

THE CDSM SENTINEL

COALITION OF DIASPORAN SCHOLARS MOVING – SPRING 2013

Steering Committee:

Dr. Brenda Dixon Gottshchild, Saroya Corbett, Lela Aisha Jones

MISSION AND MANIFESTO

As movement researchers and performing scholars of the African Diaspora, we have all experienced some form of either outright discrimination or subversive, exclusionary tactics by the academic community. CDSM is our response to millennial-style racism in our supposed post-racist era. Like those involved in the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-20th century, we are resolved to be proactive. Our fledgling organization is creating a database, disseminating our Mission Statement, and gathering resources (including legal counsel). We welcome new members from across the Diaspora as we extend our base. A voluntary, not-for-profit coalition of concerned dancer/scholars, we do not collect dues or elect officers. We are a service organization, ready to “trouble the waters” in order to embrace our future fully and fairly.

Our Mission:

- To offer strategic advice for Diasporan scholars and movement artists in academic settings
- To maintain a database for networking and announcements
- To configure an organized process of pairing mentors and mentees in times of growth and crisis
- To serve as an accessible hub for national/international collaboration and partnering for efficient processes of sharing resources and social capital
- To serve as a medium through which members can share experiences and advice, discuss best practices, and offer support.

CONTACT US

Email:

cdsm@iabdassociation.org

Facebook Friend Page:

<http://www.facebook.com/diasporan.scholarsmoving?fref=ts>

Facebook Group Page:

<http://www.facebook.com/CoalitionOfDiasporanScholarsMoving?fref=ts>

EDITORIAL NOTE FROM BDG

Dear CDSM'ers,

The Steering Committee collectively assembled this inaugural newsletter to inform, inspire—and, we hope, increase—our membership. It represents data collected during and following our initial face-to-face meeting and panel at IABD in January. Lela, Saroya, and I are committed to continue working on a volunteer basis through the end of 2013. At that point, however, we will assess where we are and where and how we should/can/may proceed. We are only as strong and relevant as our members, and we solicit your suggestions and invite your participation. Lela Aisha Jones is committed to checking the CDSM email weekly, so your comments will not be overlooked. We encourage you to make time in your schedules to read this document thoroughly. Without your attention, we don't exist!

The entries are simple, straightforward:

- 1) Suggestions from three members on how to take the bull by the horns;
- 2) Selected list of resources; and
- 3) Summary of the CDSM meeting at IABD.

What more would you like to include, and who is willing to come on board?

SAVVY SUGGESTIONS FROM SEASONED ACADEMICS

These recommendations were offered by CDSM members as a helpful guide before a crisis takes hold. Ingram, a former lawyer and judge in Philadelphia, is a freelance choreographer/performing artist. Ozuzu and Frazier are administrators, performing artists/choreographers, and educators. Ozuzu is Professor and Chair of the Dance Department, Columbia College Chicago; Frazier is professor and Associate Dean of Grad Studies and Faculty Affairs, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University and Co-Dean of the American Dance Festival.

GERMAINE INGRAM

Here are two preliminary thoughts on ways to move forward:

- Be realistic about how much legal process can affect these situations. University procedures are designed to evade external standards of fair process. Often, the most effective way to deal with them is to use their own process and procedures to defeat them. That takes knowing the internal workings, the unrecorded as well as the recorded histories and precedents, the pressure points. It often means finding the internal allies who are willing to share those precedents, histories and vulnerabilities of the system. What good lawyers are good at is using process effectively---even screwed up process. But they've got to have access to information about how the process works.

- It seems that one of the ways that these academic ordeals keep people confused and helpless is there is little uniformity across institutions. People have little information on which to base comparisons. One thing the network might do to address this is to develop a survey that can over time be used as a research tool for figuring out where there are similarities, dissimilarities, and odd ducks among the major degree programs. This can be a service to people in the throes of battle, and also to those who are considering degree programs.

ONYE OZUZU

Diasporan Scholar Moving through Academia

The Steps

The steps could be a series of "stages" or situations that through discussion/circulation we collectively evolve. They would be scenario driven that would, hopefully, describe positions that Diasporan Scholars are experiencing and then propose some possible "steps" one might take to move from these positions/scenarios in positive and productive directions. I can visualize two streams of types of scenarios. One would be "proactive scenarios" where the scholar is in a situation that has not "peaked", or does not have a particular "event" but can see a number of factors potentially converging towards one. The scholar might be seeing a general social, structural, political, or curricular organization that is somehow in discord with that scholar's work, identity, expertise etc. The second stream would be "responsive scenarios", where an event, or a crisis, has occurred that needs to be addressed specifically and perhaps swiftly.

Proactive Scenarios might include some like the following:

1. A Diasporan scholar newly hired at an assistant-professor level, inherits classes in a combination of dance technique and dance studies areas. Scholar immediately identifies shifts in objectives and values that will need to take place in order to provide the context for his/her expertise to be appropriately presented within the department's curricular framework. Steps?
2. A Diasporan scholar coming up for 3rd year review in a year has a portfolio full of local community oriented creative work/projects. The Departmental tenure guidelines favor regional, national, and international performance over local performance. The Scholar feels that because of the nature of his/her work, its inherent focus on community practice, the development of local vernaculars and civic discourses, that the Department's current tenure guidelines will inevitably misjudge its quality. Steps?

3. A Diasporan scholar is hired to teach a fusion form of contemporary dance technique. After a few semesters of teaching the scholar begins to hear from faculty and students that there is question as to whether his/her class is contributing or detracting from the overall development of the dancers' "technique" in the program. Steps?

Responsive Scenarios might include some like the following:

1. A Diasporan scholar is approached by their faculty mentor and told that their work is too "identity focused", "narrative", and "essentially too focused on blackness and race" to be seriously considered for tenure at their institution. Steps?

2. A Diasporan scholar is repeatedly disrespected by white students in a class that focuses on race and culture and can get no support or intervention from the institution. Steps?

3. A Diasporan scholar is in written evaluations accused of intimidation and arrogance and the scholar believes that the accusations are based on a combination of unconscious racism and social expectations that are more culturally appropriate for practice of western-based dance forms/culture. The scholar believes that the behaviors in question embody the assurance and forthright engagement that is an inherent part of the dance language she/he is teaching. Steps?

Lastly: I can see both the Proactive and Responsive scenario streams existing inside of a Meta-Structure "Step" system that might look like:

Scenario - Consultation - Documentation - Visitation - Resolution.

A typical scenario might not engage these steps in exactly this order, may go forwards and back, repeat steps etc. A typical Proactive Scenario might begin with a phone call to a friend, progress to the visit from a scholar colleague who consults with the department, and result in a departmental culture shifting in a way that opens up space for the Diasporan Scholar to avoid anticipated conflict. A typical Responsive Scenario might also begin with a phone call but that phone call might be to a member of CDSM earmarked with particular expertise/experience that relates to the scenario. Progression might quickly move to legal consultation and hopefully resolve in a negotiation that would minimize harm and maximize justice.

Thank you for reading through this. Obviously if this seems like a useful road to go down, there is some fleshing out to do. Hopefully the steps would be detailed

enough to give real help AND flexible enough not to be cumbersome. Perhaps if they exist online there would be an option for Scholars to upload new scenarios if they don't feel anything fits their experience. Likewise the suggested "steps" could be living documents (wiki-like) that can be contributed to by CDSM members to form a collective voice of mentorship.

Thanks again Brenda, for the encouragement and I look forward to developing tools with you all to facilitate Diasporan Scholars to keep moving effectively in academia.

DR. JAMES FRAZIER

Some Words of Advice on Promotion and Tenure For the Coalition of Diasporan Scholars Moving

Know the game and the players. What is generally and specifically expected and who will be evaluating and making assessments of your work. Understand the promotion and tenure process in your unit/your school and how it is carried out as your case moves up through the system.

Seek mentorship (formal and informal) ideally at your institution, but also from the outside. Many departments/programs assign mentors to tenure-eligible faculty members. In-institution mentorship is an important way to gain insights into the tenure process. Mentors from outside can offer useful perspective as well, as outsiders will be solicited to serve as external evaluators. Outside mentors may give you a sense of what is expected at other institutions.

Build a base of support. An ally may be a mentor, but not necessarily. Allies are people who understand your work and can speak clearly about it – its strength, its merits. Remember, in most cases, you will be reviewed by a peer (or mostly in-department) committee, before that committee's findings are reviewed at the school level and moved up the ladder. Also, the tenure candidate is often asked to submit a list of potential external evaluators. While external evaluators typically cannot be friends or people with whom you have close personal or professional relationships, they can be people who have professional knowledge of you and your work. Allies are important.

Maintain documentation of work assignments and all feedback and assessments. At the time of hire, find out what the processes for evaluation are and the consequences of these evaluations. Annual work assignments and evaluations (positive and negative) provide both a frame and support for the major reviews – the third year review and the tenure review.

Do your work. Package your work – write about it, talk about it – in ways that demonstrate value at your institution. Be aware of the character and initiatives of your institution, some are considered teaching institutions, while others are research driven. Where possible articulate the merit of your work within the field and within the context of your institution.

A note about service: Service is a central area of consideration in tenure review, along with research and teaching. It is, however, unlikely that one will get tenured on the basis of excellent service. The tendency is for minority faculty members to get loaded down with service obligations, providing the “diversity” on search committees, working with the students who are longing for contact with a faculty member who looks like them and those who are drawn to you as the new, cool faculty member. Be somewhat selective about what and how much you do. Departmental service is something of a given, school and university-level service is to some degree expected, and they are important because they put you in contact with colleagues outside of your department. One of these colleagues may later serve as the outside committee member for your tenure review, and others may be able to provide a letter of support, attesting to the quality of your service. But, don’t sacrifice your research or teaching for service, as these other aspects of your work weigh more.

Should challenges/problems arise in the doing of your job, go through prescribed channels to be heard and to go “on record,” unless it feels unsafe. If professional safety feels at risk, consult with Human Resources, the Equal Employment Office or appropriate office in your school or at your institution. Please note, you run the risk of making enemies when you go above or around your immediate supervisor. Know the proper channels and weigh your options.

RESOURCES

MEDIA

CDSM has created a vimeo channel for a more private story sharing experience. (Stories can also be posted on the CDSM facebook page) Please let us know your thoughts on whether or not this is an online space in which you would share your stories. Is this a useful and efficient tool? Does anyone have stories they are willing to video and post? If so please contact us through the methods listed above. If there is no interest we will remove the channel, as it requires maintenance and upkeep.

Also in the near future we are hoping to create an informational video that will serve as a quick info session on what CDSM is all about. Who could assist us in media or do we even need one?

INSTITUTIONAL

Sisters of the Academy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imBx5tEU1uY>

<http://www.sistersoftheacademy.org/>

Brothers of the Academy

<http://www.brothersoftheacademy.org/>

University of California Irvine (UCI)

Advance Program for Equity and Diversity – Expect Equity and Support Diversity

<http://advance.uci.edu/>

About

<http://advance.uci.edu/about.html>

Career Advising General

<http://advance.uci.edu/careeradvising.html>

Career Advising Through Mentoring

<http://advance.uci.edu/Brochure%20PDF/FACULTY%20ADVANCEMENT%20-%20Career%20Advising%20-%202011.pdf>

CDSM INAUGURAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Saturday, January 26, 2013

Facilitator: Dr. Brenda Dixon Gottschild, Temple University

Discussants:

James Frazier, Virginia Commonwealth University

Charles O. Anderson, University of Texas, Austin

A'Keitha Carey, Texas Woman's University

Liana Conyers, Rutgers University

Mentoring Programs and Resources

1. Sisters of the Academy – a group that supports Black female scholars
2. Kerry Ann Rockquemore – Founder of National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (SOTA member) Author of *The Black Academic's Guide to Winning Tenure Without Losing Your Soul*.
3. National Council for Faculty Development and Diversity – has a 15 week success program
4. Black Performance Theory: A Working Group and Colloquium started by Thomas F. DeFranz (web.mit.edu/bpt) has an upcoming conference.
5. Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Faculty: What Higher Education Unions Do by AFT Higher Education – A great resource for statistics on minority retention in academia.

Legal Resources and Suggestions:

1. Balsa – National Black Law Students Association
2. National coalition of black lawyers (NCBL) www.ncbl.org
3. Germaine Ingram (former attorney) www.folkloreproject.org willing to mentor or guide
4. Michelle D. Flamer (Lawyer for City of Philadelphia) – willing to mentor or guide
5. Contact a Labor Lawyer in some instances

Giving back to our mentors:

1. Introducing your institutions to your mentor's work
2. Sharing professional opportunities with them.
3. Possibly creating means to relieve the stress and demands put upon them.

Notes and thoughts on creating steps (on a website) for scholars who need help to follow:

Creating a System: Tiers or levels of intervention (see Ozuzu's entry, above)

James Frazier's steps: (See Frazier's entry, above)

Liana Conyers's steps:

1. Follow the appropriate protocol in your institution.
2. Document everything
3. Blind copy people on emails
4. Avoid private meetings.

Additional Suggestions:

1. Do networking lineages or linkages of similar areas of research.
2. Bring people outside the academy to act as mentors. Connection with cultural institutions as they are also dealing with similar racial experiences.
3. Provide a list of resources on our website.
4. Allow people tell their story.
5. Use our website for people to post online video narrative of their stories.
6. Include the voices of those who came before us, the struggles of Pearl Primus and others.
7. Provide information to individuals in charge at these institutions. Inform them of instances they may not be aware of and with tools they can use to transform their institution.
8. Side Note: The challenges facing black women are different and often more challenging than those imposed on black men. This is something we should address. bell hooks has some great examples of how she was treated in a classroom as a black woman.
9. We should address steps for individuals in private institutions, as their steps are different than those in public institutions.
10. Provide information on anti-racist training that departments and institutions can utilize. Example: Crossroads; People's Institute for Survival and Beyond—Undoing Racism
11. Define racism and systemic racism on our website. CDSM'ers anyone willing to take this on?

Technical Resources to consider:

1. Facebook
2. Skype