to know a culture.

Responses to Acts of Racism

- I'm a business man. I saw a 60 minutes program about a teacher—Maria Collins—who taught her students a powerful lesson about racism and inclusion/exclusion—with amazing results! I contacted her, went to visit, and told her I am not leaving until I learn how I can start a school like yours in Milwaukee. I came back to Milwaukee and created a school like hers. We try to get kids to believe in themselves. We have a 97% high school graduation rate and 2/3's go on to college. I became friends with Jay and Anna and we are doing this through the Zeidler Center.
- Growing up white I can't say I faced racism, so not much for me to add. One struggle I have is to give up space better, allow other people to talk and learn to listen better. I'm trying to be better about that.
- In the dance performance I try to convey all the hustle and bustle of life and how it makes it difficult to really see and listen to others. It's like two people travelling together but not really seeing each other.
- I rode the bus and, on my way here this evening, I witnessed three black men handcuffed and sitting on the ground with police present. I wasn't sure what I should do or if I should do anything at all. When I reached my stop that was just a couple blocks over from the situation I looked back to see if the situation had escalated and I feel my being unsure playing into my invisibility.
- My brother is in an interracial relationship and his wife was white. Once when I was in the hospital she came to see me and gave me a card. It had a monkey on it holding flowers. I asked her to explain why she would give me a card like that and she tried to throw it off. I asked her again when I got out of the hospital and she told me it was not meant to be a joke. No one came to her and said anything – my close friends even signed the card. It still bothers me when I think of it. When white people try to be like black people, they don't understand our language. Some white people don't speak straight out. We don't try to beat around the bush.
- The poem about PTSD resonated with me the most. The idea that PTSD is passed from one generation to the next resonated with me. I was on the football team in college and once I was talking with the coach in the locker room. The coach was white. He said that we know they're not going to get jobs when they graduate. He was referring to my

black teammates. He continued to talk about them until they walked in the room and then all of a sudden, he stopped and started to laugh like they were cool and all. I feel terrible because I didn't confront my coach or tell my teammates about what I was thinking and feeling. I knew the coach was talking to me because I was white. Now I work at a school and I am sure to talk about racism. We need to have more classes on this subject.

- My mother died when I was young, and it wasn't until she was on her death bed that she told me she loved me. I found many outlets to get through the racism that existed in my community. Poetry and dance and dialogue about fear. When white people fear black people, it is not my problem. It's there's to work through and understand how we were held back from living, from working, from school, from buying houses. The fear they have about black people is the fear they pass down to their children and grandchildren and racism stays alive. This generation will be different. I feel it and parents feel it. We have to allow our children to grow free not like a caged bird repeating history over and again.

Violence and Police Brutality

- When I was watching the performance, I was thinking about racism and police brutality. This is the off-season for Black Lives Matter. The March for Lives got more attention, which isn't ok.
- Great performance! I was at Bayshore and me and a friend were just walking around. I was wearing a hoodie and camouflage joggers and these two White cops stopped us and the first thing I thought of is that we didn't do anything. The cops asked what we'd just done. It was 2pm and they said someone had just stolen something. I was offended because I didn't do anything. It was unacceptable. I could have gotten mad, but I didn't.
- I love ballet and I used to want to be a ballerina. I just tried to figure out the meaning of the dance and performance. I understood that section "Hands up; don't shoot".
- I love basketball and dance and I wanted to dance, like these dancers. I want to know the story behind the dances. I understood some of the dance performances, like the part of police killing black and brown people and the ways that black and brown children are taught to put their hands up and say, "Don't Shoot!"
- I drew upon my own life experiences to create this dance. Each of the performers were asked to think about an experience in their lives and create a movement to express the feelings that accompany that experience. Then, we each performed our own movement for the group. Next, we put all of those movements together to create a dance segment. We looked at police violence against black and brown people, and we also looked at black on black violence. These two types of violence were at the heart of the piece: people being tossed around, almost like rag dolls.

- I watch a lot of television and news and I see the brothers on the street handcuffed, I can't help but get angry by my experiences.

Art, Feelings and its Role

- I'll say that the performance was incredibly powerful. The whole thing. For me, because of who I am, my life and identities (facilitator note: White, female), I haven't experienced a lot of pain. So, this highlighted the disparity. Performances like this seem to be the way to touch people, through the physical expression of dance. I think the best way to touch people is through art.
- It's about what race means in the world. How to discuss. My own struggle with understanding how the arts can be a mechanism for communication and healing. Sometimes we enter into conversation through different forms, trying to understand ourselves and others. I'm not artistic but art can be very important in building bridges.
- The play reminded me of Romeo and Juliet -- two people from different cultures who loved each other and who were not accepted by the other families. The dance also reminded me of the movie "Mississippi Burning".
- The words that came to mind were loneliness, deprivation, separation and loss.
- The words that come to mind for me are powerful, phenomenal.
- I have been involved in shaping the piece over time. I have seen it 100-200 times. I still experience periods of sadness about the oceans of separation between people. Then I feel anger. Not anger but frustration. Wonder what else I can do in addition to time and money. It just doesn't feel like enough. Towards the end it reminds me that we can get past our differences to love and empathy. We need to get to common ground where something positive happens. The dancers mesmerize me and give me hope. So, I go from sadness to frustration to hope.
- I never really understood poetry or dance but recently I'm in a group that has been reading a theological book and it's more like poetry and helping me to understand. Tonight, I came because I like dialogue and witnessed my first performance. It was very exciting to see the emotions of pain, power and strength. I thought it was important for performers to be of different races.
- I thought the music reminded me of one of Steve Reich's pieces "49 Trains" people being put on a train to be sent a way.

Connected Conversation: "What motivated you to attend the performance and was there anything that surprised you?"; "What's a scene in the performance that was particularly striking to you and why?"; "What's at the heart of the matter for you in discussing the issues the performance brings up?"; "What in the performance

challenged your opinions or viewpoints?"; "What questions remain for you?"; "What new questions do you have about the performance itself?"

Art, Dance and Meaning

- Can't hide from a feeling from a performance.
- Art crosses color barriers.
- "Artists are here to disturb the peace." I like that quote. The dancing tonight was phenomenal. I came to see the dancing but look what I'm leaving with. It takes courage to dance.
- I love storytelling. Deep down I'm just an artist in disguise.
- That is what YPA does - police and kids storytelling.
- I want to try contemporary dance.
- You may convince me to do hip hop.
- I do ballet 3-4 times a week. If I can do it anyone can dance.
- I want to try hip hop. I also want to learn crumping - it's like going to the edge of the void and out of your comfort zone.
- Dancing frees you.

Dancer Perspective/Explanation

- How long did it take to put together this performance? 1-1/2 years but it is still being shaped. We only come together 2 times per week. There is enough time in-between to dream and think but it is not frequent enough to condense the time to bring it together. Everyone made the piece together. All ideas were combined. Good discussions were important to making something like this.
- Where do you go from here? 2-1/2 weeks on the road and then back to Boston.
- What would be the biggest compliment to you as a performer? Being asked to come back and do more. Being told that the performance was great but that the discussion was even better.
- Hopefully all performances will include discussions like this. I really appreciate the Zeidler Center
- I wanted you to know that these people started YPA. I said come to Milwaukee and we will sponsor you. This is their third trip to Milwaukee in six months and it's in 30 cities. This program facilitates talks with young people and police.
- Two days ago we were performing outside and it was hot I could feel the last piece more because of where the performance took place. I remember it being really hot and we were gasping for air.
- I hate my character of white privilege while playing the mistress of the slave owner and it hurts my sole with every performance. My being in that particular piece is the most challenging for me.

- I had the most discomfort with my role as the Slave Master. I wanted to add an accent to get into the character and there were certain places in the performance that I allowed myself to not see certain people in the audience so I could get further into the character.
- I was curious about the choreography. Answer: The director will give us prompts and then we move with how we feel about the prompt(s) and sometimes she will give us movements.
- Look at my perspective of the world—fighting for my perspective but losing. My perspective isn't the dominate one.
- I invited to bring the poem I wrote to more than the U.S. but I was requested to not be so global.
- I was encouraged to think- what would you tell an 8 -year-old girl?
- Grandma used to press our hair—the burn—back in Africa. We did a lot with our hair. We didn't have education about hair.
- I loved Vanessa Williams- Miss America—my image—the closest thing to Black. I am a born educator. I talk about hair care, loving yourself, loving your beauty.
- We channel each other's energy.
- We all genuinely love each other in this dance company. We come as a pack so doing this type of performance and with this subject matter is hard. We have to shut off our discomfort to get the message across. The part where I "died" is hard for me. It reminds me of when I was 5 years old and was in a drive-by and saw an innocent man die in front of me. There was something that protected me. I had to crawl under a car. Another thing is seeing so many deaths of friends who had barely started a life before life was taken from them. Police brutality is a shame. Racial profiling, too. I was asked to take a cousin to school and before I left I knew I had to have my wallet with me in case I would get stopped by the police. I got stopped and was asked where I was going – home – and where I was coming from – dropping cousin off at school. He said, "You look grungy" – yes, it's 7am and I just got up. He ran my ID and I was cleared then he said, "Oh well, make sure you go in the house" and stuff.
- This piece has been performed for 3 years, it took 2 years to develop it and it's had a lot of changes... new dancers and poets sharing personal experiences. Everything is very collaborative. The Director gives prompts and a motif. We're very silly to take our minds off what is otherwise really intense.
- It's been an awesome tour, very controversial, many interpretations.
- Thank goodness they're doing this, went through my mind.
- I'm here because dance has been my voice – I'm lucky to have that. I always wanted to make a change in racial issues from a young age. It's like my mission. I want to see change in the US where we can celebrate all of us.

Performance Parts

- The male dancer balancing on one leg.
- I thought the final scene was powerful the performer using one leg in an intense struggle to keep up. It was like he was having a conversation with himself. Dancer interjected saying "I wasn't really thinking I was just letting my body flow and afterwards I question myself as to why I did that."
- The moving of the bodies.
- I like the way the performance builds emotionally.
- The White guy in the performance—took off the head set and gave it to the Black guy—I read into this gesture. It could have been logistical but also an opportunity to be symbolic.
- The piece that really spoke to me was the one with two women and two men and it was the crime I see on the streets and in the news.
- I enjoy the facilitated dialogue.
- I am a facilitator and I enjoy discussion, one never knows what they will learn or hear during the discussion.
- I did not understand much of the dance or the rest of the performance, either. I found that frustrating.
- Two dancers, one struggling and then the other was struggling, too... one was pushing the other down in order to be able to continue. This seemed like it was about internalized trauma within People of Color communities... self hatred... you are my brother but I'm going to do what I have to to eat.
- I was walking out from the locker room and the lady sitting at the desk asked if I would like to see the performance. It was a surprise and I was impressed with the movements of the performers but I wasn't prepared emotionally.
- What made me feel good was the flying; seeing 2 dancers working together; when a dancer was lying on another dancer.
- Our teacher teaches a class on Global Studies, and we are studying race issues; the dancers reminded me about some of the themes that we talked about during class: keeping people back, pushing people down, not looking because we don't want to see, black on black crime, police brutality, and problems in families, too.
- The pushing bothered me and made me a little uncomfortable.
- I noticed a little bit of red and I wondered what it represented. (Red represents the heart, how it's lifted up and shut down)
- A powerful one for me was when the dancer was rubbing their arm... like they were trying to, but couldn't take off their skin.
- The part that got me most worked up was the part about slavery. The struggle and pushing of African American dancers.

- The beginning when slave owner was speaking reminded me of my family moving from the Midwest to the south and really having a culture shock with all of the Confederate Flags and remembering how I could appreciate where I lived prior.

Purpose for Attending

- I was eager to see this performance because I had heard about it and I love modern dance;
- I loved seeing how people could overcome obstacles;
- I belong to the youth group "Urban Underground"; we bring young people together to talk about racism and other forms of social injustice, and we work for social justice in our communities. All four of us belong to this group.
- I am frustrated because there is so little awareness of racism and racist words and actions in our high school. I want to help change this.
- We need to find better ways to bring about respect for people of different races, religions, and cultures.
- I attended the schools in my community for all of my school years, from K-4 to today, and I do not see any changes in my school system; there is as much racism in the high school as there was in my kindergarten class.
- I enjoy learning about different races and cultures.
- I am concerned about the white supremacy students in my school, and there are many; we have talked to our teachers, and they know about it, too.
- I wanted to learn more about the ways that racism occurs in Milwaukee, expressions of both visible and invisible racism.
- I have been involved with a group called "One Circle Forward"; we help students and their families in Whitefish Bay meet people of different cultures and races and help them learn to respect people who are different.

Racial Imprints: Personal Experiences

- A white woman said to me "I don't see color" but that makes me be invisible. That means I'm not acknowledged or important enough; I'm indispensable; when you say Neo-Nazi—that says hate.
- "If we didn't have black and didn't have white we would just have gray—gray area where you don't get the whole story. So many colors. We don't need to be in the space to be combative.
- Gray is safe place for white people.
- Liberal gray.
- When fear enters my heart I can't shake it away. It's like the foundation of a house. One brick is remove and it jeopardizes the foundation. You can't broad stroke. There are always other things going on. There's crime in the White community. There's crime in

the Black community. There's crime in the Latin community. We shouldn't single anyone out.

- I feel that.
- Anti-gun violence organizing efforts that include everyone are working and taking off because people have it as a concern in common.
- I was out with my family and when we walked into the room someone said, "The n words are here." History is repeating itself. This is a new generation but it's getting worse.
- Two or three years ago I went to Illinois where my dad's family is. We went to a celebration with thousands of people of all races. My parents' phones were low. I'm not trying to be stereotypical but there was a guy who looked like he was in a biker gang. He didn't say anything but the way he looked felt like he wanted to whip me.
- Around Christmastime I was going to Arizona to see my dad. I got on a plane and I was in the middle with a big dude on one side. I was just sitting there and he was taking up space. He was all up in my face. I moved and he mean mugged me. It's confusing because any time I did something he reacted. I get mad fast but I didn't try to get mad.
- I work at TJMaxx in Menomonee Falls. It's predominantly White. I clocked in and I got my nametag. I was working at the cash register and realized I accidentally had someone else's nametag so I went to the back and was questioned... "You don't look like her but you would if you were ashy." That was bogus. I felt like that was not funny. That was racist. It was wrong. I didn't say anything because my two managers are White.
- I experienced something similar. A White person came up to me and said, "What tribe are you from?" My tribe is Boston, it's Massachusetts. I'm so sorry. Not all African Americans who are tall and slender are from Africa. You can't make that assumption. It was a prime example of a person not thinking before speaking.
- There's lots of lateral violence. When I was a young person I was angry and didn't know about systemic racism. There is a huge anti-Black problem in the Latin community. "You're going to get a White girlfriend to better the family." There's all this implicit bias. It's a challenge for myself as a heterosexual cisgender male. I have to check my privilege. At a party we needed more cups and a friend was coming so I asked her if she could ask her girlfriend to pick them up. She said "No," she wouldn't ask her girlfriend to do that because it was late and it wasn't safe as a woman to be out.
- Sometimes people don't think and don't think about how people feel. That's how things like this happen.
- This is smaller but it bothers me. I go to Wedgewood School on the Southside. Because of the name people think it's all White people at the school but the classrooms are racially mixed. People make assumptions and it bothers me.
- I was among peers when I was living in New York street performing alongside working in a ballet company. There were other crews around and they didn't know where I was

from and they assumed because of my demeanor that I was from the suburbs. I said "No, I'm from the hood and I just know how to change hats." People can be really narrow-minded. It can depend on what they're exposed to. We still don't know how to understand each other and that we're all human. No one is better. You might have a better advantage but if taken away, what do you have?

- What we're exposed to dictates how you move forward. My mom was walking down the sidewalk and a Black guy took her purse. She went after him and my grandmother went after both of them and then the community joined in the chase and got her purse back. My mother reacts negatively to Black people because the person who took her purse was Black. In Mexico there aren't a lot of Black people... it's so easy to paintbrush people because of one experience. In the news there's disproportional coverage of drugs associated with race. It's hard to get out of the isolated incident mindset.
- My mother is a dental hygienist and is learning from co-workers that there is more in common among people across race than she'd thought.
- I was with White colleagues who I'd created a dance company with, in Brooklyn and a van drove by several times. It stopped and police got out and asked, "What do you have in that bag?" My colleague said something smart... it felt great she had my back but it also could have caused harm. I said there was tea and cookies in the bag. I remember it was Arizona tea. When he opened my bag and saw it really was that he kept trying to find something wrong. It sucks. It really sucks. There's a lot we have to struggle through.
- It's all systematic... the areas where there is poverty, bad schools, it's all planned. The rich are given more. Those who need it don't get it. And the well off don't care.
- Don't pretend it's not happening here. We work with these people
- I'm in an anti-discrimination group that is growing. I'm happy that people are uncomfortable. I can't be racist but I can be prejudiced and I am, against my own people. I'm so confused I don't know how to feel. It's systemic and our people are killing ourselves.
- Blacks don't value selves because taught by society not to.
- Our city models that some people are valuable and others are not.
- I've applied over and over to a company where I'm totally qualified for the job but denied every time. And H.R. Won't even tell me what I'm missing.
- Getting a job in the city of Milwaukee is especially hard. The hurdles are getting higher and higher.
- I 'woke' late. Just a couple years ago I realized just how much is in place to keep the status quo. Even for young people.
- My two college grad sons are still black. I worry every day.
- Talk about stress. I got it.

- I wanted to be a ballerina and I was told that I could not be a ballerina because I am too black and because I am too fat; this hurt my feelings, a lot. I still like to dance, but I cannot dance the way that I want to dance
- When I was a young girl I remember being around the table for a large family gathering and hearing one of my relatives talking very racist, about blacks. I and my mom were surprised and startled and didn't know what to say. We sat quietly and then my mom left the table and in anger she and I left the gathering. We never said anything and they continued talking racist.
- I was touched by what happened to you [referencing the story about traveling with family and hearing a racial slur at a rest-stop]. I wish I could do something to change what happened to you. I appreciate your resilience, strength and leadership. We need you.
- I thought about the people who were affected by the Sherman Park unrest a couple of years ago.
- I wonder about the people of Sherman Park neighborhood and how they are healing.
- I brought kids from the Urban Underground because I wanted them to have the opportunity to experience something positive. Even if the youth don't speak they have the opportunity to listen, learn and spend positive time with adults. Milwaukee is very segregated and tough for young people. Hearing it is a bad place to raise a child is a difficult pill to swallow. We have to show youth that it is possible to be successful.

Whiteness Assessment/Perspective

- Whites too afraid—too much guilt to step beyond the gray.
- To play devil's advocate- Whites are definitely allies. White people say: "Don't applaud me. I'm doing what needs to be done". Self-actualization. Whites aligned. Help push Black people further.
- My struggle is trying not to generalize. The climate we are in—there are White people who are allies but there are still barriers like white people who won't challenge each other.
- The naturalness of responding and shutting down. A white male walks in at work and I feel deep resentment—"I'm never going to be you—be like you—getting to move ahead.
- The role media plays... it presents women, African Americans and others in certain ways. You have to resist that. In my experience some White people want to resist and others don't. I recognize my power as a White woman is to influence. It was reinforced for me today, that it's through art we can break down barriers. I've seen story telling as a way that works, though it also has problems around creating safe space. What are ways that might work? Get to know someone, try something new, break out of patterns. From my perspective it's about making genuine relationships. Doing that is labor intensive and time intensive. Sometimes people don't want to do that because of trust

issues. Get to know people first. Even then it's tough because it's like: I just got off work, I picked up my kids, I've got to make dinner...

- I wonder how to get these stories out... every time I hear it I'm impacted. How do we bring people who don't want to hear it to the table? I feel, as a privileged White person that as a culture people are focused on feeling good.
- If we can't realize as white people that we don't all have the same resources, what's the use?
- Stay "wok"—having a higher perspective.

Fear, Hopelessness and Hope for Change

- I'm optimistic but it's hard to hold on to that. Every day it seems to get worse.
- I feel helpless most of the time, to affect change.
- Why are people afraid to talk about this, deal with this?
- I'm afraid to be around white people and black people. It's a Catch 22.
- Migration came to Milwaukee. I'm hoping for more permanent residences.
- I hear you and think lots is happening.
- We all want the same thing.
- Why do we expect something different when we're not doing anything differently.
- I'm looking for a national movement to connect everything.
- The theme is relevant to today and I wanted to learn more;
- I teach children K-12 to dance, and you would be welcome in my school; all children should have the opportunity to dance; we are learning how to make a way for everyone to dance.
- I was taught to speak up – to be intelligently outspoken. My dad told me not to tolerate ignorance. If I say something untrue, it is your job to correct me! Be strong and say what you mean.
- Correct with wisdom. Be respectful. There are no quick fixes, we have to walk it together.
- This may sound simplistic but I think the more you know, the better you can do. I am an audience; I sit on boards. This is a wonderful education for me.
- I think there's a need to come together and get serious about racism.
- I feel we are on our way to a better way of life that will be peacefully shaped and will lead to us overcoming racism.
- I think this piece that was presented tonight forces one to ask questions and participate in the discussion.
- I believe that race relations are definitely something that needs to be talked about.
- I think the heart of the matter is the human connection because it's so easy just to go home.
- I think the heart of the matter is love vs. fear and I believe we must have the conversation.

- I believe the heart of the matter is the heart (how I feel emotionally).
- I think the heart of the matter is that we are all the same and when we realize that it will move us forward.
- For me there is a hope that we can talk our way out of this and the talking will help us collectively.
- I think the heart of the matter is discussion of the issues in hopes of finding out where people are and their idea of humanity.
- As I watched I was just thinking about art and how it is so beautiful. I question myself as to if I am doing enough to curve racism, am I speaking up enough and I realize sometimes I am not so I challenge myself to do more.

Parting Words

- Be cautious.
- Connections
- People have different thoughts about other people.
- Everyone has different ideas. Like you're not the only one.
- I am taking with me the images and feelings from the performance and discussion.
- There is a picture at our house—four babies of different races. Brown eyes/Blue eyes program—those that participated in that school experiment as young children grew up to have tons of empathy as adults.
- Empathy
- Empathy
- Never had a structured talk after our performance. This will be the biggest experience.
- (Performer) If I made you all feel something I've done my job.
- Happy to be who I am. Internal anger is inherited. When I become "wok", it helped me appreciate who I am—I used to be angry.
- I'm happy this happened. Thanks to you and the Zeidler Center
- Everything in my life is about inclusion—sharing food and music; doing this tour with such a diverse group.
- More "we," less "me."
- Stay encouraged. Every day it's so easy to feel discouraged. My voice does matter. We need to find each other- all the people who want this.
- Being able to share is kind of a relief. It was inspiring because now I want to continue to dance.
- Listen.
- I feel a little more love.
- I feel love.
- Building wealth and legacy classes on self-worth in suburban schools.
- I'm going to be more impatient for something to happen- speak up, write letters to the editor. Take action.

- Take a moment before diving behind protectiveness. Sometimes you have to educate a little.
- Keep using my artistic expression as an outlet. And encouraging others to use theirs.
- I'm committed to never stop learning. We're in trouble when we think we know all we need to know.
- And keep sharing.
- I'll continue to be involved in my community. I knew nothing of my history and am being exposed now. I'm gonna stay woke and keep learning more. Be open-minded and help others open their eyes.
- I want to learn how to stop being so judgmental of people of other races and colors;
- I learn a lot from conversations like these;
- I am learning to be more intentional, more focused during dialogues with others;
- I want to learn how to talk to people who are different, people who are white supremacists specifically; (I suggested that the participant contact Arno Michaelis, who works with people trying to end their association with white supremacists);
- I want to help people figure out what this dance means to them;
- I want to continue dancing, to take our performance to as many places as possible, to learn from the people in these places, and then to help them name their experiences of racism and grow through the experience.
- The performance is important but more of a jumping off point for conversations. I am going to talk to people who are not a part of my friend group.
- Don't judge a book by its cover.
- Really see people.
- Thank you for the opportunity
- Thank you for coming
- Thank you for sharing
- Thank you for your vision, hard work and creating a space. We have to be intentional in creating the space. Hearing stories humanizes us; creates a better sense of community.
- Thank you for coming. Communication is key. Tomorrow I am going to recap with friends like sharing my playlist.
- No ownership or wealth—so vulnerable to gentrification.
- Conflict as a white person—to know what you need to know. People of color shouldn't have to tell White people—teach White people-- but how can Whites learn if they don't?