A Critical Race Theory Analysis of the OSU Dance Brazil Tour Group 2020

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Introduction

As I sit in a vast white studio in a folding chair in front of a wall of mirrors, I witness a multi-racial group of dancers sweat as they pump their arms in small circles. Each one slices their legs through the air and hops to the rhythmic interludes of the upbeat jazz music. The dancers smile at one another, not concealing their effort. They feed off one another's energy, displaying a unified symbol of community. As the dancers drop their weight into the floor and shift their hips in angular patterns with the rhythm of the music, they radiate joy. Each making eye contact with another and myself as the researcher observer-participant, they rejoice in their ability to swing, shift, clap, and shout as a unified team, offering their dance as a gift to themselves and anyone who witnesses. A warm feeling of excitement washes over me as the tour group director smiles and gives words of encouragement. After they finish the piece, the dancers gasp for air letting their lungs fill deeply for the first time in almost ten minutes. The director, Professor Perkins, speaks to them in a firm, calm voice giving general corrections and emphasizing the importance of performing and functioning as a traveling company. She says, "There is a sense of group; there is a sense of community," stressing the need for dancers to connect and dance as a cohesive whole. She continues, "We are trying to center the work. It is necessary for us to decenter ourselves." As I left the rehearsal space, I pondered what Professor Perkins meant by "the work." As my experience continued abroad, I realized that "the work" was not only the choreography and performance, but everything that surrounded

it. This "work" is the foundation of this race-conscious autoethnographic study of The Ohio State University (OSU) Department of Dance 2020 Brazil tour group experience.

The Ohio State University and Study Abroad Programs

OSU, a predominantly White university in an urban midwest city in the United States, is a Doctoral University: Very High Research Activity institution.[1] From 2019 to 2020, OSU had 68,262 students, and 22.4 percent were people of color (The Ohio State University n.d.). Additionally, approximately 72 percent of students studying abroad from 2018 to 2019 were White (The Ohio State University Office of International Affairs n.d.). Thus, the overt blackness in the trip's personnel, subject matter, and location provided an aspect of resistance for this case study, as most university study abroad programs are designed for and around White students. Contrary to the White dominance of OSU and most U.S. study abroad programs, the company consisted of myself (a Black PhD student), a faculty duo of a Black woman and White man, two Black MFA candidates, and ten undergraduate women who were a racial mix of Black, Filipino, Latina, and White.

The trip inverted the typical OSU study abroad statistics by featuring a Black woman faculty lead, a combination of graduate and undergraduate students, and a diverse cast. OSU Dance Brazil, a two-week faculty-led study abroad trip to southern Brazil, sought to counteract White hegemony by creating an African Diaspora-centered experience (Schupp and McCarthy-Brown 2018). Professor Perkins, the Black woman faculty lead, used her institutional power to recruit a diverse group of students for the OSU 2020 Brazil tour group and encouraged us to see studying abroad as possible for underrepresented students (Davis and Phillips-Fein 2018). Her additional effort and support were empowering and created an educational counternarrative that resisted the institutional norms that invisibilized students of color.

My Positionality

The 2020 OSU Dance Brazil tour group was my first study abroad experience. I only applied because Professor Perkins directly invited me and helped me find ways to connect it to my research trajectory. Until then, I had never had a Black woman professor encourage me to study abroad and make space for me, as the study abroad trips are typically for BFA or MFA students focused on performance. I was unsure what to

expect when I accepted the offer to go, but I knew I would benefit from experiencing international travel and intentional time in another culture. I attended as a full participant in the trip and was the only PhD candidate and non-performing student; thus, I had a unique positionality as I focused on producing written dance scholarship instead of embodiment and performance.

Since I was both a student participant and an observer of performances, I saw the trip from multiple angles. Before the trip, I observed rehearsals and discussed expectations with tour group members. Prior to our travels, I had built meaningful relationships with the other graduate students but rarely interacted with most undergraduate students. However, I spent most of the two weeks traveling with the company, experiencing and analyzing our unique circumstances as we traveled to and within Brazil. Once abroad, I also participated in movement and culture classes, such as *Samba*, Afro-Brazilian, and Bahian drumming; observed performances; talked with tour group members; took field notes; and attended various cultural experiences, such as museums and landmark tours. Throughout this essay, I recount my experience as a student and researcher to expand existing dialogues surrounding race and dance in higher education through voice memos, movement descriptions, and field notes. To do so, I examine how racism operated throughout the trip, even though there was a robust representation of Black and Brown people.

Autoethnography and Critical Race Theory

Analytical autoethnography, as defined by Leon Anderson (2006), encourages researchers to be visible members in their scholarship while developing a theoretical understanding of broader social phenomena. I utilize an analytic autoethnographic methodology to center my positionality as the first and only Black woman PhD student on the trip and the group's work as a community intending to engage in cultural exchange. I also employ autoethnography to provide nuanced context for how subtle racism operates within dance academia and broader society.

Scholars in various disciplines have utilized critical race theory (CRT) to explain the phenomena of racism in daily life. As the arts are often erroneously assumed to be utopic and free of racial bias and hierarchy, adopting a CRT framework is vital to unravel the misconceptions that result in personal bias and institutional oppression of Black people. Therefore, I deployed CRT as my primary framework to analyze my experiences and resist White supremacy within dance. While CRT has roots in legal studies with scholars like Derrick Bell (1992) and Kimberlé Crenshaw and

colleagues (1995), its prevalence is also evident in higher education and artistic spaces.

Because this trip sits at the intersection of dance and higher education, I utilize the framework of CRT in education articulated by Daniel Solorzano, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso. They state,

> The critical race theory framework for education is different from other CRT frameworks because it simultaneously attempts to foreground race and racism in the research as well as challenge the traditional paradigms, methods, texts, and separate discourse on race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact on communities of color [2000, 63].

This research intends to follow in the lineage of Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso to combat implicit racism by pulling at the intersecting strings that create and maintain the traditional paradigm of White supremacy within study abroad programs, dance, and higher education. The tenets of CRT, as described by Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000), are (1) centrality of race and racism; (2) challenge to the dominant ideology; (3) commitment to social justice; (4) centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the transdisciplinary perspective. Each CRT tenet is interconnected and present in my experiences within the OSU Dance Brazil trip. However, in this essay, I intentionally deviate from the order of the tenets to best fit the narratives of my experience. Through each CRT tenet, I provide a nuanced understanding of how racism and whiteness morphed (Bonilla-Silva 2010) throughout the study abroad program and interrogate my experiences as a Black woman navigating Brazilian history, politics, and culture, and the racial dynamics of the OSU school tour.

Centrality of Race and Racism

As a Black student at a predominantly White university, I was excited to travel to Brazil and be in a predominantly Black space. Although we were in a country where we did not speak the language, we expected to blend in. Once in Brazil, it became clear that the racial politics were very similar to a caste system, in which having darker skin was disempowering. People with deeper melanin were systemically on the outskirts of society and given fewer resources and opportunities. The histories of slavery and colonialism could not be evaded despite the trip's intention to value the African Diaspora. No amount of secondary research prepared me, as a dark-skinned Black woman, to feel the implicit devaluing of my humanity (Bennett 2009). The combination of hypervisibility, invisibility, and ancestral trauma that persisted in Brazil and the OSU tour group resulted in my delicate navigation of racial politics.

While being all together as the OSU tour group, Brazilian people walking or driving by could see that we were not Brazilian. I was confused by how I was spotted as an outsider as my skin was the same tone or darker than many other Brazilians. Yet when separated from the group, the Black dancers and I blended in with the Brazilian communities. The ability to travel unnoticed presented small moments of ease for many of the Black dancers; as many noted, it gave them the ability not to stick out and receive unwanted attention as we did in a large group. I realized that our proximity to and ease around whiteness as Black people were noticeable and uncommon. Even though Brazil is predominantly Black, I observed significantly more segregation than expected. This systemic segregation was not built into the signage or made explicit in the law, but dark and light skin separation was common (Khalema 2020).

Throughout the trip, the OSU company retained positive comradery and spent time with one another beyond the required activities. There were no intentional overtly racist acts displayed between OSU company members, but there were microaggressions throughout the trip (Bonilla-Silva 2010). In these moments, I noticed myself and other Black students navigating whether to address the incidents overtly or stay silent to keep the peace. Whenever I noticed a microaggression from a company member, I would make eye contact with the closest Black student for acknowledgment and validation (Davis and Phillips-Fein 2018).

In some moments, the tour group actively investigated microaggressions to bolster the group's understanding of racism. For example, when preparing to depart for Brazil, many Black students identified the need to get to the airport early because they needed additional time to go through security. Some of the White dancers initially resisted the early arrival time because they were confused about why our group would need additional time. As Black students, we explained how we are frequently subjected to additional TSA checks; our hair and skin are often flagged and examined more thoroughly. The White students were in disbelief at how often this happens, but later saw this in action at the airport as we traveled. Thankfully, there were no significant incidents as we traveled through the airports, but I was glad we had ample time to travel and ensure no dancer was left behind.

Brazil's racial history significantly influenced our trip's current racial and structural politics. While I knew some general aspects of Brazilian history, I was naive about how its legacy would shape our study abroad. Since no OSU dancers or faculty on the trip spoke fluent Portuguese, we relied heavily on our Brazilian translator and cultural guide from *ICR Brasil*,[2] Simone. While in Brazil, Simone taught us how Portuguese invaders pillaged the country in the 1500s and exterminated over

three million indigenous people who resisted enslavement. Hundreds of years later, we visited the shoreline, military bases, and city structures that the Portuguese used to assert dominance. While committing genocide against the indigenous populations, the Portuguese imported millions of enslaved Africans to provide brutal labor and build the infrastructure of present-day Brazil. After spending a few days in the city, we learned about the colonization that influenced how the cities were constructed and arranged, and continues to influence how they function.

We primarily stayed in *Salvador, Brasil*, where the population is predominantly from Black or African ancestry, yet we rarely saw Black people near our hotels. Much to my dismay, the only deeply melanated Black people I saw were staff at the hotel or people living several miles away from us. There was no text I could have read to prepare me for this division, but I knew my Black body was not supposed to be there. Our hotels were always in "safe locations"; upon being there for a few days, I learned that "safe" was a code word for White.

After slavery was outlawed in Brazil, Black people were homeless and expected to fend for themselves without governmental support. Historically, Black people were forced to live in the lower city—which is frequently flooded by the coast—or far up into the hills. We never visited the communities in the hills, but we saw the lower city's bustling culture for a few hours. In the lower city, Black people played music on the beach, sold clothes and ice cream, and lived their best lives against a vibrant, politically conscious graffiti backdrop. The lower city was the Brazilian experience I expected. It existed, but I did not realize I could not access it because blackness was presented as inherently unsafe.

While on tour, the OSU group experienced several Brazilian historical and cultural sites and performances. Simone took us to several cultural sites, including *Farol Da Barra*, a fort and military base from the 17th century; *Pelourinho,* an old slave auction site; and the central city of *Salvador*, which had restaurants and shops surrounded by cathedrals. She explained how these cultural landmarks continue the country's ongoing reckoning with the aftermath of slavery, and how the colonization and dehumanization of enslaved Africans are interwoven into the country's history and architecture (Khalema 2020). In *Pelourinho*, we visited the *Igreja e Convento de São Francisco* (San Francisco Church and Convent of Salvador). Simone showed us the separate rooms for enslaved people to stand in during Mass while their masters sat in the pews. She also showed us the sculptures of pregnant Black women carved into the church, designed to lure wealthy White male patrons into lust and pay higher penitence to the church. The manipulation of the Black female body for monetary gain, juxtaposed with the maltreatment of Black women in the same church,

caused me extreme physical and spiritual dissonance. While the physical architecture was immaculate, I could feel the ancestral trauma inside. I appreciated learning about the complex history but could not wait to leave that church. My mind, body, and spirit are still disturbed recounting it.

Challenges to Dominant Ideology

Simone consistently taught us about Brazilian history throughout the two-week trip, which gave us a better context for understanding how the communities and spaces were impacted by colonization. Even though many dancers had taken a Brazilian culture course while at OSU, the country's contemporary racial relations shocked us all. Through several informal conversations, the dancers revealed that they were impacted by seeing what they had learned from the classroom in reality. The reading material presented Brazil as a country that celebrated blackness, and it was not until arriving that the subjugation of Black people became apparent. We saw advertisements featuring White women who reinforced Eurocentric beauty standards and predominantly Black communities with several homes with dirt floors and broken glass only a few miles from one another. While we were able to meet several Black dance masters, experience three cities, and perform for several communities, the undercurrent of racism never wavered.

Racial dynamics were evident in our daily traveling experiences and the communities we entered on tour. Many performance locations were in predominantly Black schools and community centers. Simone helped us enter the different communities by translating the performance script, written by the faculty lead, that provided historical and cultural context before each piece. Many of the dances were choreographed from an Africanist root and thus connected to Afro-Brazilian culture (Davis and Phillips-Fein 2018). However, the language and framing of the performance helped make the African Diaspora connections more explicit for Brazilian audiences who may not have been familiar with Africanist dance forms from the United States. While the language barriers extended beyond performances, the dancers often used their bodies to imitate, respond, and teach dance when language was not easily accessible (Bennett 2009).

The show performed by the OSU tour group contrasted the implicit whiteness of OSU and U.S. concert dance. Many dances the tour group performed had music, choreographers, and choreography rooted in the African Diaspora. Dance scholar Clare Croft (2015) discusses how Black artists have historically been used to present universal ideas of the United States in international contexts. Black dancers use their opportunities

on stage to self-determine (Croft 2015), as did those performing in the OSU tour. The tour group provided a unique opportunity for Black student dancers and choreographers to locate themselves as U.S. citizens and unapologetically Black. Many Black artists from OSU created work for the tour using movement vocabularies rooted in stepping, double-dutch, contemporary, West African, and jazz, connecting their unique artistic voices to the broad range of dance within the African Diaspora. Specifically, Black student choreographers gained vital international choreographic experience and began self-defining within the dance field. Thus, early career students and choreographers were provided access and opportunities required to bolster their careers in the White-dominated field of dance in the United States.

Centrality of Experiential Knowledge

While many Black students and I were excited to be in a predominantly Black country for the first time, we were unprepared for many of the Brazilian communities' overt favoring of White and non–Black dancers. After performances for children, dancers were often able to sign autographs and dance with communities after the final pieces. The non–Black tour group members were treated like celebrities. Many of the little Black children in the audience flung to the White and Asian women for autographs and pictures because they had never seen or been in close contact with anyone who looked Asian or had fair skin. Meanwhile, despite dancing in or choreographing the same pieces, the Black tour group members did not receive such adoration.

The company frequently entered and engaged with various communities throughout the trip. Therefore, understanding what dances would connect beyond the rehearsal space became essential (Bennett 2009) as the trip progressed. For example, the company made a collaborative piece to connect the company to Brazilian audiences. The piece was personal and included each performing cast member introducing themselves in Portuguese. It featured an ambient nature sound score with no precise rhythm and minimal synchronous or virtuosic movement. OSU dancers received a positive response during the showings at OSU, but the performance did not move the Brazilian audiences. Once in Brazil, the dancers learned that while introducing themselves, they were saying words in Portuguese incorrectly, and the intended unifying gesture became a moment of embarrassment.

While there was an attempt to promote racial mixing with roommate pairings throughout the tour, racism prevailed. The embodied racial politics of the OSU students were heightened once in Brazil. Memorable

microaggressions against me as a Black person remained while we were abroad. One occurred while we visited *Casa do Carnaval da Bahia*, the first *Carnaval* museum. The museum contained many visual elements, such as costumes and historical videos for participants to view (Salvador Bahia Brasil 2022a). I had never seen *Carnaval* and was excited. While watching one of the videos, a White student from the tour group decided it was appropriate to stand right in front of me. I exchanged looks with another Black student who saw what happened; we both rolled our eyes. The other Black student and I observed the blissful lack of awareness and consideration of others that manifests with whiteness. Thus, I could not fully engage in the museum and other aspects of the experience without navigating subtle racism.

The internalized White supremacy of some undergraduate OSU tour group members was evident. Despite my senior status as a graduate student, some felt they could order me around as a servant or exert power over me when convenient. For example, near the end of the trip, we took a movement class in a small dance studio. It looked like a small tin box and was about the size of a one-room schoolhouse. Although there was air conditioning, it was no match for the intense heat of the day and the exhausted dancers' sweat. I was taking observation notes in the corner when Professor Cozido, a master *Samba* instructor, asked me to take photos of his class for documentation. In the middle of class, one of the White dancers snapped at me and demanded that I stop taking pictures. I was instantly furious. Despite people consistently taking photos the entire trip, she had the audacity to tell me how I should participate in the class and micromanage me. I told her I would try to shoot around her if she was uncomfortable, but I would not stop taking pictures as the instructor asked. Her entire tune shifted. She responded, "Oh, if it's for him, that is okay. I just don't like it." She says this as if she is my boss and has the power to oversee and approve my actions. I intentionally distanced myself from her for the remainder of the trip, fearing that I would speak my mind.

While studying Brazilian dance, we also trained with *Balé Teatro Castro Alves* in *Salvador* and learned about their status as a government funded and owned dance company (Salvador Bahia Brasil 2022b). The Brazilian dancers are protected as government employees and given financial security. The dancers retain their jobs until they retire and know the country values their work. We took classes with the senior company members and learned more dances of the Orishas. I was introduced to the Orishas through *Candomblé* research before visiting Brazil. Spirituality was inseparable from Brazilian culture. However, I did not expect the presence of the Orishas to be overt: statues, altars, paintings, and ribbons associated with them were everywhere. Ribbons dedicated to the Orishas

even surrounded several of the Catholic cathedrals. The practices of *Candomblé*, in which Blacks subverted the practices of Catholicism enforced by the colonizer, have persisted since the time of the Transatlantic Slave Trade (Soler 2012). Although there are over 1,000 Orishas in Africa, not all are common in Brazil. Professor Denilson taught us the Yoruba alphabet and what Orishas mean to the culture; we also learned the dances of the Orishas Oshun and Ogun. Each dance sought to honor the individual aesthetic of the gods and used props to embody their spirit.

We also learned to "play" *Capoeira* with Mestre Sapoti. We learned the history of the fight dance from several dance instructors who emphasized how enslaved Africans learned to fight against oppressive systems through *Capoeira*. Initially, *Capoeira* could not be "played" openly by enslaved people and their descendants. Once slavery was partly abolished, there were still places similar to slave conditions, and the government still persecuted Black people. Laws were formed against *Capoeira*—*Capoeira* players were sent to maximum-security prison for "dangerous" behavior (Talmon-Chvaicer 2008). However, now that *Capoeira* is more freely practiced, the older *Capoeira* masters are incredibly respected. Dance masters taught our OSU group the basic moves, which blended African dances, nature observations, and Brazilian culture. Learning African Diasporan dances from leaders in the field provided us with an embodied connection to Brazil's cultural and historical resistance.

Transdisciplinary Perspective

Higher education and CRT scholar Lori P. Davis (2015) advocates for scholars to continue using CRT as an epistemological lens to connect the academy to broader social agendas. Davis states, "The everyday nature of race allows it to remain hidden and even, when revealed, remain unaddressed" (2015, 324). Simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility became very salient as the Brazil tour group was creatively rooted in the African Diaspora while not eradicating the pervasive nature of racism (Bonilla-Silva 2010). While racial bias was not at the forefront of every interaction, it was always in the background. Within the OSU tour group, there were no overt references to racism or racial slurs from White students; however, I could still feel the undercurrent of racism throughout the experience (Call-Cummings and Martinez 2017). There was no clear way for me to name it, address it, or change it within the limitations of the trip. Instead, I tried to offer informal conversation spaces to unpack the nuances of racism the group navigated while pushing back on rising subtle biases.

Many dance scholars have researched the multitude of ways racism permeates dance in the academy, regardless of positive intent and utopic

rhetoric (Schupp and McCarthy-Brown 2018). Julie Kerr-Berry states, "Despite being considered by some to be a liberal bastion, postsecondary education is not immune to racism and White hegemony, and academic dance is not an exception" (2018, 139). Kerr-Berry's statement establishes that White hegemony persists in the academy and within dance education. The implicit whiteness of these interlocking systems omit, silence, and undervalue Black aesthetics and Black students, faculty, and staff (Davis and Phillips-Fein 2018). Unless institutions consciously and strategically resist whiteness in dance education, hegemony will continue (Kerr-Berry 2012). Even though there was an explicit attempt to decenter whiteness throughout the trip, the pervasive nature of whiteness made it challenging to irradicate completely.

Often Black women faculty, like Professor Perkins, director of our tour group, are expected to prove their expertise consistently and also endure racial microaggressions that invalidate or demean them and their work (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012). I observed subtle racism in White students' attitudes toward her whenever they became uncomfortable (Call-Cummings and Martinez 2017). Within moments of frustration, it became clear that race was an unspoken factor that resulted in casually disrespectful comments about Professor Perkins' expertise. Slick comments like, "What was she thinking," "This is so unorganized," or "She knows not to mess with me," would quickly slip out whenever the White students wanted to assert their dominance.

Commitment to Social Justice

Whiteness in academic dance often radiates through dance forms, students, and faculty. Dance scholars focusing on education have long discussed the prevalence of White supremacy within the dance field and dance education. Therefore, learning African Diaspora dance forms from dancers of the global majority is in direct contrast to the Europeanist dance forms and predominantly White teaching faculty of OSU, as well as in many other dance programs in postsecondary institutions.

The overt embrace and explicit valuing of Black dance was a revolutionary act toward social justice. To Takiyah Nur Amin,

> Black dance is not a declaration of a particular technique, style or political ideology; rather it speaks of an ongoing commitment to artistic growth and quality while demanding a commitment to community responsibility and engagement on the part of the practitioner. By placing Black people at the center, this expansive definition makes plain that while others may choose to perform it, Black dance both originates and finds its full expression in the locus of the Black dancing body [2011, 11].

Amin's definition of Black dance is central to understanding the connection between the dance forms of the African Diaspora as it values the movement vocabularies and the people creating and maintaining the dance forms. A particular geographic location or movement vocabulary does not solely define Black dance. Instead, Black dance is characterized by community, connection, and innovation centered within Black dancing bodies.

Embodying Black dances extended beyond language barriers and connected the Brazilian dances we learned while on tour to the African American dances at OSU. Learning from Brazilian dance teachers like Professor Cozido and Professor Denilson made it possible to understand dance forms and their connection to the broader culture. Learning from Brazilian artists of color and dancing with them inside and outside the studio allowed dancers to communicate and contextualize culture on an embodied level (Davis and Phillips-Fein 2018). Although none of the dancers spoke fluent Portuguese, they attempted to communicate with Brazilian communities with body language. Similar Africanist aesthetics of rhythm, groundedness, and curvilinear movement provided clear tethers between the African, African American, and Afro-Brazilian dances (Welsh-Asante 2001). Whenever the dancers took classes from instructors who did not speak English, dancers observed the body's movement phrases, picked up the rhythms, and drew on concepts from their other African Diaspora training.

After most performances, the dancers attempted to engage with the communities through mini dance parties. However, the necessary dance parties often took on a different texture based on the age and racial makeup of the audience. After a Brazilian middle school performance, the OSU performers attempted to build community with the middle schoolers in the audience. After watching on the sidelines, the Brazilian students entered the performing space; several held hands with the OSU tour members and bounced together to the rhythm of the music. Once the song ended, members of the OSU tour group taught the children part of the step routine from the performance. The OSU performers stomped slowly into the ground and slapped their chest and outer thighs to create a rhythm. The Brazilian students, all wearing uniforms, eagerly mimicked the slaps and clapped to match the percussive sounds of the OSU dancers. The OSU performers switched between mirroring the students and turning to lead them, as they incrementally increased the tempo. There was no emphasis on perfection; instead, the children were excited to try an unfamiliar dance. The tables then turned as the middle school children began to teach the OSU company a popular social dance with rhythmic hip-thrusting to the musical lyrics. The cultural exchange offered a refreshing sense of levity to the harsh heat and a meaningful engagement across cultural divides.

Takeaways

Overall, the OSU 2020 Brazil tour was a meaningful experience for me. After reflecting, I realized that the "work" Professor Perkins introduced was for community and racial justice. Racial justice and community building are ongoing work that requires constant reflection, investigation, and time. The lessons I learned from Brazil settled deep into my mind and body, extending beyond the two-week experience and reverberating through my life. Our "work" has extended beyond our individual school or tour group experience, and we are all responsible for carrying it forward. If we don't commit to the work of racial justice and community when studying the African Diaspora, we will just leach off other cultures for our own gain. This work is not optional but essential to ensuring that universities do not cause harm when they travel abroad, especially to predominantly Black countries.

Although the experience was engaging, the Covid-19 pandemic struck while we were traveling abroad and caused severe anxiety and concern for most of us. The global crisis severely hindered our ability to reconnect and engage in a deep group dialogue about our experiences. While everyone finished the experience as scheduled, the company was immediately thrown into psychological turmoil when returning to the United States.

The OSU 2020 Brazil tour group is a story of complexity; while embodied aesthetics of the African Diaspora were praised, the Black people on the trip were not always treated with the same respect. As postsecondary dance programs critique and address racism within their programs, they can charge their students with dismantling cultural racism. Continuing to query racial dance departments in academia will become safer and more accessible for students and faculty of color. When thinking about ways to diversify curricula and student experiences, departments and programs should account for how power and normalized manifestations of global anti–Black racism operate. To reorient our actions toward racial justice, as an academic community, we must continue investigating the experiences of Black dancers and correct the systems and behaviors that perpetuate harm.

Notes

1. The designation "Doctoral University: Very High Research Activity" comes from the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education,® a recognized method of describing the different types of postsecondary educational institutions in the United States (American Council on Education 2024).

2. ICR *Brasil* is the acronym for *Instituto Clara Ramos*, an independent organization providing international programs for Brazilian culture. https://www.icrbrasil.com/.

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