Continued Care, Love, and Support in The New Year

Since our beginnings, CDSM has focused on meeting the challenges of the moment by providing resources to movement researchers and performing scholars of the African Diaspora. As we all seek hope in the possibilities of a new year, CDSM feels the importance of supporting our community and being a small beacon in the still pending troubled waters. For us, our dedication to Black life is not just a trendy slogan. It is the foundation of who we are and what we do. Instead of statements, we want to provide words of love and support for those of us out there fighting battles everyday, the battle to live, to be whole, and to actualize the beautiful lives we deserve.
I strive to find words of solace to offer at this dire time in American, African-American, history. As a people we know that we stand on the shoulders of extraordinary Ancestors who passed on to us the amazing resilience that allows us to keep on keeping on, despite the forces that look to eradicate us. We won’t give in: we continue to live, love, laugh, and find joy despite all the roadblocks set up to defeat us. And we are here to stay!

I am reading sister Isabel Wilkerson’s brilliant new book, *Caste - The Origins of Our Discontents*, and I can’t recommend it highly enough. It is not a book about dance, but it has everything to do with everything we do, as artists and Black people. Wilkerson. Ibram X. Kendi. Ta-Nehisi Coates. Angela Davis. Reading their work gives me the strength to continue to do The Work—and that means reaching out to you, because truly, we are all in this together! The West African tradition of sou-sou, a cooperative way of helping one another through group effort, is really what CDSM is all about. Our mission is to help you cope in the way our Ancestors taught us: each one, teach one. We are as strong as the help we can offer one another. CDSM is here for you. You/We Are Not Alone!

-Brenda Dixon-Gottschild
after the storm  
we shimmy away  
dirty waters  
hands clasped  
we dance  
into tomorrow's sun  
-Omilade Davis Smith

What grounds me in this moment is reflecting on our resiliency as a people. Our history proves that we will push past this moment and still create, love, and live. We stand on the shoulders of some powerful ancestors that will continue to guide us through stormy weather.  
-Saroya Corbett

I am unsure what to say in this moment, but I do know how I want us to feel: hopeful, full of light, and loved. Now, more than ever, I find Octavia Butler's words powerful and necessary:

We have to consciously study how to be tender with each other until it becomes a habit  
-Audre Lorde  
As I've witnessed and experienced
whether good times are coming back again. But I know that won’t matter if we don’t survive these times.”

- Parable of the Sower -

-Adanna Kai Jones

many folx have the habit of being tender and creating space. Whether it's for grieving, dancing, or chatter, I'm appreciative of the tenderness through these times.

-Jazelynn Goudy

I experience life as a series of rituals. Water activist Sobonfu Somé (Ibaye) reminds me that rituals for anytime and any moment are created and that we can design an appropriate ritual for all we live through and with. We are in ritual. Locate your rest, reset, renewal, and revival. No matter the attempts, blackness cannot be captured. It is an infinite force...ashe.

-Lela Aisha Jones

CDSM's 2021 IABD Panel

The twin pandemics of racism and COVID-19 stopped us short in 2020, forcing us to pivot in our professions, our daily lives, and also in our internal lives, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Join us as we share strategies on how we can continue to move forward.
Bring Our Communities Together

The Virtual Gathering

For the first time, we gathered virtually on November 7, 2020. In general, our annual Gathering is an offering, a space, a discussion, a communal journey that allows us to both embody and voice our concerns for who we are, where we are, and where we hope to go. During this collective gathering, we can and have strategized around upcoming projects and employment,
pre-formed “pods” (of no more than 6 persons) to take part.

As expected, we were joined by the president and CEO of The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD), Denise Saunders Thompson, and members of their staff. They discussed the tireless work they do and will continue to do, to support the Black Dance community during the pandemic, including their upcoming 30th year anniversary celebration!

We also featured Dr. Shamell Bell (creator of Street Dance Activism), who guided us through several embodied practices as we collectively and individually shared our stories and experiences.

CDSM’s 2020 IABD Session

On Saturday, January 18th, CDSM's annual panel session was held at the 2020 International Association of Blacks in Dance Conference to a sizeable group of rapt attendees. The panel consisted of four panelists, who presented parts of their research, specifically illustrating their strategies for survival in a white supremacist-dominated dance field.

Pawlet Brooks started us off with a powerful powerpoint presentation describing the mountains she had to climb as CEO and founder of the Let’s Dance International Frontiers annual dance festival in Leicester, UK.

The remaining three presenters amazed us all by performing their survival strategies: Dr S. Ama Wray (UC Irvine; founder of Embodiology®, and pictured giving her presentation, above); Maria Bauman-Morales (“Bessie” award winning multi-disciplinary artist/community organizer); and Dr. Adesola Akinleye (Senior Lecturer, Middlesex U., UK, Co-Founder,
The second hour was devoted to conversation with attendees, which is an integral aspect of CDSM’s work: bringing together concerned dance workers to share how we can help one another survive and actually thrive in our field.

Our Communities at Work

There are many of us in the trenches right now working to be a life line to each other and ourselves. We highlight just a few of these groups doing the work of healing, resisting, and activating.
supports the telling and archiving of black dance artists and their experiences. Each episode allows different artists to talk about their trials and tribulations, especially during these trying times, bringing attention, yet again, to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Camille A. Brown’s Social Dance for Social Change - Social Dance for Social Change is reclaiming Black narratives for Black & Brown people, giving African Diaspora culture its rightful place in American culture, fostering learning & creativity, and spreading the joy of dance. This School aims to create safe spaces for healing & connection, and a creative environment for leadership building & consciousness raising through our FREE class and lecture series, a mentorship program for emerging BIPOC artists and our community engagement initiative, Every Body Move.

Danza orgánica - through their research, storytelling, and performances, 'do' remains committed to the creation of an equitable society. They also work to amplify the voices of underrepresented peoples through their many platforms, including their annual 'we create festival', their 'dance research online forum', and their signature program—'dance for social justice'.

Florida Black Dance Artists Organization - FBDAO was created to educate, inform and empower Black Artists (especially in Florida) as agents of change, cultural keepers, truth tellers, activists and radical leaders. This organization provides space for Black artists to be nurtured, edified and supported through education, training, mentorship and professional development.

Get Dis War Dance - This is a platform for and a coalition of black movement artists in the fight for Black liberation. As movement artists, they have mapped out ways that speak to our black practices, skills, capacities, and callings, so that we can all show up to support the work of uplifting Black lives.

IABD Emergency Fund - The IABD Emergency Fund provides limited and short-term assistance during these difficult times to IABD members in good standing.

Jumantu Poe: Study Sessions - Jumatatu M. Poe hosts conversations on Facebook and Instagram with Black and Indigenous artists from the lands currently known as the US and Brazil about what they have, what they want, and ESPECIALLY where to go from here. This conversation series is an imagining laboratory, centering Black and Indigenous dream work, and especially queer Black and Indigenous folks.

SLMDances: Education - Their educational programs not only engage participants in the creative processes of movement and dance-making, but provide them with the space, time and tools to discuss and explore the themes and methodologies — such as understanding systemic oppression and dance as social activism — that guide SLMDances’ artistic practice.
Liberation began with Dr. Shamell Bell’s dream for collective liberation and healing. For 28 days, folks attend embodied meditation & movement sessions led by Black, Indigenous, People of Color + Queer guides from multiple wisdom traditions and healing practices, creating a collective daily practice, together.

Transition and New Beginnings

*Lela Aisha Jones, PhD,* has walked with CDSM since our very beginnings. As our operations coordinator, she has been instrumental in helping CDSM continue the work we do. With the change of the season, Lela has decided to step down from the Steering Committee to shift her focus on other areas in her life. CDSM is very grateful for Lela’s eight years of dedication and she will always be family to CDSM.

*Omilade Davis-Smith, MFA, PhD,* has agreed to join the CDSM Steering Committee. She is a certified instructor of Germaine Acogny’s Modern African Dance Technique whose research examines embodiment in African and Diaspora dances. She is the organizer of Dance in Africa Workshop: Senegal, located online at [danceinafrica.com](http://danceinafrica.com). CDSM is excited to work with Omilade this coming year and bring her talents to the team.

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