

In the early 1990's I was accepted into the *Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre's* Certificate Program at the same audition Linda-Dennis Fisher-Harrell was accepted into the company, auditioning for Judith Jameson. I stayed in Chicago instead to continue to dance with the [Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theatre](#) company, (last video, I'm in the background of first pic.). I worked on the south side in the Pilsen area, run by Artistic Director [Randy Duncan](#). Although I loved Ailey's work deeply, and was humbly ecstatic I was accepted, I loved Holmes, Lee's and Duncan's work precisely because of the company's unique vision.

To this day I was privileged to teach some of the most tenacious, resilient, laser-focused-working students I have ever taught anywhere, which was at JHCDT. The students did not care that I was the only socially constructed white person in the studio for hours. They just wanted the training, and I wanted to teach them. They were hungry to master technique and artistry. Many fell in love with the company works they watched before their classes started. The works often spoke to them, were danced by people who looked like them, and some saw it as a future job to get out of the south and west sides. I loved them, still do, and always will, including the new children each year who grace our south and west side neighborhoods in Chicago. They are gold, no matter what you hear in the news, most are just getting by sometimes, but street smart, which is dance smart too. To me, JHCDT and the school was the future of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in dance training, performance and choreography before D.E.I.B. was ever a phrase. I was determined to give them the tools for them to do whatever their hearts desired.

In my being raised in and having a career in Chicago, I noticed a disparity between multiple cultural identities, vast gender expressions of our population and the bodies I saw on stage. Dance has been an elitist pursuit and it has been my goal to use whatever privilege I have to dismantle the ways dancers are trained, starting when I began professionally teaching in 1989. I have utilized my education in the 9 intelligences pioneered by Howard Garner, the four main ways people learn choreography, and the science of kinesiology to do this. I have demonstrated experience in producing, creating, teaching choreography and dance history inclusive of these three pedagogical lenses, now "trends". Many of my socially constructed white colleagues at various schools I have taught at the last 20 years, until a couple of years ago, would say: "you need to be truthful with the students, in whom who will hire them and in terms of body shapes, especially". Body shapes that don't fit most Dance molds can be in any culture, but have been more discriminated against in African, Latino, Indigenous, LGBTQI, Pan, and Polyamorous American and Global bodies. Watching how and why Dancers were cast in the Miss Cosmopolitan competitions I performed in Chicago in the early 90's gave me direct experience in the change I wanted to see in the field when I would perhaps be in a gate-keeping role someday. I always educated my students on how the concert world in Modern and Contemporary hiring was progressing: Ballet extremely slowly, and hardly ever changing in Commercial dance work. I have been truthful AND have brought awareness to solutions that could change this. One being I teach students that how and what they pay to watch, including what they watch for free on social media, dictates this.

The last five years teaching at Yavapai College, like throughout my career, I have had African, Asian, Latino and Indigenous American/Global, Neuro-Diverse/Differently abled students with service animals, Trans, Pan and Polyamorous students. I spend those extra hours to set up an inclusive and belonging environment like I always have, and it always pays off. The little and big micro and macro aggressions have lessened since 1988, but there is still such a long way to go.

Starting with this base in my performance, teaching career, I have a demonstrated record of empowering, advocating for, and valuing a broad range of students of diverse identities and experiences. I am not perfect and check myself daily in my words and actions everywhere I go. I welcome with love, care and joy teaching, choreographing on/with, collaborating with, and mentoring ALL humans. Thank you for reading.