

RADICAL MOVEMENTS: KATHERINE DUNHAM AND RONALD K. BROWN

TEACHING TOWARD CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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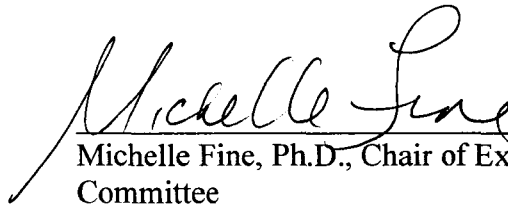
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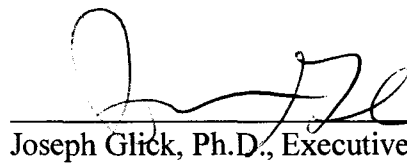
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## Abstract

RADICAL MOVEMENTS: KATHERINE DUNHAM AND RONALD K.  
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Advisor: Professor Michelle Fine

While the power of the arts to move, provoke, and educate has been recognized (Greene, 1995), we know little from performers/educators about their theories for social justice, multi-cultural educating. In this dissertation study, a conversation is created between social psychology, education, and the arts. Examined is how educators provoke critical consciousness in diverse audiences within the terrain of African-derived Black performance dance. Dance is conceptualized as a critical site of action wherein knowledge and power are enacted and contested towards three objectives: A) educating critically, broadly, and deeply within and outside traditionally-defined educative sites; B) teaching towards a critical understanding of identity and history; C) constructing multiple historical narratives and representations of marginalized individuals and groups. Inspired by these objectives and using African-derived Black dance as the site of study, this inquiry builds upon the Freirian tradition and argues that the world is not only in the text. It is also in the body. Case studies of prominent African-American, dancers/choreographers/educators Katherine Dunham and Ronald K. Brown are undertaken in order to address three areas: 1) Method of educating to provoke critical consciousness across diverse viewing audiences; 2) Content of critical consciousness; 3) Theories of audience provocation. A multi-method approach, including interviews,

observations and archival data collection, are used in order to build the case studies. The dissertation project examines the performance of resistance to domination; in particular, I examine critical pedagogies of the body and teaching practices of Katherine Dunham and Ronald K. Brown, focusing on how they, through performance dance, teach critical consciousness to diverse viewing audiences. Findings include a four-minute digital film (*The Collective Body and Collective Remembering.mov*) based on *Walking Out the Dark*, a dance choreographed by Ronald K. Brown and performed by Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE*, which was analyzed and edited for social meaning. The film presents dissertation findings in text and movement. In particular, the film details the social conditions necessary for creating a collective body, brought together by means of the performance, to remember dislocated/dismembered elements of American history, black culture and aesthetics.

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## CHAPTER 1: CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

In this dissertation study, I create a conversation between social psychology, education, and the arts. While the power of the arts to move, provoke, and educate has been recognized (Greene, 1995), we know little from performers/educators about their theories for social justice, multi-cultural educating. I'm interested in how dance performance, similar to Freire's concept of literacy, when linked to an emancipatory project for liberation, has the potential to teach critical consciousness. By teaching the world in the words and the words in the world, Freire demonstrated that people all around the globe living in oppressive, socially dominating conditions can become critically aware of those conditions and can become social agents of change. Similarly, dance performance is conceptualized as a site wherein knowledge, power, and action toward emancipatory social change are connected. In particular, dance performance is a site wherein ghosted social realities (Gordon, 1997) are translated into the language of movement and provide a provocative encounter for a viewing audience with historical and cultural knowledge. The overarching question of this dissertation study is as follows: *What are the possibilities for teaching critical consciousness when the educative terrain is dance performance?* In order to address this question, I examine the work of two Black dancers/choreographers/educators, Katherine Dunham and Ronald K. Brown, across dance performance encounter settings (concert stage and rehearsals) and audiences.

Two theoretical assumptions ground this study. The first assumption is that social domination and resistance are expressed through a dependency relationship between

groups such that the influence of one group upon the other is dialectical (Apfelbaum, 1979; Deutsch, 2002; Fanon, 1967; Foucault, 1980; Memmi, 1965/1991). That is, while oppression and social domination persist, strategies for maintaining unequal power relations change. As strategies shift, so do modes of resistance, producing shifting social-historical conditions of social domination and resistance. The second related assumption is that social actors of struggle and resistance are also makers of history (Marx, 1852/1972). That is, they intervene and participate in the historical process (P. Freire, 1973). Historically, Blacks have been agents in the struggle against social conditions of oppression and social domination. Moreover, coming to know the past is the critical pedagogy of liberation (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Although not readily conceived of in the roles of activists or as makers of history, they are conceptualized as both in this study. Given these assumptions and using dance performance as the site of study, this dissertation will address three research questions: 1) What is the process of educating to provoke critical consciousness? 2) What is the content of critical consciousness as taught? 3) What is the theory of audience provocation across encounter settings and audiences?

In the next section, I will review a diverse, cross-disciplinary set of literatures. I begin with an examination of the theoretical work on critical consciousness, toward the goal of defining critical consciousness in the context of this dissertation study. I will then look at a set of theoretical rationales for the conditions under which critical consciousness can be provoked, followed by a discussion of collective historical memory as an instance of collective critique and collective action and an encounter site for diverse audiences. In

the third section, I turn to an encounter site, art, and in particular, dance performance. In the final section, I weave together these literatures in order to ground the research questions.

### Critical Consciousness: Conceptions and Objectives

The concept of consciousness has been discussed from a variety of perspectives: as the process of decolonization, (Fanon, 1967; Memmi, 1965/1991); as identity transformation, (Hall, Cross, and Freedle, 1972, Tajfel, 1974; Zavalloni, 1974); as dissimilation (Hays-Bautista, unpublished); as the shift from generation to generation units (Mannheim, 1952); as class consciousness (Morris, and Murphy, 1966); and as the growth of feminism (Carden, 1974) (as cited by (Gurin, Miller, & Gurin, 1980). Since the 1980's, consciousness has also been articulated at the intersection of race and gender (e.g., (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1992) and from the perspective of multiple identities and locations (Anzaldua, 1987). In their study of class, race and sex consciousness, Gurin, Miller, et al. (1980) observe that, despite the concerns with regard to different target groups, all have been influenced by “Marx’s social psychological concept of class consciousness” Gurin, Miller, et al (1980), and all discuss nearly identical concepts as central components of coming into social consciousness.

In the last twenty years, a radical theory of education has emerged that insists that education can provoke a critical awareness of unjust social conditions and inspire action to transform those conditions (hooks, 1994; McLaren, 1994). Many theorists have contributed to the emergence of a critical educational theory and critical pedagogy that “directs educators toward a teaching process . . . of engaging students in . . . analyzing

social issues with reference to unequal and unethical social structures and processes that they see every day but have learned to take for granted . . . ” (McLaren, 1994, p. ix). According to McLaren (1994), profound debt is owed to the Frankfurt school and its members, such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, John Dewey, William H. Kilpatrick, and others in the U.S. The idea of awakening a critical awareness among oppressed and dominated peoples by drawing on words used to describe daily experience, linking those to an awareness of oppressive social conditions as well as possibilities for transforming those conditions, is owed in large part to Paolo Freire. In his groundbreaking book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) discusses literacy as an educative site for oppressed peoples to come into a new awareness of “selfhood and begin to look critically at the social situation in which they find themselves, [and]. . . take the initiative in acting to transform the society that has denied them this opportunity of participation [as Subjects]” (P. Freire, 1970, p. 9). Freire conceived literacy as a contested site where knowledge, together with power and action, could produce social change. In Freirian terms, critical consciousness is conceptualized as a process of knowing social location within unequal power relations (identifying power discontent), forming a critique of those relations (social critique), and acting together to change those relations (collective action). In this conception, action is intentionally directed at transforming social injustice for self and for others. Additionally, such action must be taken up by and with oppressed peoples for the sake of changing oppressive social conditions.

For Freire, as for most liberation fighters, including other radical educators, liberation is attained only through radical practices and struggle. Liberation is not given or conceded. Fundamentally, Freirian critical consciousness presumes that, within the dynamic relationship between social domination and resistance wherein power is exerted to reproduce and sustain systems of domination, resistance strategies for social change must be developed by oppressed peoples; they must “name their own world” since liberation is not going to be *given* by the oppressor. Freirian critical consciousness directs educators to engage in a process of teaching that provokes students’ critical awareness of the injustice of subordinate social locations within unequal power relations (identification) and provokes both a sense of discontent with such locations (power discontent) and action to change unequal power relations with the oppressed (collective action). Freire, as well as other radical educators, theorizes that engaging in educative practices to provoke critical consciousness should not be prescriptive or mechanistic (P. Freire & Macedo, 1995; McLaren, 1994, 2000). Instead, practices to provoke critical consciousness should be grounded in local experiences and contexts (Martin-Baro, 1994). Therefore, critical consciousness is conceptualized as a set of objectives: 1) provoking individual awareness of the collective nature of social injustice 2) stimulating a collective critique about social injustice; and the unequal power relations that are implicated in social injustice; and 3) agitating for collectively-oriented action.

In the next section, we look at different theoretical rationales for the conditions under which critical consciousness can be provoked. Discussed will be the standpoint of

the oppressed in naming injustice and the impact of the collective on individual thought and action.

### Critical Consciousness: The Individual and The Collective

Within the vast literature of social injustice, particularly on naming and acting against it, there is a set of empirical findings and theoretical ground which bear on the notion that those in subordinate positions have a greater social sensitivity to naming injustice. Henley (1977) says it this way: "Certainly it makes sense that when oppressive social situations make life a struggle, one becomes finely tuned to the nuances of that struggle" (p.14). Indeed, Deutsch (1985) has argued that victims of injustice are more sensitive to injustice than victimizers or non-victims. Fine (1980) also reports that victims more readily identify and name injustice than non-victims. However, as Fine and Wong (1995) admit, the proposition that victims are better than non-victims or victimizers at perceiving and naming injustice has been widely contested by social psychological studies looking at job discrimination, battered women, abortion, and sexual harassment.

These studies suggest that victims rarely see themselves as such. Instead, they perceive themselves as individuals free of injustice even though they may acknowledge their group has been harmed (Crosby, 1982; Hafer & Olson, 1989; Guimond & Dube-Simard, 1983; Birt & Dion, 1987; Ford, 1988; and Mays & Cochran, 1997), (cited in (Fine & Wong, 1995). Additionally, some victims may engage in a process of selecting out damaging information in order to regain a sense of control over their lives (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). Brodkey & Fine (1988) analyzed sexual harassment narratives of

female graduate students. They found that more than 70 percent of the respondents reported instances of harassment while only 10 percent filed grievances. In contrast to respondents in other studies, these women identified the injustice, but were not prepared to report it. If it is the case that individuals select-out and/or re-frame instances of victimization, do not identify victimization, name an injustice, or report such instances, how do individuals come to know their socio-political location, and under what social conditions can individuals take action toward social justice as Freire and others contend is possible? We turn to an important essay written by one of the mothers of black feminist consciousness in order to address these questions.

Patricia Hill Collins (2004) penned a critical commentary on an individualistic recasting of feminist standpoint theory. She makes some important distinctions between individual and group responses to injustice—distinctions that support a different interpretation of individual naming of social injustice and taking action to counter social injustice from that of groups. In the context of hierarchical social arrangements and instances of social injustice, these distinctions underscore the value of holding on to a notion of group in analyzing individual awareness and action. According to Collins, “Groups have a degree of permanence over time such that group realities transcend individual experiences” (p. 247). In other words, in the face of injustice, individuals will have unique experiences. However, the cumulative and aggregate experience of oppression and social domination creates a setting/context for collective critique within a group. Collins continues, “. . . groups hav(e) shared histories based on their shared location in relations of power . . . It is common location within hierarchical power

relations that creates groups” (p. 248). Collins’ framing of group consciousness responds to the worries generated by Crosby and others that individuals may not perceive or name personal injustice. That is, rather than privileging an individual naming of injustice, equally important is to be able to name group level injustice as real and material, thus facilitating the naming of personal injustice. In the absence of being able to name a group experience of social domination and oppression, it is difficult to name injustice as personal.

These various studies point to the interrelation between individual knowing and action along with an awareness of group level knowing and action. They suggest that the latter is a necessary condition, if not a social framework for the former. In the language of critical consciousness, the process of knowing one’s location in the social world of unequal power relations and taking action to change those relations is more likely to take place when there is a sense of a collective critique and action to which personal critique and action can be linked and supported. These theoretical rationales and empirical findings, which point to an interrelationship between individual knowing and collective recognition of social injustice and the impact on individual action, suggest that it is worth further unpacking this relationship. Whereas earlier the question of individual naming of injustice was asked without a sense of a social or collective inquiry or action, now we look at the relationship between collective critique and action and individual knowing and action. To do so, I turn to a site of collective critique and action, collective historical remembering.

### Critical Consciousness and Collective (Re)membering

...history [is] written in the hearts of our people who then feel for history, not just because it offers facts but because it awakens and sustains connections, renews and nourishes current relations. Before that which is in our hearts can be spoken, remembered with passion and love, we must discuss the myriad ways white supremacy works to impose forgetfulness . . . (hooks,(1992, p. 183)

Locating memory within a collective framework and defining it as a social process is traced to psychologist F.C. Bartlett and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Bartlett aimed to understand remembering as a normative activity of social groups rather than something possessed by a group. Bartlett (1932/1967) wrote that individual recollections are determined by social conditions, “by providing that setting of interest, excitement and emotion which favour the development of specific images, and secondly, by providing a persistent framework of institutions and customs which acts as a schematic basis for constructive memory” (p. 55). While Bartlett conceived of memory as a normative social activity, it was Halbwachs who “work[ed] out in detail the social and physical support of memory” (Douglas, 1980, p. 76). In his study of “collective memory” of religious groups, Halbwachs highlighted the permeable boundary between individual memory and the social construction and practices of recollections by doing a close study of European institutions, historical and contemporary. Halbwach’s work stimulated interest among a wide range of scholars including psychologists (Billig, 1990, 1995; Middleton & Edwards, 1990; Shotter, 1990) in examining the social and collective aspects of memory and the sites in which memory is enacted, including text, public

memorials, institutions, and nations. Erika Apfelbaum (2000) and Michael Billig (1990; 1995) extended the social framework of memory even further by looking at the differential modes of memory enactment and construction when unequal power relations constitute the social context.

For any social group, history provides a mirror of lived experiences and is a reflection of how the group makes meaning of those experiences (Apfelbaum, 1997, 2000; Howard, 1999; Lifton, 1964; Roberts, 1998). Taking a critical look at the making of history, we find that recorded history is usually written by the powerful. Its version typically relegates the experiences of oppressed groups and their resistance to social domination to historical limbo or obscurity (Howard, 1999). The history produced becomes “the” account. However, no matter what social, political, and economic resources are put to the service of obscuring and forgetting the experiences of dominated groups, those experiences do not disappear. Rather, they hover over hypervisible accounts of history and social spaces waiting to be encountered and contended with (Gordon, 1997). That is, there are social spaces where the work of collective (re)membering is an ongoing and flourishing process by and with oppressed peoples. I use the term “collective (re)membering” instead of collective memory to invoke the sense of on-going action that is necessary for a collective historical memory to exist.

According to Apfelbaum (2000), “Revisiting...collective history has consistently been the first step in the overturning of a society’s regime; having a history of one’s own is a vital step towards resistance and the regrouping...of any community that has been dominated by another more powerful group” (p. 1011). It is in the remembering of

collective histories that collective critique emerges. Apfelbaum (2000) contends, for example, that trials concerning crimes against humanity or genocide (e.g., attempts to bring Pinochet to trial, Maurice Papon's trial in France and the Cambodian and South African Truth and Reconciliation Commissions) perform a vital psychological function for individual victims. The public testimonies these trials produce create an opportunity to break a collective silence of crimes committed against oppressed groups. Apfelbaum also reminds us of the impact of Haley's (1976) novel and movie *Roots*. She says, "By bringing the African roots of the American community into an open public arena, *Roots* contributed to a readjustment of memory and the symbolic meaning of the slavery period. For millions of people, almost overnight—especially after the television series—slavery had to be reevaluated as a consequence of White domination" (Apfelbaum, 2000, p. 1012). Trials of crimes against humanity would not have occurred without collective critique and collective action. Similarly, *Roots* might not have been written in the absence of the Civil Rights Movement.

These examples suggest that public testimonies double as sites of collective historical (re)memberings, enabling individual victims to make sense of their personal experience by linking it to a set of larger collective historical experiences. Relatedly, these instances of public (re)memberings illuminate the fact that acts of resistance through collective critique and collective action energize, indeed make possible, a public hearing and viewing of social injustices and social justice in action.

Cross (1971) developed the notion of encounter to describe an event or experience that could provoke critical consciousness. Cross conceived encounters as one of the

stages of a process of identity development where an individual moves from a “Negro-to-Black” conversion experience (Cross, 1971). The encounter stage is characterized by a significant and compelling personal or social event that is outside of an individual’s frame of reference, particularly involving one’s attitudes and beliefs about race. Cross (1991) says that the event or experience may “revolve around exposure to powerful cultural-historical information about the Black experience...” (p. 200). An encounter could also be an opportunity to revisit or work through some aspect of identity that results in a more profound understand and/or appreciation for Blackness (Parham, 1989). Encounters, as conceived in this study, are powerful and significant sites of experiences of the world of social domination as well as the resistance to domination from a Black perspective, especially the nation's unresolved themes of injustice, marginalization, and segregation along racial lines. Encounters are sites for collectively (re)membering complicated accounts of history, which reveal the ghosts of a troubled past that hover over the hyper visible accounts of history. Encounters, as conceived in this study are sites of resistance which, to quote bell hooks once again, “sustain connection, renew and nourish current relations” (hooks, 1990, p. 183).

In this section, the literature suggests that provoking critical consciousness is a social process that is facilitated by collective critique and collective action. Public encounter sites where collective (re)memberings of contested history, social injustice and struggle for justice take place in public illustrate this point. Whether naming takes place before action is unclear. What is apparent, however, is the importance of encounters with public memorializations of histories of domination and resistance for naming and

contesting injustices and their potential for provoking critical consciousness. In the following section, I move to art, another public site of encounter.

### Art and Critical Consciousness

Art by its very nature is provocative and, whether stated or unstated, art has a political and moral agenda (Bolstein, 1998). Theorists have discussed radical performance texts that have come out of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960's and 1970's (Baraka, 1997; N.K. Denzin, 2000; hooks, 1990) feminist and Chicano/Chicana Cultural Movements, (see Harrington, 1999; Hurtado, 2000), and more recently, popular culture and hip hop, (Daspit & Weaver, 1999); (Dimitriadis, 2001; hooks, 1990, 1992). Hurtado (2000) observes that "cultural production is a means by which young people can explore alternative forms of consciousness and social relations..." (p. 274). Greene (1995) theorizes that aesthetic education and the artist play critical roles in stimulating a public toward imagining a better, fairer world. Critical ideas are brought forth and articulated into a public through the arts and aesthetic education (Greene, 1995). Art can reveal the invisible mechanisms of power, privilege, the subtle, mundane, banalities that fill the spaces between skewed social representations and realities, as well as the possibility that social change can occur.

Within the field of psychology, art, particularly expressive arts and dance movement, have been noted for their therapeutic benefits and their efficacy in provoking individual consciousness such as self awareness (e.g., (Adelman & Castricone, 1986; Crawford, 2000; Edwards, 2000; Hornyak & Baker, 1989); body awareness (DuBose,

2001); new and deeper insights into self (Talerico, 1986; Weiner, 1999); self-reflection on desires and expectations (Ganim & Fox, 1999), and self-inquiry (Evans, 1999).

Dance has also been recognized as a vehicle for self- and social understanding (Shapiro, 1998). Inspired by Freirian critical pedagogy and feminist epistemology, dance educator Sherry Shapiro created a pedagogy and curriculum which recognizes the need “to open the space for students’ struggle to understand, that is, to make sense of, their own lives and experiences...” (p. 8). Shapiro conceives of dance as a site wherein students can engage in critical reflection upon lived experiences, “...can interpret the individual and social relationships in which they interact and can begin to understand their own power to reshape and recreate those relationships, hence, their own lived world” (Sherrod, 1998, p. 8).

There is a strong tradition in African-derived Black dance to create dance which is geared towards educating diverse individuals in a collective setting through social commentary (Hazard-Gordon, 1990; Kelley, 1994) and activism (Aschenbrenner, 1981, 2002). Sherrod (1998) asserts that as early as the 1920's, when concert dance was developing, Black concert dance spoke of social, political, and economic experiences (Sherrod, 1998). She also comments that “Black dancers adopted the underlying philosophy of the Harlem Renaissance: that art could change how people were perceived by the rest of the world” (Sherrod, 1998, p. 423). This was the case for both teaching and performance. Sherrod (1998) documented the process through which African, African American, and African-Caribbean dance pioneers of the late 1930's and 1940's conceptualized and taught dance informed by their direct experience as Blacks and

African people in the United States, and their research of African-derived dance in African and the Diaspora. She found that a teaching and performing tradition developed within Black dance, using African-derived movements and concepts to dance themes of Black lived experience, historical and contemporary. For instance Browning (1995) says of samba, an African-derived dance form,

In Portuguese, one says that the skilled Sambista is able, and obliged to *dizer no pé*—speak with the feet. No other language is required; song is redundant, words are superfluous...In the samba, in fact, not only the feet speak. The dance is a complex dialogue in which various parts of the body talk at the same time, and in seemingly different languages. The feet keep up a rapid patter, while the hips beat out a heavy staccato and the shoulders roll a slow drawl...The message is simultaneously narrative and lyrical. That is to say it spins itself out over time, increasing in meaning as it recounts its origins; and yet it compresses its significance in a momentary image. Samba narrates a story of racial contact, conflict and resistance...(p. 2)

Spinning out a historical narrative, remembering origins, conflicts, domination, resistance is a feature of the African-derived Black dance teaching and performing tradition that developed during the '30s and '40s. As Black dance has changed and evolved, presumably so has this tradition. However, this historical feature endures as a critical part of the tradition. Choreographers and dancers transform dance performance into a social, collective space, where an audience encounters the historical (re)membering being performed. For instance, Black modern dancer and choreographer Dianne McIntyre says,

I want the dance to have some meaning, some kind of impact on myself, the dancers, and the people who experience it...I want the dance to have a close connection with what people's lives are about. Because of that the

themes I select often deal with our history and whatever we feel from the inside in our daily lives. (West, 1996, p. 131)

Dance performance is another social space where consciousness could be provoked through the collective (re)membering being performed. Thus dance performance is conceptualized as the critical encounter site with collective (re)membering, of struggle and possibility.

### Summary and Research Questions

Through the various literatures discussed here, we find that spaces have been carved out within education and the arts to create collective sites of encounter with critique and action. Art generally and African-derived Black dance specifically are sites of creative protest wherein goals for teaching towards critical consciousness are enacted. Thus, for this study, dance performance is conceptualized as a collective educative site. The social injustice literature suggests that the collective is a powerful site of protest and action wherein individuals will voice injustices. While this study will not focus on individuals voicing critique in collective settings, it does use as part of its theoretical grounding the notion that the collective is a central feature of an encounter site for “educating toward” critical consciousness. Freire’s legacy of educating towards critical consciousness has taught a great deal about practice and pedagogy for working within low power groups. His legacy, however, is from the neck up. This study aims to understand educating toward critical consciousness through and for the body—individual, diasporic black bodies, and diverse collective bodies. Thus, the conceptual ground for this dissertation concerns the practices by which across-group encounter sites and settings are created

through the action of African-derived Black performance dance. I locate these questions about critical consciousness within African-derived Black dance for three reasons: First, it is an encounter site of action guided by a set of objectives to provoke critical consciousness. Indeed, the site was cultivated in the soil of a collective discontent with unequal power relations and a concern about how to transform those relations. Second, given that it is theoretically a site of action, the relationship between action, knowledge, and power can be studied differently than it has been within social psychology. Third, African-derived Black dance uses a distinctive movement language which spins out a historical document recounting themes of Black life and historical (re)memberings of acts of domination and resistance. Therefore, this study will be situated within this site of action with the aim of understanding critical consciousness when it is in embodied and in motion. For this dissertation study I ask the following research questions: 1) What is the process of educating to provoke critical consciousness in diverse audiences? 2) What is the content of critical consciousness when taught? And 3) What is the theory of audience provocation across encounter settings and audiences?

## CHAPTER 2: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### Multi-Method Approach

In this study, two case studies were undertaken about Miss Katherine Dunham and Mr. Ronald K. Brown in order to examine the research questions. Case study, as a method, is useful because it reveals the complexities and particularities of the case (Stake, 1994). Additionally, as Stake (1994) notes, “a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory” (p. 237). I am interested in investigating the teaching of critical consciousness beyond words with an aim of refining what we already know and extending our understanding of this construct by examining it through dance, a site of action. Dunham and Brown were selected based upon the following criteria:

- They are both dance practitioners of African ancestry;
- They are both based in New York City, the cultural capital of the world;
- They are both performing and/or teaching in New York;
- Their Dance vocabulary includes African derived movements, postures and gestures (MPG) and Black themes.

I used a multi-method approach to build the case studies. A multi-method approach “reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (N.K. Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2) and allows patterns and idiosyncrasies to emerge through distinct methods, in this case, archival data collection, observations, and, interviews (Lather, 1986). Conceptually, this design creates opportunities to cover multiple encounter settings, namely teaching and performance. Within these settings--

which include rehearsals, performances, post-performance talk, and dance classes--I examined the process of *creating encounters* designed to provoke critical consciousness across diverse audiences. I also kept my peripheral vision as wide as possible in hopes of capturing—beyond text and words—how both Dunham and Brown transform deep meaning and desire into dance in order to provoke social awareness about Black culture and history. In addition, by collecting data on the life of Brown, I could also reveal the spirit and journey behind the three dimensions of critical consciousness examined in this study. Across the three methods--archival, interview, and observations-- I examined three primary dimensions of critical consciousness: **Pedagogy**, the processes by which dance educators develop a set of instructional and performance practices and goals for provoking critical consciousness across time, audiences and encounter settings; **Content**, the substance of instructional and performance practices across time, audiences, and encounter settings; and **Encounter**, conceptions of the social event and experience of teaching and performing as site of provocation and social actions employed to create an encounter within those sites. Two types of data were produced: spoken/textual data and action/dance data. Indeed, action and dance are used interchangeably throughout. That is, I investigated what was *said* about **Pedagogy**, **Content** and **Encounter** and how these dimensions of critical consciousness were *enacted* through dance performance.

#### History: Revealing a Troubling Past in Order to Trouble the Present

History figures prominently in this study. In Chapter One, I offer a theoretical framing of history which asserts, in sum, that history is an important means by which

social groups provide a mirror of lived experience and make meaning of those lived experiences. However, within a social context of unequal power relations, recorded history is usually written by the powerful. It is a hyper visible historical account that obscures the experience of dominated groups. A dominated group's account becomes a forgotten historical account. Thus, we must look to social spaces of action, in this case African-derived Black performance dance, in order to reveal the ghosts of a troubled past. African-derived Black performance is conceptualized as "...a moment of production...induc[ing] actively a tension between the present and the past, between the dead and the living" (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003,p. 5). In this context, the dead are the ghosts of a national and collective troubled past and the resistance against forgetting a collective troubled past. As Eng and Kazanjian (2003) argue, only by contending with a troubled past—that which has been rendered dead and forgotten but is in reality very much part of lived experience—can we hope for social change. Across the three methods, I collected data to examine how Dunham and Brown, using historical references or information, frame or (re)frame racial social issues of their day. In particular, for the Dunham case, I examined how she (re)framed racial segregation, and, for the Brown case, I investigated how he (re)frames racial integration.

#### Tracing African-Derived Movements, Postures, and Gestures

As noted in Chapter One, the movements, postures and gestures in African-derived Black dance, constitute, in part, the embodiment of the ghosts from a troubled past. Therefore, I compiled a list of African-derived movements, postures and gestures

(MPG) based on those standard in dance that have been documented by Black aesthetics scholars, historians, and dance scholars, such as Robert Ferris Thompson, Cheryl Willis, Brenda Dixon Gottschild, Cynthia S'thembile West, as well as those I learned through my study of Central African, West African, and Afro-Caribbean cultures and dance forms. I used the list of MPG across the methods, which will be described in the next section, in order to examine the forgotten and denied histories and experiences of Blacks and their expression as embodied in African-derived movement, postures, and gestures (MPG), looking for and asking about their use in pedagogy as well as in teaching and performance practices. In addition to collecting data on African-derived MPG as a way of examining the ghosts of a troubled past, I collected data on the Black past that Dunham and Brown included in their **Pedagogy, Content and Encounters**. In the dance storylines, I examined the ways they referenced the dance when working with dancers in rehearsals and the aesthetics of the dance performance and dance classes (dancers, costumes, staging, and music). Thus, history in this study is operationalized as content. That is, I was looking for history or the past within the data and the way it is used as “a moment of production” (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003) toward creating an encounter for the viewing audience. Within **Pedagogy**, I collected data on how Dunham and Brown used historical references of Black life or experience for provoking critical consciousness. I sought to understand how historical Black life was a part of instructional or performance practices. Within **Content and Encounter**, I explored the extent to which and how historical references about Black life figured in their conception of creating a critical social event and actions employed to provoke critical consciousness. Across these three

dimensions, the particular historical references about Black life that I was tracing involved racial segregation and integration. In the next section, I will discuss the procedures of data collection.

### Procedures

**Archival Data Collection, Observations and Interviewing** are the primary research practices used in this study. I collected data from November 2001 through November 2002.

#### Archival Data Collection

The archival data I collected for the Dunham case consisted of films, video tapes, photographs, magazine and newspaper articles, essays, books, letters, speeches, performance programs, class syllabi, and books by or about Dunham, her dance, choreography, Dunham Technique, dance companies, and schools. I viewed a total of 10 films and video tapes that documented Miss Dunham's dance (1937 – 1987), ranging from choreography performed for the concert stage (*The Choreography of Katherine Dunham* and *Divine Drumbeats: Katherine Dunham and Her People*) and motion pictures, (*Stormy Weather* and *Carnival of Rhythm*), to rehearsals (*Choros, Love Songs, Cry, and How Long Have it Been* and *Celia Ipiotos Talks With Gary DeLoatch and Vanoye Aikens*), to the teaching of Dunham Technique (*Norman Davis video*). The videotapes also documented talk about Dunham dance through interviews and panel discussions about and with Miss Dunham and Dunham dancers (*Roundtable with Some*

*Original Company Members and An African American Dance Forum*), as well as with Miss Dunham's husband, John Pratt (*Interview with Katherine Dunham in her home in East St. Louis*). Dunham archival data collection took place at four locations: The Research Libraries of the New York Public Library at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; the home of Anna M. Grayson, where I viewed video tapes, Miss Grayson's notes, letters, photographs and performance programs; the home of Julie Belafonte, I viewed photographs. Mrs. Belafonte is also a Dunham Technique's teacher and a former member of the dance company. Miss Grayson was one of Miss Dunham's personal assistance, wardrobe mistresses, the Founder and President of *The Katherine Dunham Council for the Preservation of Cultural Arts, Inc.*, and a former dance company member. During video tape viewing of dance, I recorded the following information in a data summary: Title and Date of Video; name of Director and Producer; and Content of Video. For the "Content of Video" I documented the story or stories the dance was telling, set, costumes, and music/songs, as well as the date on which the dance piece was created and historical references. If the information was available, I documented the names of the dancers and musicians. I noted the African-derived MPG that appeared in the video, using the list of African-derived MPG as a guide. If I was viewing a photograph, I documented the "who, what, when and where" of the photograph. If I was granted permission and where possible, I also made a photocopy and/or a digitized copy of the photograph. This was possible in the case of photographs that are part of the personal collection of Anna Grayson and Julie Belafonte. For the performance programs,

letters, and video taped interviews, I also noted the “who, what, when, and where” for each. When I viewed the video taped interviews and panel discussion, I noted what Miss Dunham or Dunham dancers were *saying* about the dances she produced and performed, the historical and social period of the dances and Dunham’s account of the making of dances, their meanings and the challenges she faced during her dance career. Archival data were gathered for the Brown case from the Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* office located in Brooklyn, New York, where Mr. Brown has a collection of photographs, promotional material, posters, newspaper and magazine clippings, and performance programs. I also examined reviews of Mr. Brown’s early works at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. These data cover the period from 1990-2002. I created data summaries for these data similar to the ones described above for Dunham.

#### Observations and Participant Observations

As researchers we are trained to use all of our human faculties in order to systematically, purposively, keenly, and consciously notice and record our observations. Similarly, dancers and dance educators are trained to translate emotions, thoughts, and ideas into movement and gestures, and we are trained to *see, feel and experience* with the whole body. Imagine walking through space. Suddenly the lights go out. Irises dilate, and the senses are heightened. The whole person comes alive, vividly noticing ambient sounds and feeling her breath. The drumbeat of the anticipating heart becomes loud, almost deafening. The whole being *sees* in the dark. In my dance training, particularly in Afro-Caribbean dance training during the past approximately fifteen years, I also learned

to step outside of spoken and written language and step into the language of the body in order to communicate viscerally. In this phase of data collection, relying on my research and dance training, I brought to the sites and work of observation, all my faculties. I systematically, purposively, and consciously observed pedagogical practices and enactments of expressed goals, the substance of those practices, and interactional methods used by Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* dance company. Observations of Ronald K. Brown's teaching practices and Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* in rehearsal took place from March 2002 – October 2002. In August, 2002 I observed Miss Dunham and Dunham Technique dance educators while attending The Dance Institute: Based on the Katherine Dunham Model (Dunham Institute) at City Center in New York City. Fieldnotes taken during observations were thick in detail, particularly sensory and sensate detail (Markula & Denison, 2000).

For the Brown case, observations took place during two critical activities: rehearsal and performance when dance stories unfold and when teaching takes place. Observations were documented through note taking and/or videotape, depending upon which form of documentation was most appropriate to the setting. I videotaped Brown while he taught, rehearsed, and performed, focusing on his dance pedagogy used to convey meaning, his method of choreographing and teaching stories, the way danced meanings were communicated to the learner/dancer. I also videotaped the dance. As noted by Art Historian Robert Ferris Thompson (1979), the use of a portable videotape camera in field research has several advantages. The camera literally captures and transports an image from the site of inquiry to other remote sites. Since this study aims to

document critical consciousness taught through the body, I used videotaping to capture the body in motion. I obtained informed consent from Brown, as well as from Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* company members. During my first observation of The Company in March 2002, Brown introduced me to Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* company members. I explained the project to them. During rehearsal breaks, I spent time building trust and relationships with individual company members, answering questions about the project, and sharing my own experiences as a dancer. All the dancers were enthusiastic about the project and agreed to individual interviews. In dance classes, where obtaining informed consent was impractical, I focused the camera on Brown as he taught. Capturing images of students/learners was sometimes unavoidable because Brown works so intimately with his students. Those images of student/learners for whom I did not have consent forms were not used and did not become part of the data.

#### Participant Observations

During the time I was observing Brown, I also took several of his dance classes and attended performances, as well as post-performance conversations with audience members. It was important to dance with Brown as a way of establishing trust and rapport. Brown's dance is not a form that I have studied. In class, Brown shifted from researched to teacher since more than once he had to demonstrate a step or pattern that I was "not getting." Taking Brown's class was also a way of getting inside the data, as detailed in the following field note entry:

*Rather than just observing his class, I took the class today. It occurred to me after an interview with Brown that feeling, spirit, and dance as a journey are important aspects of what he wants to share with others through dance. I had to have a "felt experience" of his class, of his movement and his pedagogy...I noted Ron's excitement when I told him that I was going to take class. (Fieldnotes, 3/31/02)*

Observations were either audio taped and/or recorded through fieldnotes. During the Dunham Institute, dance educators working in New York City public schools and dance studios were trained in Dunham Technique, its theory, philosophy, and practice, Haitian dance, historical and socio-cultural theory, dance making, dance curriculum writing, and music and instrumentation. There were also lecture/demonstrations of traditional Haitian dance, interviews with Miss Katherine Dunham by Gil Noble, and dance scholars, educators, and practitioners.

#### Interviews

I conducted a total of fifteen (15) semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The interviews were structured in the sense that I used a protocol (Appendix B). They were unstructured in the sense that I was led by the Interviewee's narration. All interviews were audio taped after informed consent was obtained. Interviewees were given the choice of using their given names or pseudo-names. Interviews were conducted at a time and place convenient for the Interviewees. The initial interview questions were general and structured as "breaking the ice" kinds of questions (Fontana & Frey, 1998). Indeed, many of the initial "breaking the ice" questions were also questions about the dancer's life and the relationship between life and dance. The responses to these questions proved critical in re-constructing Brown's life and realizing how prominently his life journey

figured in creating protest dance. Initial questions were followed by specific questions structured to examine the three dimensions, **Pedagogy, Content and Encounter**. Specifically, I was interested in what interview participants had to say about the pedagogical practices and goals used, the substance of those practices, how they were thinking about the social event of dance as performance, and actions employed to create a provocative encounter, as well as the life influences and events that led them to frame dance as they did. Of interest also was the endurance and viability of these practices as provocative encounters across time and space.

My first interview with Ronald K. Brown was done via email. I sent him the consent form and interview protocol via email; he returned the consent form in person and responded to interview questions via email; I revisited the interview protocol to clarify responses during our first one-on-one interview in March 2002. The second interview with Brown was conducted in April 2002 and the third interview on May 2002. Each interview was approximately one hour in length. The questions posed in the second and third interviews were aimed at clarifying meanings from a previous interview as well as exploring my observations. During the period of observations Brown was rehearsing (*Water*) and choreographing and rehearsing (*Walking Out the Dark*). Therefore, I also posed questions focusing on teaching practices, content, and meaning of those pieces. In-person interviews with Brown were conducted in dance studios after rehearsals and dance classes. I conducted interviews with each member of Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* during the time of the study: Diedre Dawkins, Bridget Moore, Keon Thoulouis, Daryl Spiers, Camille Brown, Iquail Johnson and Shani Collins. I also conducted an interview with Mr. Brown's Associate Artistic Director, Renee Redding. During summer 2002, six young dancers apprenticed with Brown. One of the apprentices agreed to be interviewed.

Consent forms were obtained for all interviewees. The interviews were approximately 45 minutes in length.

At the Dunham Institute, I conducted an interview with Janelle Stovall, Director of The East St. Louis Children's company and school and Rachel Travenier, a certified Dunham Technique dance educator. Interviews with Travenier and Stovall were conducted during the Institute in August 2002. I conducted an interview with Katherine Dunham on September 7, 2002, at her home in New York City. I interviewed Dunham-trained dance educator and Dunham Company member Julie Belafonte at her home in October 2002. I also interviewed Dr. E. Gaynell Sherrod, who at the time of the interview was Director of Dance in the Office of Arts Education at the New York City Department of Education and conceiver, organizer, and supervisor of Dunham Institute. I listened to all the interviews multiple times and created data summaries. I transcribed the Brown, Dunham, and Belafonte interviews, yielding full transcripts of those interviews and an edited transcript of Bridget Moore's interview.

#### Data Analysis

The spoken/textual and dance/action data generated across the multiple methods about the **Pedagogy, Content** and **Encounter** dimensions of critical consciousness were analyzed across three units of analysis: The **Individual (Brown and Dunham)**, The **Interaction (Dunham and Brown with meaningful people and events in their lives and dancers)** and The **Collective (the performance, particularly *Southland* and *Walking Out the Dark*)**. The Archival method produced data about what is said and done about pedagogical practices and goals, substance, and intersectional methods across time and space. Observations produced action data about what is done, and interviews

generated data about what is said. The aim of data analysis is to “clarify meaning and verif(y) the repeatability of an observation or interpretation...” (Stake, 1994, p. 241). The process of data analysis across the various data sources generated through three primary research methods occurred in four phases. As asserted by Huberman and Miles (1998), I was building a triangulation process during on-going data collection, as well as data analysis so that I could see, hear, and feel “multiple instances of [what was said and done]...from different sources, using different methods, and by squaring the findings with others with which [they] should coincide” (p. 438). Additional codes were generated through the analysis of these data and a revised Data Analysis Coding List was compiled (Appendix D). During each phase of data analysis and the steps within each phase, I was also looking for repeated ideas and themes that would enable me to move from the particular (the case) to a theoretical (beyond the case) level of understanding (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

The first phase of data analysis began in January 2002 shortly after I finished collecting the archival data for Miss Dunham’s case. Here I started to analyze the data by using the original Data Analysis Codes (Appendix C). These codes were modified soon after (Appendix D). Notably, after archival data collection had been completed, data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection. Additional codes were generated during phase one of data analysis. The second phase of data analysis began after my first interview with Brown, archival data collection for the Brown case, and a set of observations of Brown and Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* in rehearsal for *Water, Upside Down*, and *Walking Out the Dark* and performance at New Jersey Performing Arts Center

in May 2002. By the second phase, a strong set of themes emerged across the data sources and the two cases (Appendix E). The third phase started in September 2002, after the third interview with Brown, interviews with Dunham and Dunham dancers and dance educators, and Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* company members. The final phase began in October 2002 after the video taping of *Walking Out the Dark*. What follows is an explication of the critical steps of data analysis.

#### Multiple Listening and Viewing

As Wilkinson (2000) and Gilligan, Brown and Rogers (1990) have done with their data, I read, listened to, and viewed the spoken, textual and dance data multiple times for conceptual clarity of the construct, critical consciousness, and dimensions examined in this study. As I coded the spoken/textual and the dance/action data, I noticed that when I looked at the coded data in relationship to each other, the three dimensions of critical consciousness were most alive. What follows are three illustrations of interrelationship between codes.

When I analyzed the dance drama *Southland*, I noticed that when I coded for the **Content** dimension of critical consciousness, single codes, such as joy and pain or beauty and stain, was co-present in a single image of the description of the dance. For instance, the magnolia tree that is the central image in the set represents at once the beauty and stain of the American South: a beautiful tree from which swings the dead body of a lynched Black man. This dialectical relationship between seemingly disparate codes also

reoccurred in the Brown data. When I analyzed the performance *Walking Out the Dark*, I noticed that,

*...hands come together or at the throat to symbolize a choking due to domination or oppression and then are followed by arms/hands open and moving in an outward direction, fast, angular, cutting the air, or curved, to symbolize resistance, it's not either of these opposing movements that are as interesting as what they look like side by side, compressed into a single image. As noted in the theory, modes of domination and oppression don't occur in isolation from one another. Operations and strategies are dependent upon one another. (Fieldnotes, 4/7/02)*

After the third phase of data analysis, I went back to the data on *Southland* to see if this pattern of interrelationships was apparent in any other dimensions of critical consciousness. When I coded for the **Encounter** dimension of critical consciousness, it was evident that the particular event that was central to the story, a lynching, was historically a past event; however, lynching was coded both as a historical reference and as an expression of racism in contemporary 1951. I then looked at the **Brown** data that had already been coded for the **Encounter** dimension. During rehearsal of *Walking Out the Dark*, I traveled with Brown and Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* members to a prominent performance venue. When we arrived at the theatre, we were met at the staff entrance and escorted to the dance studio and rehearsal space. We rode in the elevator to a sublevel floor, walked down a long, winding corridor, and entered through a set of double doors that opened to the kitchen of the theater. I noticed that we all fell silent. At the other end of the kitchen, we walked down another hallway, through another set of doors that led us to the corridor where the rehearsal space was located. During the rehearsal break, we talked about the walk through the kitchen and the palpable silence that we walked in, wondering aloud if all performers were guided to the rehearsal space

through the kitchen. But whether they were or not, at that moment, even though segregation had long been outlawed, the past and the present blurred as the ghost of Jim Crow and segregation haunted us. That walk was a walk with the ghosts of segregation and the many famous Black and phenotypically Black Latino artists that were not allowed to walk into venues through the front door—of all the Black artists who had to go through the kitchen. Not only was that moment experienced as a (re)calling of a past occurrences into the present, as Dunham had done in *Southland* for the audience, but it was also a moment of historical (re)membering which formed a collective body of (re)membering in the present a past in a public space. Here again, the interrelationship between the codes, “past” and “present,” was much more compelling than either code by itself.

#### Writing as a Method of Inquiry

I used “writing as method of inquiry” (Richardson, 1998) as a form of data analysis. Writing in this case was a critical practice of discovering what I was learning while collecting data. That is, a large part of data collection involved watching (tapes of Dunham dance and performance) and doing dance (Brown’s classes and Dunham Institute), so that collecting data was at times an embodied process for the Investigator. I used writing to discover the knowledge that I had embodied and internalized. This kind of writing was different from taking fieldnotes--those involved recording observations and impressions. In writing as inquiry, I was reflecting on the data and revealing its meanings.

Writing as a method of inquiry was especially critical during the observations of Brown rehearsals and dance classes. Most of the time I was behind the video camera, taping the making and performance of dance. I viewed from behind the camera lens as Brown danced and interacted with dancers and students, using words and movement. After a rehearsal or dance class, I viewed the tape, recorded the date, time, place and wrote down my reflections on what I had video recorded and experienced by being present in the rehearsal or dance class. I discovered through this viewing and writing process that, in the two-dimensional space of writing, my thinking was ordered in a way that was different from the thinking in a multi-dimensional space of interactions and artistic creation. The written word distanced me from the experience. I struggled to write down much of what I had seen, felt, experienced, and learned while I was in a multi-dimensional space with the dance and the dancers. Drawing on the work of Denzin (1998) and Cahnmann (2003), I shifted strategies and began to record observations in prose and poetic form rather than full sentences. I wrote single evocative words or phrases (e.g., **where you begin I end and begin again, heavy load, or surrendering**) as the entry point into the ideas that would later form. I coded the observations together with the summaries of video taped data and interviews with Brown and Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* dancers, using the coding scheme (e.g., **where you begin I end and begin again Code: Pedagogy=Philosophy and heavy load Code: Content=Weightedness=**). Then I wrote, as a practice of inquiry, using full sentences (e.g. ...when the **weight of experience** is internalized as a process of critical awareness and externalized **through the action of connecting with others...**). Using this three-

step process, I was finally able to capture in words that which can be so elusive about observations made during rehearsals and performances, or observational notes constructed while viewing videotape of a performance.

#### Making Sense of the Data from the Inside Out: Creating A Dance Viewers Guide

*Today I visited with Ron at his office in Brooklyn. I showed him the videotape of the data I had analyzed of Walking Out the Dark. We sat and looked at the tape together. My nerves were in my stomach. It's hard to share analyzed data with the researched. After the four minute tape played, he said to me, "you are sharing my secrets." At first, I had a sense of dread. Had I crossed a boundary? I quickly said, "Is that okay, Ron?" He responded simply with a yes and a smile. I felt relieved. We were both pleased that I had been provoked by the piece and understood, viscerally as well as intellectually, what Brown was trying to teach the audience. (Fieldnotes, 6/5/03)*

I begin this section with these reflective fieldnotes because in order to analyze the action data, I had to create an analysis scheme that would give voice to the unsaid, the unspoken in dance. I had already analyzed the dance data together with the spoken data. For instance, I examined what Brown or Dunham had to say about performance philosophy for **Pedagogy** and the dance data to reveal whether or not and how philosophy and concepts were enacted. The action data had already been analyzed for African-derived MPG. I had also analyzed Brown's interview data about what he had to say about *Walking Out the Dark*. In this, the last phase of analysis, I was looking to understand what the choreographer and dancers were communicating *in* the dance.

In the performance, dance is the main mode of communication. In order to address questions of **Pedagogy**, **Content** and **Encounter**, I positioned myself as a knowing, feeling subject that the choreographer is aiming to provoke, bringing to the

analysis my experience and position as a dancer, choreographer, dancer educator, as well as researcher. These positions afforded me a particular view of and specialized knowing about the data (Collins, 2000), particularly the dance/action data that I aimed to articulate for the reader/viewer of dance. Here I was interested in looking at the piece for *how it meant* in movement. The action data was a critical aspect of the theoretical notion that dance compresses meaning, and earlier data analysis had revealed how the relationship between codes operated in and outside the dance. After multiple readings, viewings of and listening to the data, I studied the dance in *Walking Out the Dark* for social meanings. I was especially interested in themes of racial integration that the dance invoked in order to address the larger question: *How does the form make meaning in order to evoke a response in its audience?* In writing about formally analyzing a work of art such as a painting, Barnett (2000) contends that such an analysis assumes that the work of art is “(1) a constructed object (2) with a stable meaning (3) that can be ascertained by studying the relationship between the elements of the work” (p. 82). While Barnett is applying these principles of analysis to objects of art, I borrowed and modified them to analyze the dance. A dance piece, like a piece of art, is constructed and has a stable meaning as conveyed by the artist or choreographer and dancers, which can be determined by studying the dance.

The first step was to download the digital videotape of *Walking Out the Dark* into the IMOVIE, *Apple* movie editing program. I viewed the whole piece from the beginning and noted from the time counter on the video camera those moments when I “felt” myself responding to what I was seeing or I had an embodied response, whether it was a gasp,

breath caught in throat, foot taps, tears, a stirring in my solar plexus, or a smile, etc. I was conscious of the heightening of me while I watched the piece. I was an active participant here. I record from the video camera time counter the time of my response. I repeated this process three times and compared the responses. I viewed the images I responded to most frequently and posed the question: “Why am I viscerally/emotionally responding?” I used single words or phrases to respond as I had done in observation fieldnotes and edited the piece down to those scenes that I responded to most consistently across the three viewings. I viewed the edited tape and conferred with the *said* data to see what in the dance or what in the *action* data “lined up.” Specifically, I looked for themes across these data sources. I looked at the edited tape again, this time having conferred with the other data sources, and ask, “why this movement or set of movements?” I connected movements with the words/phrases that came to mind/emotion as I saw/observed them and words/phrases that appeared elsewhere in the data. For instance, I had assigned the word “*invitation*” to a section of the dance data. I returned to the Brown interview and archival data that I had coded **Encounter** when he spoke/wrote of his performance as an *invitation to the audience to connect*.

### Building A Theoretical Construct from Themes

I continued to build on the viable set of themes that had emerged from the coded data across data sources, multiple methods, and cases. At the end of the previous section, I indicate one way that data “lined up” across data sources and methods. In this section I will show how I moved from themes within dimensions of critical consciousness, across

the dimensions towards a theoretical construct that is both grounded in the data and moves to a theoretical level of understanding. Other aspects of themes not used in this illustration were used to build other theoretical constructs. Here I focused on the building of a theoretical construct that will be explicated in Chapter 3, **Magic of Confiscating**. While **magic of confiscating** is a concept that derives from the data, it became a theoretical construct when the concept was reflected across methods, data sources and case studies. Returning to Appendix E, I draw on "P1," a theme reflecting the idea that, for the choreographer/educator, critical consciousness is a multiple process of teaching and learning, recovering, reclaiming and (re)membering. Through social interactions the dancer/choreographer makes a path as he goes, learning and making meaning (P1, P2); choreographers/educators take on or embody the weightedness of lived experiences, insisting that their dancers do the same in order to (P3) externalized the weight of lived experience (C2) in performance. The choreographer/educator creates embodied stories for public viewing of a set of public encounters (E2, E3 drawing on these themes P1, P2, P3, C2, E2 and E3). I developed **Magic of Confiscating** (See Appendix F). In summary, **Magic of Confiscating** relates to a dynamic process of critical consciousness, involving awakening to deep meaning through feeling the weight of lived experience, making sense of those meanings through strategic excavating activities, towards creating encounters with ghosts of a troubling past and bringing them into the present so that they can be contended with as a function of social change.

## CHAPTER 3: KATHERINE DUNHAM'S RADICAL PROJECT

### Introduction

In the next three chapters, I present the findings of the study. In Chapters three and four, I will present data that reveal Dunham and Brown's theory, methods, and practices in teaching and performance. Dunham and Brown create spaces and dances to reject dominating forms of injustice. In a Freirian sense, they teach critical consciousness by unveiling the ghostly world of social domination from the standpoint of the dominated and by provoking moments when unequal power relations are turned upside down (Freire, 1970). Their work is filled with portrayals of the histories and experiences that are wittingly, unwittingly, tacitly, and strategically shunned or as Avery Gordon (1997) argues, are ghosted under conditions of social domination. The ghosts of dominating social and racial formations, such as lynching, racism, slavery, segregation, and integration are given embodied form through dance. The portrayals are at once popular two-dimensional stereotypic images of Black people, as well as the story of how Blacks have reacted and interpreted such stereotypes. They present invisibilized histories of resistance to domination that do not make it into the pages of history books (for exceptions see, (Katz, 1986; Kelley, 1994; Zinn, 2003) and the inextricable connections between the past and present (Tuhiwai Smith 1999; Roberts 1998). They reveal the invisible mechanisms of power and privilege and the subtle, mundane, banalities that fill the spaces between skewed social representations and realities (Gordon, 1997) and the possibility that social change can occur.

Since Dunham and Brown are creating and working in two different socio-historical periods, Dunham during segregation and Brown during integration, each case will take up teaching and performing theories, methods, and practices separately. This chapter begins with the Dunham case. Miss Dunham created public scholarship by performing her fieldwork findings based on the ways of peoples from the African Diaspora, specifically Haiti, Jamaica, and Martinique. I explore her teaching and performance theory, method, and practices-- zooming in on and bracketing areas of her work that reveal a radical project of creating spaces and dancing to challenge and interrupt racial segregation. In particular, I discuss Dunham Technique, dance companies, and dance schools. Miss Katherine Dunham, now 95 years of age--dancer, choreographer, anthropologist, writer, mother, and activist--is much more than the sum of these bracketed areas of her work. Nevertheless, these areas represent critical evidence that, during the period of legal and de facto racial segregation in the U.S., Miss Dunham created schools, dance companies, a dance technique, and dance performances that value Black humanity and difference, while, at the same time, challenge and reject racial segregation.

In Chapter 4, I present the Brown case, a deep case study also taking up teaching and performance, with a look first at a life in which his radical project—teaching and performance-- was developed and at what was “behind” the teaching and performance theories and practices in Brown’s dance and company. Having grown up during the civil rights era, the Black power movement, and the Reagan/Bush and Clinton years, Brown's radical project was to reject and challenge a dominating form of injustice: integration as

assimilation. After presenting the two cases separately, in Chapter 5 I bring Dunham and Brown together to explore how they aim to provoke diverse audiences. While in the early sections, Dunham and Brown will be analyzed for the different strategies necessitated by different socio-historical moments, their provocation aims will prove to be similar and overlapping. Drawing upon the data presented in the individual cases and looking closely at the anatomy of two dance pieces--Dunham's' *Southland* and Brown's *Walking Out of the Dark*--I discuss their pedagogy of embodiment and their shared theory of encounter and provocation.

#### Katherine Dunham's Humanism: Creating a Theory and Practice of Performance and Teaching

"...all art is humanist." (Dunham quoting Erich Fromm in "Dance As A Cultural Art and Its Role in Development," (Dunham, 1976/1978, p. 233)

As an anthropologist and a humanist I felt that I could give something, make individuals aware of themselves, their environment, and create a desire to be alive. Katherine Dunham, 1976. (Mazer, 1976/1978, p. 174)

If people could only understand they belong to a much vaster society than they live in, this would give them courage to live life with less fear of death. A bit of the whole is in everybody. You take your participation in the total. Katherine Dunham, 1976. (Mazer, 1976/1978, p. 174)

Katherine Dunham considers herself a humanist. She has always been proud of her Blackness, has never adhered to the simplistic and discriminatory conventions of race in the United States (Sherrod, 1998), and has consistently viewed the practice of separating people, based on skin color or segregation, as creating a sense of alienation in all people. However, while she considers herself a humanist—viewing all people,

regardless of skin color, as part of the human family-- she knows that the world has not agreed with her. For instance, when Miss Dunham performed in Paris for the first time with her dance company during her Europe tour (1951-1953), she said, "I danced to something so much vaster than the audience. I felt part of a universal setting. It justified all the hardships...Being on stage was, for me, making love. It was an expression of love of humanity and things of beauty" (Mazer, 1976/1978, p. 168). While she may have felt part of a universal setting, Blacks were not part of a universal setting. During that first night in Paris, she discovered that on opening night there were no Blacks in the audience. However, she would see to it, that for the next performance, Blacks would be included. She had the theater set aside for the African students attending the Sorbonne. Humanism is Miss Dunham's most deeply held belief, and creating a worldwide geography of inclusion through dance is her most protracted struggle and radical project.

Miss Dunham was deeply influenced by Erich Fromm. They were friends and she viewed him as a mentor. During our conversation, Miss Dunham said,

*I think that Erich Fromm had a lot to do with me as I am today. ...Erich awakened in me a recognition of an entirely new and vast field of thinking and that would be the spirit part of body, mind and spirit or the whole psychological approach to the human being. And he was extremely important in my development as I am today. I think, frequently, I out and out think, what would he think of this...(Dunham Interview, 9/7/02)*

According to Fromm, alienation results from Capitalism. For Dunham, alienation is linked to U.S. racial body politics. Using Erich Fromm's notion of alienation, Miss Dunham framed the human consequence of segregation as creating a lack of self-knowledge, as well as intra- and inter-group stereotypes. She posited that alienation

could be solved through knowing the psychological, embodied, and spiritual self, as well as through discovering the connections between people, and gaining an understanding of one's own culture and the culture of others. In "Reflections on Survival," Miss Dunham's Macmurray College Commencement Address when she received an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters in 1972, she said, "No one lives life alone, no one lives life uninfluenced or entirely outside the concept of Master, Guru, Curador... In 1935 through the friendship and guidance of Erich Fromm, a lifetime search began for the keys to self-knowledge, self-love and humanism" (p. 4). Continuing her address, she quotes Fromm:

...the wish to make productive use of his powers is inherent in man, and his efforts consist mainly in removing the obstacles in himself and in his environment which block him from following his inclination. Just as the person who has become sterile and destructive is increasingly paralyzed and caught, as it were, in a vicious circle, a person who is aware of his own powers and uses them productively gains in strength, faith and happiness and is in less and less danger of begin alienated from himself: he has created, as we might say, a virtuous circle...every increase in joy and happiness culture can provide for will do more for the ethical education of its members..."(Dunham, 1972, p. 4)

Thus, if people (all members of humanity, a racial and culture group) remained segregated, alienation would result and people would never come to understand themselves or each other.

Through her research, fieldwork and experience in Haiti and other Caribbean islands, Dunham would retrieve cultural and historical knowledge to re-educate dancers and audience. Based on these knowledges, she developed Dunham Technique and created dance for the concert stage. She wanted to declare Black people's humanity, which had been destroyed under segregation by the twin forces of alienated and [cultural]

deracination. For mostly white audiences, she used such knowledge to speak truth to white dominating power by having a mostly Black dance company perform dance-stories derived from American and Diasporic Black culture. She challenged the notion that U.S. history was not a shared history and the widely held racist notions that Blacks were not human and were without culture, history, intelligence, dignity or greatness. As she wrote in the following excerpt from *Island Possessed*, Dunham also countered the exoticized black, brown and yellow body and narrow, "condescending" conceptions of people of color in performance. Miss Dunham wrote,

Disturbed in my early years of social anthropology at the lack of emphasis on the complex of dance in a primitive society, I proposed that my scholarship from the Rosenwald and Rockefeller Institute be directed toward an effort at repairing this lack. Also involved was an element of rebellion against the cliché often condescending attitudes toward not only negro performing arts but those of all other deprived, minority, "exotic" folk people...Oriental dancing at commonest level became "kootch," African dancing "shake" or "grind," American Indian dancing hopping about bent double, West Indian and South American a melange of sensual shoulder-shaking and pelvic undulating. Pacific regions were vaguely mixed up in fantasies of knee slapping orgies wildly swaying grass skirts. There is, of course, some truth in all of this, but surely these expressions of thousands of years' combined culture could be better oriented. To observe, record, classify, and teach became an aim of mine, and in so doing to establish a rigorous discipline and from much as must be intrinsic in the evolving of classical ballet from primitive northern ritual to country fair celebrations to court entertainment to Convent Garden. (Dunham, 1963/1978, p. 205)

In addition to doing research and teaching, Miss Dunham strove to create shared, inclusive spaces where Whites learned about Blacks from Blacks and where difference, culture, and/or history would not be erased. One such space was a school in New York for Whites who wanted to study from and be together with Blacks; for Blacks and

Latinos who, due to segregation, could not find rehearsal venues or just a place to *be* before or after performing at local clubs. Thus, she created a geography of inclusive spaces where she located a series of encounters (Cross, 1971), created for Blacks, aiming to move them from a sense of alienation to a sense of collective body. Within these spaces, Black culture and history could flourish; through that collective body, people could (re)member from a collective U.S. history those aspects of history that had been strategically erased or forgotten.

#### Retrieving Cultural and Historical Knowledge

Miss Dunham's work of retrieving cultural and historical knowledge began in 1936. She went before the Rosenwald committee with a written proposal, framing "...dance... not [as] a technique but a social act...the heart and soul of man, and the man's social living" (Redmond, 1976/1978, p. 267). I'm sure Miss Dunham, writing this in 1968, meant women too. The committee asked her what kind of research she was interested in undertaking. Biemiller (1969) writes, "She stood up in her tights and first did some movements of the type that were being taught in most schools, 'pretty steps and turns'... She then demonstrated an African dance she had choreographed earlier." [Dunham told the Committee,] 'That's what I'm after. I want to find out why Africans dance, how they started, and what this kind of dancing does to people, the life they lead'" (pp. 88-89). Impressed by her proposal and presentation, the Committee awarded Miss Dunham a grant to study dance in the Caribbean and additional funds to study with Melville Herskovits, Head of Northwestern University's African Studies Department,

before leaving for the islands (Perpener, 2001) and to pursue her studies at the University of Chicago. Miss Dunham traveled to Jamaica, Martinique, and Haiti (Rose, 1990), where she did field research as part of her anthropology studies at the University of Chicago. According to an early reports of Miss Dunham's findings, different forms of dance were related to the societal functions they served; dance brought people together to share social experiences of play, release of emotional and physical tension, a sense of social cohesion and solidarity, and exhibition of individual and group skills (Dunham, 1942/1978b). Much of her research took place in Haiti. Miss Dunham arrived on the Haitian side of the island of Hispaniola soon after the U.S. occupiers of Haiti ordered by President Woodrow Wilson in 1915 had withdrawn. Dunham describes the Haiti she arrived in this way:

When I arrived in Haiti, not long after the exodus of the Marines there were still baptized drums hidden in hollow tree trunks and behind waterfalls. President Stenio Vincent paid deference to "folklore" for the sake of the growing interests of tourists in the island, but an air of secrecy clothed all the serious ceremonies and it was not the policy of the first government after the Occupation to sponsor young women visitors in investigations that might verify to the world outside what had been a crucial problem to Haitian statesmen since the independence: the irreconcilable breach between the thin upper crust of the Haitian elite--who would have liked to be rulers of the land, participating in the revolution only to get rid of the French--and the bubbling, churning ferment of the black peasants, who really were by numbers and by historical content and character and humanness, I was to find, the true Haitian people. (Dunham, 1969, p. 3)

Immersing herself in the culture and the religion of the people of Haiti, she eventually was initiated into the Rada-Dahomey cult, the "matrix of so many of the dances of Haiti" (Dunham, 1969, p. xxiv). Miss Dunham found pieces of cultural and

historical knowledge that had been forgotten and that could potentially root Blacks in the U.S. (or the north Blacks as they are referred to in the following text), to their culture and history. She was received in Haiti as if she was a long lost daughter. Thus, the pieces of cultural and historical knowledge she found in Haiti rooted Dunham to her cultural and ancestral ties. She writes,

In Haiti, more than in any other of the other islands of the Caribbean, the peasant priesthood acknowledges the blood relationship of all people whose ancestors hailed from Nan Guinin ('from faraway Guinea'). When the stigma of being an American had worn off, there was great and protective interest in the recognition of 'Guinea' blood ties and great concern for my ancestors, who had not received the proper ritual attention because that group of slaves taken farther north had been cut off from their brothers in the Caribbean and had forgotten these practices. In some instances...it seemed that the welfare of the entire Negro race might be improved if these unfortunates to the north could be acquainted again with the rituals of their ancestor worship and the vodun. (Dunham, 1969, p. xxiv)

Miss Dunham experienced the power of being a part of a collective and the sense of belonging. She danced and interacted "with the community of those who worshipped their gods through dance, guided by and interacting with the rhythms dictated and fused into the individual and group by the orchestra of drums, the drummers, the high priest, the worshippers." (Dunham, 1972, p. 12). In *Island Possessed*, Miss Dunham remembers dancing for Damballa, one of the deified forces of nature of the Vodou pantheon:

Teoline and Degrasse came toward me and we crouched together, touching. Our hot breath, the moist odors of our bodies mingled with perfume and talcum powder were overwhelming; I felt weightless, like Nietzsche's dancer, but unlike that dancer, weighted; transparent but solid, belonging to myself but a part of everyone else. This must have been the "ecstatic union of one mind" of Indian philosophy, but with the fixed solidarity to the earth that all the African dancing returns to..." (Dunham, 1969, p. 136)

It would become critical for Miss Dunham, not only to bring to the United States material knowledge, but also to develop a system of dance that could recreate for dancers a felt experience of connection to community as well as body, mind, and spirit. Through this felt experience of connection, a dancer could experience a sense of belonging to self as well as to everyone else and transmit that felt sense to the viewing audience and, with a sense of “being a part of everyone else,” move from alienation to a sense of collective (Apfelbaum, 1979).

#### Cultivating Roots: Dunham Technique

I am only interested in dance as an education, a means of knowing peoples, and I want students who want to learn and have a desire to develop people and tastes...I believe that a person who dances should know why they dance, and to do so they must have an historical background. (Dunham in *Educational Dance Magazine*, 1941, p. 18 and 29)

The Dunham Technique is the system of dance Miss Dunham developed over many years of studying, creating and synthesizing the material and experiential cultural and historical knowledge she gathered and retrieved in the Caribbean and Haiti as well as in other parts of the world. Dunham Technique is a theoretical, methodological, and practical system of dance consisting of three models. They are: *Form and Function*, *Intercultural Communication* and *Socialization through the Arts*. Albirida Rose (1990), author of *Dunham Technique: “A Way of Life,”* extensively defines and explains each of the models and practices. Here I discuss two of the three models beginning with

*Intercultural Communication.* Miss Dunham describes this model as one that brings people together through historical and cultural knowledge. She says,

*I think that the whole concept of intercultural understanding of life has barely been touched by people. I think that we, public in general have [an] inclination to be insular and I notice this in so-called modern American dancers today. I feel a little too much of, "I'm an American, this is what I'm doing and this is the it." It isn't the it, its only one tiny little part of what it's all about. I think the whole thing of intercultural communication to me is the epitome of human living today. This we have to feel we don't necessarily have to be scientists, we don't have to go there and study or if you do so much the better. But just the awareness of it--the recognition of the fact that we are just a part of a whole. I think that's important. (Interview with Katherine Dunham, 9/7/02)*

*Intercultural Communication*, the second model, is the theoretical centerpiece of Dunham Technique. It follows from an understanding of how the physical properties and qualities of dance relate to socio-cultural forms and belief systems, or the *Form and Function* of dance and specific dance movements. It is well documented that Miss Dunham brought back dances from Martinique, Jamaica, and other parts of the world. (e.g., Dunham, K. 1969. *Island Possessed* and Sherrod, E.G. 1998. *The dance griots: An examination of the dance pedagogy of Katherine Dunham and Black pioneering dancers in Chicago and New York City, from 1931-1946*). Significantly, she drew heavily on Haitian culture and history through religious and secular group dance. Among the dances she studied and brought back from Haiti are Yanvalou, Zepaules, Congo Paillette, Petro, and Banda. Each dance has its own set of physical characteristics, feeling states or qualities, and its own storyline that sets it apart. The storylines correspond to certain psychological and socio-cultural functions (See Appendix G) (e.g., play, releasing, and building of emotional and physical tension, establishing social cohesion o solidarity, and

exhibiting skill) (Dunham, 1942/1978a, p. 201). *Socialization through the Arts* is the third model. Flowing from the other two is the idea that, through the study of “ethnic” art forms, practitioners will gain an enhanced awareness of self and others and be a productive member of their own and other communities.

Practically applied, these models are energized through the integration of material from European ballet, African-American Vernacular dance, West African dance via the Caribbean and Haiti, with an emphasis on a non-balletic use of the body. Miss Dunham recognized the rhythm and movement style connection between jazz dance of the African-American culture in the United States and that of the islands of the West Indies (Rose, 1990). “Though [Dunham Technique] incorporate[s] standard classical movements such as *tendus*, *developpes*, and *ronde de jombs*, [it] also stressed a non-balletic use of the body that emphasized Afro-Caribbean movements—pelvic contractions, hip isolations, and undulating back movements” (Perpener, 2001, p. 155). As narrated by Dana Mano, a teacher of Dunham Technique, when the technique is practiced as Dunham conceived it, the practitioner (teacher or learner) engages at the physical, emotional and spiritual levels of being. Mano says,

[y]ou use the floor as the earth, the pelvis as center, holding torso and legs together. You work for fluidity, moving like a goddess, undulations like water, like the ocean. High leaps for the men. You elongate the muscles, creating a hidden strength. We use both parallel and turn out...The isolations of the hips, ribs, shoulders that you see in all dance classes were brought to us from the Caribbean by Miss Dunham. Also, she [talks about] Indian chakra points (in yoga, points of physical or spiritual energy in the body). (Perron, 2000)

In her description of the Technique, Mano signals the historical and cultural roots of the technique (“Caribbean”), the intercultural communication between European, East Indian and African-derived movements and postures (“parallel,” “turn out,” “isolations,” “high leaps,” “isolations,” “chakra points,” “elongated muscles, creating a hidden strength”), and stresses the spiritual relationship between human beings and forces of nature as sources of energy and power (“use the floor as the earth,” “work for fluidity, moving like a goddess, undulations like...the ocean,” and chakra points”).

As part of the research, I attended a New York City Board of Education Dance Institute based upon on the dance pedagogy of Miss Katherine Dunham. In 2003, The Board of Education was dissolved. It is now called the NYC Department of Education, marking the shift in power from local boards to the mayor. During the Institute, Miss Dunham taught a dance class from her wheelchair. There were approximately 80 students –women, men and children, ranging widely in age and size. Among us were veteran Dunham dancers and teachers such as Walter Nicks, Joe Nash, Marie Brooks, Eloise Anderson, Dr. Glory Van Scott, and Julie Belafonte. Miss Dunham began the class with breathing exercises. The following is an excerpt from my participant observation fieldnotes:

*Miss Dunham’s long fingers that had pointed so many in that room and beyond along the path of dance, pointed to the ground, instructing us to go deeper and deeper into our diaphragm to find the breath that connects us to the earth, to each other. In between an inhalation and exhalation, it felt like time stood still. After about 15 minutes, I didn’t need my eyes to see that we all took the next inhalation together, reaching deeper and deeper inside ourselves to find the depths of our breath and the place where each breath joined with another and we all grew and expanded in our bodies and joined with other bodies as we prepared to dance. (Fieldnotes, 8/14/02)*

This experience reminded me of the feeling of “belonging to myself but a part of everyone else” that Miss Dunham had referred to when she danced Yanvalou for Damballa with Teoline and Degrasse. We danced together the “humility and assurance” of Yanvalou and the “urgency” of Petro, having prepared to do so through Dunham Technique’s undulations, and shoulder, torso and pelvic isolations, as well as lectures about the history and cultural context of the dances. Together we learned content; the power derived from a collective as well as intercultural engagement, and a model for retrieving historical and cultural knowledge. My experience was in a dance studio, rather than in a ritual setting. I had studied Dunham Technique and Haitian dance for approximately fifteen years. However, this was not the first time that I had the sense that Miss Dunham had indeed created a system that transmitted the material, as well as the felt experience of cultural and historical knowledge.

#### Declaring Black Entitlement to Humanity and Speaking Truth to White Dominating Power

Miss Dunham brought dignity to black culture by presenting dance forms on concert stage, thereby developing an audience for black art and an appreciation for the great contribution of Africans in the Diaspora have made to the Arts. (Written by Anna Grayson in an application for the Paul Robeson Citation Award Committee, n.d.)

Dunham “used all the resources of the theater—brilliant scenery, costumes, theatrical techniques—to convey the message. In this way, she communicated the total context of the dances, much as she did through the rich descriptions of her written work. (Aschenbrenner, 1981, p. 188)

From the early 1940's to the late 1960's, Miss Dunham wrote on the African (via the Caribbean) roots of U.S. *Black* culture, research methods and dance (teaching and performance), for popular and scholarly journals and magazines. She published four books (*A Touch of Innocence*, *Island Possessed*, *Journey to Acompong*, and *Dances of Haiti*), and many articles in popular and scholarly journals. She lectured on the form and function of dance, often accompanied by members of her dance company who demonstrated the dances as she lectured. Miss Dunham was the innovator of the lecture/demonstration format (lec/dem) of lecturing. Used widely today in museums and universities, it combines text and action, the material and the embodied. Writing and lecturing provided Miss Dunham with an opportunity to educate reading and viewing audiences, to explore out loud and in writing her research findings, and to conceptually develop Dunham Technique. Writing and lecturing also gave her work a sense of authority that her radical view of dance did not always, by itself, evoke at that time. Finally, the income she earned from these activities helped her to support her work and her self-financed company. However, "the stage became a physical and spiritual necessity to her, and life as a writer would not satisfy her deep needs for communicating to an audience" (Aschenbrenner, 2002, p. 113).

When Miss Dunham returned from the Caribbean, she re-assembled her dancers and eventually established the Dunham Company. According to Aschenbrenner (2002), the program for *Tropical Revue*, one of her early pieces, was the model for later Dunham Company shows. She explains, "They opened with lively Latin American and Caribbean

dances for which the group was noted...[T]he second part [included a] dramatic ballets telling a story, such as *Rites de Passage* or *L'Ag'Ya*...The finale would usually consist of Americana, such as plantation dances, spirituals and American popular or social dances” (Aschenbrenner, 2002, p. 113). Dunham choreographed “*Bal Negre*...following the same three-part pattern as in *Tropical Revue*. It opened with an overture...based on Afro-Cuban themes...The second part of the overture was the Haitian *Congo Paillette*...After a group of Caribbean dances, the company performed *L'Ag'Ya* as the dramatic part of the performance and then concluded with...*Kansas City Woman*, and some vignettes showing inter-cultural encounters...and historical settings” (Aschenbrenner, 2002, p.132). Note that, with its "plantation dance" and "spirituals," the Americana section was a Black version of Americana. Also, of note is that most of her works included dances from Haiti and the Caribbean. According to Talley Beatty, “before her work in Haiti, the main discipline and practice was ballet: Then when she came back from Haiti, she incorporated the Haitian material into dances and songs and into her concert presentations...we did the dance of the hips—[Congo] paillette. We did them purely at first, but very simply, you know, she has this talent for cutting things to the simplicity, the essence...” (Ashenbrenner, 2002, p. 113). Julie Belafonte also described Miss Dunham's pieces as having three sections. She said, “*very often our 2<sup>nd</sup> Act was a story in three Acts, like L'Ag'Ya, her famous ballet L'Ag'Ya. Rite de Passage, which is perhaps one of her greatest works of choreography, that was done in three acts. The Veracruzano Suite...was done in three Act*” (Interview with Julie Belafonte, 10/15/02). Thus, post-Haiti, Miss Dunham began to craft encounters (Cross, 1971) for

performance. She worked with her dancers, teaching Dunham Technique, its theory and practical application, and as Beatty tells us, the "Haiti material."

According to Sherrod (1998), from 1933 to 1946, the Dunham Company included a total of eighty-three mostly African-American men and women. Dunham's aim was that her dancers would become "repositories of memory" (Clark, 1994a, p. 7). From 1940 - 1965, Dunham trained "three generations of performers...to internalize dances as they were known in the Caribbean or in the African America...(Clark, 1994, p. 7). During the period from 1937 - 1964, Miss Dunham's company performed in theater, nightclubs and hotels in over fifty-seven countries worldwide (Stovall, no date/1978). She also performed on television. Aschenbrenner (2002) says, "The Dunham Company was the first dance group to air an hour-long broadcast, on NBC in 1940. It also performed on Australian, Canadian and European national broadcasts" (p. 128). She and her company appeared in films, and Miss Dunham choreographed for stage and film, including operas. She also directed theater. As Lucille Ellis, a member of the company recalls, "We were with her when she broke the nightclub barriers in Chicago...That's all we did. We broke barriers all along..." (Dunning, 1991, p. C11).

Touring across the segregated United States was very hard on Dunham and on the company. In some hotels, the Company was segregated on floors designated for "colored people." Other hotels provided substandard accommodations. When Miss Dunham complained she was urged to request accommodations at the home of her influential friends (of which she had many). Tommy Gomez recounts the strategies used to find housing. "[T]he problems of trying to house the company in whatever city we

were...The advance man would go to the black area of one of the black churches and ask the minister to ask members of the congregation to house us. So we went through the problems of racial prejudice all the time, from the very beginning of the company” (Aschenbrenner, 2002, p. 133). In 1943, while in Portland, Oregon she saw "We Do Not Serve Colored" or "White Only" signs. In Carmel, California, the Dunham Company found that their hotel reservations had been cancelled. Miss Dunham concluded, "I am getting good and mad about it now because of the war...It would seem ridiculous if it were not so tragic" (PM, 1943, p. 86). In an article entitled, "Katherine Dunham is Weary of Hotel Trek," Miss Dunham reported that while in Portland, Oregon, she saw "We Do Not Serve Colored" or "White Only" signs. A year after the article was published, Miss Dunham told the white members of the audience in the Louisville Memorial Auditorium,

It makes me very happy to know that you have liked us, that you have felt some of the beauty and happiness that we feel when we perform. But tonight our hearts are very sad because this is a farewell to Louisville. There comes a time when every human must protest in order to retain human dignity. I must protest because I have discovered that your management will not allow people like you to sit next to people like us. I hope that time and the unhappiness of this war for tolerance and democracy, which I am sure we will win, will change some of these things, perhaps then we can return. Until then, GOD BLESS YOU – FOR YOU MAY NEED IT! (Dunham, 1944/1978, p. 88)

Indeed, Miss Dunham got "good and mad" and continued to plant cultural and historical knowledge in the contentious soil of the time by crafting particular kinds of encounters (Cross, 1971). Using *black* bodies, content steeped in *Black* culture and history without serving up *black face* or minstrelsy, Miss Dunham "...challeng[ed] well-

established stereotypes of the Negro's potential signal[ing] the break from the prescriptions defining vocabularies of dance on stage" (Clark, 1994, p. 9). Hodson writes, "How Dunham must have startled the Metropolitan Opera by the authenticity of her 1963 production, in which the Ethiopian princess was played by a Black performer and the Egyptian army was composed of Somalians, Nubians, and other groups which archaeology identifies as the population of Black Africa at the time of the ancient Egypt..."(Hodson, 1978, p. 198). Dunham dancers were "repositories of memories," and her dance performances were revising history.

#### Planting Roots: Training the Dancers

The artist must be educated as a person, a living developing humanist aware, as all artists are, of the happenings of the times, but aware with equipment that will serve him in his technique as an instrument for social balance and if necessary, and this is a constant in all societies, of social change, (Katherine Dunham, 1970, p.x) "Performing Arts training Center as a Focal Point for a New and Unique College or School"

Alone or in concert man dances his various selves and his emotions and his dance becomes a communication as clear as though it were written or spoken in a universal language." (Dunham, 1954/1978, p. 211)

The Dunham Companies, including the experimental company, proved to be a source for developing the three models of the Dunham Technique and exploring their efficacy on the dancers. Miss Dunham selected dancers not only based on skin color. She wanted dancers that could learn the material she had gathered in Haiti and the Caribbean and embody the stories/meanings that she was creating for the performance stage. Belafonte elaborates:

*...when we got on the stage, it seems like we had so much of life's experience in our psyche and in our bodies that it was electrifying to the audiences and Miss Dunham chose dancers in a very interesting way. She would prefer a dancer that was not technically consummate so that she could sort of form in the way that she wanted to. One in her technique... and two...none of us were the same. For instance, my strength was in the Dunham Technique, I was a very strong dancer and I gave the component of acting or drama into whatever roles that I played and some of course, I was just a dancer, but a lot had to do with projection, etc. It was primarily...the content of the story...(Interview with Julie Belafonte, 10/15/02)*

As noted by Hodson (1978), “working in words or working in movements, she begins and ends with the body as the instrument of knowing. In Dunham’s vision, the body embraces mind and psyche (soul)...(p. 197). When the company traveled outside the United States, she asked her company to embody *intercultural communication* by studying the host culture with/through their bodies. Julie Belafonte says,

*Also if you are in a culture where the dance is part of that culture, and Miss Dunham, I must say in South America, if it was the Cumbia in Columbia, she would ask us to go to a Cumbia and dance with the people of [the host] culture that has a smell...it is a completely different experience than going into a classroom or into a theatre, to be part of the earth and part of what these people have been doing for centuries. Same in Brazil. Going to a Macumba or to a Candomble and of course in Argentina, she would say, why don't you go to the clubs and learn how to do the Tango, which I did. That's another thing, I ended up and Lucille Ellis and Lenwood, there were five of us on the stage that did a fabulous, fabulous tango, I have to say her choreography was stunning, tango so that I knew that whenever she said go learn this with the people, with the culture...(Interview, 10/15/02).*

Miss Dunham insisted on precision when one executed the exercises of the Technique so that the body could be prepared to dance the dances--not only the steps but the feeling of the dance as well. In 1987, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performed Miss

Dunham's choreography. I viewed the videotape of the performance as well as a videotape of an interview Celia Ipiotos conducted with Gary De Loatch, an Ailey dancer, and Vanoye Aikens, one of the original members of the Dunham Company. The interview cut to takes of the rehearsal led by Aikens on the dance floor and Dunham seated behind a table. In the following scene, Aikens is leading dancers as they are doing pelvic contractions across the dance floor. Miss Dunham stops the dance. From her seat she says,

Van excuse me please, it is more than a contraction, the upper body is folding in on itself. With one hand in front of her wrist, Miss Dunham demonstrates, "this half folds in on itself. You should get that look." In an earlier scene, Aikens is prepared to begin with one of the dance pieces, Miss Dunham tells Aikens to take the dancers to the top of the progressions because they are not in top form. She says, "Will you listen carefully. Here's the idea, shoulders down, elbows lift up from beneath the shoulder, arms open and the hand descends slightly from the elbow. That is the proper position. Shoulders down. (Ipiotis, 1987)

Precision also creates a discipline of the body so that the dancer does not have to think, "I have to keep my shoulders down, isolate my torso, when I rotate my pelvis." The body becomes disciplined, preparing the dancer for the more complicated work. As the dancer is dancing, the movements are also meant to create a state of being which Dunham would called hypnotic<sup>1</sup>—from the rapid, sharp and fluid movement of the shoulders in zepaules, to the low, undulating movement of the spine in yanvalou. This

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<sup>1</sup> According to Dunham (1969), "There is no tension, not the least rigidity of muscles, but a constant circulatory flux which acts as a psycho-narcotic and catharsis to the nervous system. The dancer is left in a state of complete submission and receptivity (p. 135).

state, or an approximation of it, is what the dancer is trying achieve. It is a relaxed, conscious state of being, feeling the weightlessness and weightedness of the body, the nuances of each dance movement, and the power and responsibility of engaging the audience. As Maxine Greene (1988) has told us about being aware of social conditions, “the growing, changing individual (no matter how reflective and autonomous he/she appears to be) always has to confront a certain weight in lived situations, if only the weight of memory and the past” (p. 9). In the realm of dance, the feeling of weightlessness is achieved when the disciplined body does not have to be concerned with the technical aspect of the movement. Feeling the weight of lived experiences, making meaning of them, and taking in those experiences as one contends with the social world transforms experience into knowledge. Individual bodies are dual in their possibility of also being and producing collective bodies (Haug, 1987) when the weight of experience is internalized as a process of critical awareness and externalized through the action of connecting with others through sharing knowledge.

#### Creating Shared, Inclusive Spaces: Katherine Dunham School in New York City

I want a school in New York where I can train dancers in the knowledge and use of primitive rhythms. I want to lecture on the subjects of anthropology and ethnology and dance; and of course I want to dance. I am not interested in dance routines. I am only interested in dance as education, a means of knowing peoples, and I want student who want to learn and have a desire to develop people and tastes (Pierre, 1941/1978, p. 76)

According to Clark (1994b), Miss Dunham’s school was the actualization of her theory. It is rarely discussed that her company as well as her school were spaces shared by Blacks with Whites. For instance, John Pratt, Miss Dunham’s husband and costume

and set designer, was White and a member of the company. In addition, for at least the seven years that Julie Belafonte was a member, the company was racially mixed. I turn to an excerpt of my conversation with Mrs. Belafonte. It is towards the end of a second interview. She is showing me her collection of photographs. The following conversation ensues:

*RAR: This is the first time I've seen you in photographs.*

*JB: Really?*

*RAR: The photographs at the NYPL, its interesting to me...*

*JB: It's very interesting because it's as though I wasn't in the company and of course I take that not so much personally, as I think its racial thing. I mean it's so ludicrous to think about it. That it's something to question and of course, when we're all gone, people will think that's the way it was. And it wasn't. Talking about questioning history, who writes it?*

*RAR: It strikes me that you had such an important part to play then and now and that in the public story, you don't...*

*JB: No, I know...Well it's not too late to rectify that. I can't do it but somebody should.*

Here Belafonte is implicating the media that promoted Miss Dunham's Company as a "Black Company" because they could not and would not contend with an integrated company in a segregated society.

In addition to dancing with the Dunham Company, Belafonte also taught Dunham Technique at the school. She described the school this way:

*...It was more than just dance. It was socially and culturally rounded. We were learning things we didn't know we were learning because we were living it at the time. And you have to understand that it was the time of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War as well...When the school moved to 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, it was under the GI bill by this time which enabled many students who could not*

*afford to study dance or other things that the Dunham School offered at the time, could because of this. The school at the time had a drama department. There was a class in Anthropology, Philosophy, Ballet—Classical Ballet... Peter Genero taught tap. We had classes in drumming. We had some very famous people coming through that school. Marlon Brando came through the school. He took my class and became a good friend, very good friend. Doris Duke started to come to take classes at the Dunham School...(Interview with Julie Belafonte, 10/15/04)*

In 1944, Miss Dunham opened her first school in New York City. Katherine Dunham School of Arts and Research was first located at Caravan Hall (first occupied by Isadora Duncan) and, at the end of 1944, moved to the top of the Lyric Theater on 43<sup>rd</sup> Street. “From studies in dance, speech, drama and allied theatre techniques, the school expanded in 1952 into the Katherine Dunham School of Cultural Arts” (Dunham, 1964/1978, p. 217). The expanded school operated like a university; it was the most comprehensive dance school in New York City, offering course in the arts, humanities and the social sciences (Sherrod, 1998). According to Sherrod (1998), Miss Dunham's school,

*...did it back in the 40's it was a place—a haven where artists of all ethnicities, of all colors gathered to study, to support each other. Where else would you have Jimmy Dean working with somebody like Walter Nicks in the 50's? Marlon Brando playing drums, I've actually seen pictures. Come on and I understand its not be said in the history book or by the mouths of the actors at actors screen guild or actors equity and AGMA and all them people, in the 40's, in the late 40's and early 50's when the school was really booming, everyone on Broadway was going up to the Dunham School to get certain movements sensibility, to learn certain understanding of rhythm. To become more diversified in the way that they were looking at...presenting themselves. To be able to say that they understood, or they studied a certain kind of—the rumba, the so and so. But this—all word of mouth from the African American people and African-Caribbean people, and the African people who were there. Oh yes, people of all colors, everybody on Broadway, Jimmy Dean, Marlon*

*Brando, Shelley Winters were there studying but you never hear them<sup>2</sup> speak about it. So it encompassed artists, regardless of their color but looking at their search for the information and their hunger for the information and their wanting to bring whatever they brought and wanting to get involved with the teaching and the learning and the doing...(Interview with Gaynell Sherrod, 9/16/02)*

Not only did theater and screen stars take classes, but also Latino musicians and performers like Tito Puente and Celia Cruz used the space for rehearsal or just to “hang out” or jam with other musicians who like them and had nowhere to go to just “be” in between or after performing at a local nightclub. Miss Dunham personally financed the school without subsidies and a minimum of donations” (Dunham, 1964). It functioned under those financial arrangements until 1954. Miss Dunham continues, “The program proved too extended for private enterprise and my personal earnings could no longer underwrite its costs on such a scale; particularly since much of my work was in countries where payment was in non-transferable foreign currency. From 1957 until November 1962, training in Dunham and allied dance techniques was confined to the performing company, with limited apprentices and master classes when visiting Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, and Near and Far East, Europe” (Dunham, 1964, p. 217). A composite version of the original comprehensive school operated at the Ballet Russe School and a small studio in the Chelsea Hotel in 1962. However, “This proved impractical because of the nature of our requirements—space, freedom to use assorted percussion instruments, irregular hours, unhampered circulation of people of varied racial, national and cultural

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<sup>2</sup> “them” refers to Jimmy Dean, Marlon Brando, Shelley Winters and other white Broadway performers who studied at the Dunham School and did not talk about their attendance publicly.

backgrounds” (Dunham, 1964, p. 217). In 1963, a composite version of the school moved to 440 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. All the versions of the Dunham School in New York eventually disintegrated. The reasons offered for the school’s demise included lack of finances, appropriate space, and management. I was left wondering if the fact that the school was an inclusive space contributed to its end.

### From Alienation to Collective Body

During my interview with Dr. Sherrod who directed the “New York City Board of Education Dance Institute: Based on the Katherine Dunham Model,” she reflected on the historical and contemporary aspects of Miss Dunham’s teachings. She said that Dunham’s work teaches inclusivity:

*GS: ...I think it taught about inclusivity...and the Dunham model breaks down racial barriers.... That is what it can do. I look at the Dunham model and I look beyond it. I look at what fed it, what made it become what it is. So, I look at the Haitian and the African components and of course the ballet and the modern and all that stuff. So, I see those components as a way of bringing together this whole globalization of dance and music culture. And when you look at the kernels of dance and music culture from a global perspective you have to look beyond race. Because you have to, number one, you have to go to the many source materials, much of the source material come from non-western... music and dance forms. And so...I think, I know that it’s going to attract people of all colors and cultural background and I know that all those folks learn something and bring something to the table when they’re coming to learn and can identify with some aspect of it. They’re going to see something that looks like the Irish jig and probably was. They are going to see something that looks like a ronds de jambe and probably is. But where did the ronds de jambe come from? [I]t makes you continually think continually think about going beyond this whole construct of race. And just looking at bodies and movements and their origins. And once you get to the origin then you’re looking at this whole thing about sharing*

*cultural information which Miss Dunham calls Intercultural Communications. It has a lot to do with race because it has a lot to do with politics because it has to do with how various groups conquered other groups or came into contact with other groups. But [at the same time] it goes beyond all that...*

*RAR: So you think it deals with that and goes beyond it. Is that what you're saying?*

*GS: It deals with it and goes beyond it is what I'm saying*

*RAR: So when you use the word inclusion, inclusivity, when you started...*

*GS: I use that word because when I did a lot of my research, and I recognize those words used by many of the people that I interviewed and also—not that word, exclusion and being excluded was the word they used. And I also realized that they were excluded and many doors were closed and for Miss Dunham to learn certain things she had to actually learn late at night, or early in the morning by herself with some European dance teacher who was being threatened by the mere fact that they were teaching her a little bit about dance and music culture from a European perspective. Some of them got fired. Some of them were blacklisted and they couldn't get jobs anymore and that happened often. So, it was a whole system of exclusivity. [T]herefore when the Dunham model came about, the way that she—I don't think she even realized the extent of what she was doing—she was including everything that she knew and also always trying to include all people. So, that's why I started off by using that term. (Interview with Dr. Gaynell Sherrod, 9/14/02).*

Miss Dunham's pedagogical approach presumed that, if students could learn how to appreciate diversity in people, movement, and curriculum, they could learn to appreciate it in the world through dance, research and practicing diversity. Her school was founded on her vision of a humane world--an "inclusive" world, the world of "we" rather than "they" and "we." She has dedicated her life to that vision. She responded to the problem of alienation by creating a geography of inclusive, integrated spaces—in the

body, within and between groups, in the state and in the globe. Today, she continues to work her radical project. In 2003, Miss Dunham were honored at Peter Norton Symphony Space in New York City. Miss Dunham responded, "There is one thing I would like to say to Mayor Bloomberg. I am so tired of being considered a leader of black dance. I am just a person who happens to be what in this country is called black. I will insist on being called, one, a person and, two, a human being...Stop dividing people..." (Kisselgoff, 2003, pp. E1 & E5). The world Miss Dunham envisions is not yet. She continues to agitate for a place of dignity for Black people within the human family. In 2002 before choreographing and performing a solo in a tribute to Miss Dunham at Jacob's Pillow, Ronald K. Brown went to meet and talk with her. She worried out loud that contemporary dancers were not doing enough to change the world, commenting "there is still much work to do."

## CHAPTER 4: RONALD K. BROWN'S RADICAL PROJECT

### Introduction

*I can't be myself because the universal world means that I need to be European. I need to talk like a European and if I'm different, you take offense. And I have to accept you up in my space because you don't understand spatial relationships in terms of where I come from because you're just working on your terms. Oh because we're the universal world and everything is about you (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02).*

Fifty years after Miss Dunham, Brown's radical project is aimed at challenging the erasure of Blackness that occurs in the name of integration. Apfelbaum (1979) theorized that, under conditions of social domination, the dominating group deploys an arsenal of mechanisms of power. Among them is to create a mythical set of standards, norms, and practices called "the universal rule." Brown's reference to the universal here suggests that, under integration, the universal rule is operating and erasing Blackness. However, as I've argued earlier, complete erasure is not possible. Thus, Blackness, as a set of cultural norms, aesthetic, and way of being in the world is in fact ghosted. Brown's response to this ghosting is to create a collective Black body. Brown's radical project begins through *the magic of confiscation*, a contemporary version of Dunham retrieving and cultivating historical and cultural knowledges. It is an embodied process of walking through life, searching for meaning, critically engaging in the social world, searching for and retrieving the pieces of roots, history, and present lived experience which have been ghosted under integration. As Brown walks, he confiscates material for and about his racial group and other groupings with the goal of becoming a whole person that isn't alienated from his Blackness. As his radical project takes shape, Brown creates a dance

company, travels to African and the African Diaspora, and studies West and Diasporic African dance in the U.S. He archives and transforms the confiscated material into racialized stories that he reclaims for perspective to create encounters (Cross, 1971) with the Black *collective body* to insure that it will not be completely erased (Kennedy, 1998).

### The Magic of Confiscation

Confiscate: *n.* *To seize by or as if by authority.*  
(Merriam Webster's Dictionary)

Se hace camino al andar (you make the way as you go)  
(Machado, 1982)

I believe that we don't have codified rituals of initiation in the Americas, but we do experience trials that serve to humble us and possibly give us a clearer worldview.  
(Ronald K. Brown, 2002)

In his *life walk*, Brown, is in the process of bringing into consciousness his life work. According to Yoruba cosmogony (Abimbola, 1994; Jackson, 1989), through a complex process that takes place before birth, an individual works out in heaven who he/she will be on earth. The Yoruba are one of the most influential ethnic groups to arrive on the shores of the Americas through the slave trade. Yoruba philosophy, cosmogony, and culture have had a significant and deep impact on the culture and ways of making meaning for people of African-descent living in the Americas (Dixon Gottschild, 2003). As Brown's story unfolds--his conception of life as a path and the importance of experiences (as he narrates in the quotation that begins this section), events, and social interactions as meaningful in actualizing his life work-- the impact of Yoruba cosmogony

is evident. By framing Brown's life as a path, we have evidence to support the idea the critical consciousness is a process of stops, starts, shifts, and turns. It is an embodied path, developed over time and through relationships. Critical consciousness is a developmental, rather than linear process, where constructing a life of meaning and creating meaning are interrelated. Brown makes connections of meaning to learn and to grow as a person intrinsically connected to his racial group, embodying by taking in and on the history and stories of his group and putting his critical awareness into motion as he moves between making, enacting, and eliciting meaning.

According to the Yoruba cosmogony, one needs the social world, a willingness to engage in it fully—body, mind, and spirit--to define the path (Jackson, 1989). *Ori*, or the head, works out the preferred path and *ese* or the legs, carry it out. Symbolically, *ese* is one's power to move in the world; it is embodied agency. Jackson (1989) relays a Yoruba tale, which illustrates the importance of *ese*. "All the *ori* meet together to deliberate on a project they want to bring to fruition. But they fail to invite *ese*. Having made their resolutions, the heads find that without legs they do not have the means to carry out their designs" (p. 131). The point of the story is that, even if the preferred path is one of great success, it cannot be achieved without the use of both the mind and body. Upon entry to the world, the path that has been worked out is forgotten. The earthly project is then to bring into consciousness, the self or path that has been constructed pre-birth. The work of defining the forgotten path *or bringing into consciousness* occurs through engaging in the world, which is teeming with all kinds of experiences, challenges, and obstacles, rather than *coming into consciousness* about a path that is static

and exclusively in the internal world. Indeed, one might encounter experiences that might not have been evident when the path was first defined. Engaging with struggle and life challenges is characterized as a journey on which a person travels on foot, across different terrain, from one place to another, encountering new experiences, hardships and sometimes joy along the way. Choice making is also part of the journey, but as Greene (1988) reminds us, “choice and action both occur within and by means of ongoing transactions with objective conditions and with other human beings” (p. 2). Thus, the path constructed in heaven is likely to change because choices are grounded in local circumstances. A life journey is peopled so that it is through social interactions that the person’s awareness is deepened and broadened. Therefore, it is through the action of (inter)acting, making choices when one comes to a crossroads, and interacting with others in one’s life (material and spiritual) that one defines, clarifies, and brings self into consciousness, and through that process manifests one’s life and life’s work. Now we turn to the historical scene that Brown entered when he was born and later engaging in as he made his path.

By the time Brown entered the world scene on July 18, 1966, racial segregation had legally ended and the nation was in the throes of dealing with the hope, fear and ambivalence of a new social experiment, interracial contact and the effects of the experiment, racial integration. Racial integration rested on two assumptions. First, increased and deeper racial contact would lead to greater understanding, foster positive attitudes, and do away with interracial hostility. Second, through interracial contact, racial differences would lead to varied and interesting relationships rather than derision

and animosity (Jones, 1997). However, there was little agreement on the terms of what racial integration would actually look like. Instead, as Black demands for equal rights rose after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, so did the resistance on the part of whites (Jones, 1997). According to Omi & Winant (1994), "... racially based social movements initiated a 'great transformation' of the American political universe, creating new organizations, new collective identities, and new political norms; challenging past racial practices and stereotypes; and ushered in a wave of democratizing social reform. The ability of racially based movements to *rearticulate* traditional political and cultural themes--first among Blacks, and later among Latinos, Asian Americans, and Indians--permitted the entry of millions of racial minority group members into the political process" (p. 138). However, these political and social gains did not "appreciably change the circumstances of a black youth in Harlem" (p. 138) or in Bedford/Stuyvesant where Brown was born and has lived throughout his life. The lack of "appreciable change" fueled debates within the black community about integration vs. black power. Pan-Africanists and Cultural Nationalists within The Civil Rights Movement rejected a moderate political agenda of integration for a black, social, political, economic, and cultural power paradigm. While resilient and influential in debating the terms of racial politics, and while cultural nationalism had "a strong hold in the black community..." (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 39), by the 1970's, the influence [of racially based social movements] diminished as their Black-centric discourse and symbolism was increasingly coopted and commodified" (p. 41). In other words, the more the dominated group, in this case Blacks, agitated for visibility of their agenda and *rearticulated* traditional political

and cultural themes, the more the dominating group pressed for the articulation of the universal rule. According to Jones (1997), there was a wide chasm between white attitudes towards racial equality, which were “uniformly positive towards general principles of equality” (p. 94), and their attitudes towards state/governmental implementation of policies that would achieve racial equality, which were much less positive. Thus, although there was less public agitation for racial equality and overt racial tension in the 1970’s, the most powerful symbols of Blackness had been absorbed into the dominant culture, and there were signs that Blacks and Whites were far from moving closer. The terms of interracial contact and engagement in integrated social institutions such as housing, schools, and other shared public spaces, led away from valuing difference as a way to “interesting and varied relationships” and headed toward the universal rule. Sameness (read white, European mainstream cultural norms) governed the rules of the engagement and interaction.

In the 1980’s, with the election of Ronald Reagan as President of the U.S., social conservatism was ushered in. “There was no more apologies for being White, for being American. There was to be no more expressions of guilt for the history of discrimination and oppression against Blacks, American Indians, and other people of color” (Jones, 1997, p. 103). By the 1980’s, there was a shameless reclaiming of a white American cultural heritage. The Reagan, followed by the Bush administrations, dismantled a range of social programs implemented to address the deleterious effects of racial discrimination. They put a heavy emphasis on personal responsibility and made use of representations of the “welfare queen” and the lazy, shiftless, ghetto dwellers who were

to blame for the deterioration of urban, inner city communities (Omi & Winant, 1994; Fine & Weis, 1998). The history of racial discrimination and oppression that was the basis for the social programs was ghosted, and to the extent to which there was a public discourse about race, these most negative representations predominated.

Among the greatest shift in racial politics of the 1990's was the "Democratic retreat from race and the party's adoption of Republican racial politics, with their support for 'universalism' and their rejection of 'race-specific' policies fear[ing] the divisiveness and polarization which characterized the racial reaction..." (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 147). On the world stage, beginning in the mid-1980's, a new globalization cycle complicated the color-line by the increasingly fluid political and cultural borders that once separated both nation states and people within them. "These external and internal borders [were] increasingly becoming noisy and conflictive areas where cultural communication and miscommunication plays out in schools, communities, and places of work and worship" (Suarez-Orozco & Hilliard, 2004, p. 3). Back in the U.S., there was mounting evidence that the racial divide was widening. Jones (1997) cites three trends in support of this observation: "(1) increases in race-based violence, labeled generally 'hate crimes,' (2) growing racial differences in beliefs about the degree of racial inequality and the causes for existing differences, and (3) a more visible and vocal movement among African-Americans towards self-segregation and group-centered standards in a variety of domains" (p. 115). Notably, self-segregation and group-centered standards by African-Americans were responses to an erasure of racial body politics, a blurring of culturally

differentiated boundaries under globalization, and the constant threat of erasure of Blackness as a rich, complex culture, identity, history and aesthetic.

Given this historical scene Brown entered, Brown would have to borrow from all the interrelated sources available to him to both learn and unlearn who he was, who he was to become (Hurtado, 2003), and what he would create. Unlike Miss Dunham, who relied on one social psychological muse, Erich Fromm, Brown would rely on many, mostly women, to develop and bring into consciousness his life work. A reflection of the fragmentation and ghosting of Blackness under integration, he would engage in *the magic of confiscation*, a strategic borrowing, pulling, and selecting from many encounters, sources, scenes, moments, and experiences from the lives of people of African descent. As Brown walked his path, he would *retrieve cultural and historical knowledge* to educate and re-educate dancers and audience, doing so through lived and observed experiences collected from his living room, the streets and dance spaces in Brooklyn, West Africa, Brazil, and Cuba. Similar to Miss Dunham, based on the cultural and historical knowledges he retrieved, he would *declare black people entitled to humanity*, which continued to be destroyed, although more insidiously than when Dunham was doing her work and now through integration as assimilation. For a broad audience, he would use these knowledges to publicly *speak truth to white dominating power* by creating and performing a *black collective body*. For Brown, a non-racialized, collective body would not be enough to affirm Blackness and resist its erasure. With a wink, smirk and big attitude, *the magic of confiscation* challenges/redefines notions of universal and refuses the narrow limits of time and space. Historical experiences of domination are

borrowed from the past and brought into the present. Dispersed roots of origin, which are much more dispersed, and the boundaries between European, American and African, which are much more blurred than when Dunham was doing her work, from continental African and the Diaspora are pulled and replanted so that they can continue to cross-germinate. Throughout his walk through life he makes meaning through *critical connections*, creating and producing a set of physical narratives (embodied stories) for a diverse audience, showing evidence of domination, resistance to domination, and affirming and valuing difference, all the time placing at the center of his work a black aesthetic. This is a telling of Brown's journey as he brings to consciousness the source of his encounters (Cross, 1971).

### The Formative Years

Ronald Kevin Brown came into the world in 1966 and arrived in the Bedford/Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York, where he continues to reside. We pick up the story of Brown in his living room where he made up dances. Brown remembers, "*I'm one of those children that danced around the house. The one who moved mama's furniture and made up a show for the family...or an imaginary audience*" (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 3/13/02). Although Brown was afraid to take dance classes, he continued to perform at home, at recitals and neighborhood events. Brown continues, "*I had quite a few creative dance experiences while I was growing up, but my basic memory, is being terrified to take a class because of what the boys on the block would say. My impression, once, was 'Mommy there are 90 girls in there.'*" (Interview

*with Ronald K. Brown, 3/13/2002*). During the summer a woman named Margo came to his block and put on musicals through the Police Athletic League program, a community-based program started in the early 1900's by a New York police officer, aimed at reducing conflict between law enforcement and urban youth. Between the ages of 8 and 11, Brown traveled to other PAL events to perform.

At age 12, Brown was on his way to audition for the summer dance program at the Dance Theatre of Harlem, when his mother went into labor. Brown recalls, *"I took this as a sign that I shouldn't dance. I had to be a big brother, after all"* (*Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 3/13/02*). Underlying his choice not to audition was a sense of responsibility to his family, as well as his fear of what the boys in the neighborhood might say about him if he chose to dance. Instead, Brown decided to write poetry, plays, and become a journalist, working on his writing and investigation skills and collecting and documenting using words. Brown attended Edward R. Murrow High School in Brooklyn, a communication arts school named after the famous journalist and television broadcaster. Determined to be a journalist, Brown took on extra courses so that he could graduate from high school in three years. While at Murrow, he participated in several musicals and dance recitals. He also had a dance company, Sherrone Dance Theatre, with his friend Cheryl. Together they attended ballet classes to prepare for a ballet dance recital.

During his last semester at Murrow at the urging of his mother, Brown also took a dance class at the high school. He remembers, *"...a woman, Sally Hipshur taught jazz, but I think I was fighting my mother from when she went into labor. so I was like, 'No,'*

*she said, 'come on just take a class.' I said, 'I can't dance. I don't want to go, I don't want to go...I missed out on the whole thing.'* And then some reverse psychology, or (something)...Miss Hipshur asked me to teach a class so I taught the dance class...she would bring me to Lynn Simonson's space...and then I was kind of hooked (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02). During his last year of high school, Brown received a scholarship to attend St. Michael's College in rural Vermont. Upon hearing the news, Miss Hipshur urged Brown to consider what his life would be if he were to take the scholarship and move to Northern New England. Considering Vermont's very small black population, Hipshur, said, "If you go to Vermont, you're going to marry some white woman and ski for the rest of your life. Don't go" (Brown, 5/29/02). That summer Brown decided to audition for the Ailey School. Together with his dance partner Cheryl, with whom he started Sherrone Dance Theatre, Brown went to the Ailey School auditions. Cheryl's audition was first. As Brown describes, Cheryl was full bodied and a "beautiful dancer." He watched Cheryl immediately eliminated and decided that he would not audition the very next day. Instead, Brown answered a very small ad in the *Village Voice* for the Mary Anthony Dance Studio, where partial scholarships were offered. Mary Anthony is recognized as one of the leader of the modern dance movement. Brown went to Anthony's school for a scholarship audition "to get my nerve and technique up" (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 3/13/02). One of the things that struck Brown about this audition was that he was unable to round his back—considered an important skill and the mark of modern and African dance training. Brown reflects, "when I found Mary Anthony and I couldn't round my back, we were doing preparations

*for contractions and I couldn't do it, 16 years old, I thought I'd been dancing my whole life" (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02).* He asked his mothers if he could take an extra year before starting college, turn down the scholarship, and *"just feel [dance] out" (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02).* Brown recalls that his mother, who always supported his dance, replied, *"Dance as much as you want to, but you have to get a job (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02)."* Brown got a job at Morgan Guaranty Trust. For six months, Brown remembers that at the end of his workday he *"jumped on the train, ran off... and danced...all the way into the night" (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02).* Brown's path to dance was cultivated with choices and characterized by meandering roads, all of which, through his interactions with his muses and engagements in the social world, were leading toward dance. Brown understands each intersection or crossroads as meaningful—an opportunity to make a choice and learn from the experience.

At the Anthony school, Brown studied dance technique, dance pedagogy, and dance composition. Among his teachers were Mary Anthony, Daniel Maloney, Ross Parkes, William Adair, and Lonne Morreton. Miss Anthony required her students to teach, choreograph, and dance. For the dance composition class, students were required to produce three pieces. Brown particularly enjoyed "making up dances." Brown later returned to the Ailey School to see what other people were choreographing and teaching. There he found Milton Myers, an African-American dancer, educator, and choreographer. While in college, Myers began an all-black dance company, *Black Exodus*. Brown began to study with Myers at Ailey, while he attended Miss Anthony's school. Brown also

returned to Dance Theatre of Harlem, where he studied composition with Bessie Schonberg for two years. By this time, Brown had shifted away from journalism—the art of investigation and words--towards dance--the art of investigation and movement, developing his skills as dancer, teacher, and choreographer and the sources for creating encounters with the collective black body.

### Creating A Racialized Collective Body

At the age of 19, four years after the election of President Ronald Reagan, Brown was still deep in his dance training. He had the impulse to create a company. Brown sought the counsel of poet friend Donald W. Woods. He asked Woods for his advice about starting a dance company or pursuing a career as a dancer. Wood replied, “...*Who’s going to tell your grandmother’s stories?*” (*Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 10/02*). Wood’s reference to Brown’s grandmother’s stories was all the more important against the backdrop of Reagan’s socio-political agenda of a “color-blind society” and movement away from a sense that government social programs were necessary in order to address the historical legacy of racial discrimination and segregation. Indeed, “[hi]story cannot be changed, so why beat ourselves up over the past “ was the mainstream thinking of the time (Jones, 1997). Resisting that mind set and the national about face on racial body politics, in 1985, Brown chose to form *Evidence*, a dance company that would reflect his “*background, heritage and sensibility*” (*Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 3/12/02*). Forming *Evidence* was a pivotal act of affirmation—*declaring black people’s entitlement to humanity and resistance--speaking truth to white*

*dominating power.* With the responsibility of growing and keeping a dance company going, Brown's path would no longer be towards dance. Through the *magic of confiscation*, Brown's path would be about *creating a collective black body*, "as a tool of reengineering the past, get in there, fix it up, guarantee the future, with history, conveniently declared deceased—an untimely death to say the least—even the less conspiracy-minded of us can't help feeling that it has been murdered in order to prevent us...from resuscitating it, exhuming it, performing an autopsy, doing whatever it takes to get to bear witness to atrocities and triumphs to which it's been privy..." (Kennedy, 1998, p. 108).

#### The Company

Over the years Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE*, has varied in size. The dancers who include the Company have also changed over time. During the period of data collection, the Company was made up of nine members, eight of whom are African American and one of Phillipino descent. They are Camille A. Brown, Arcell Cabuag, Shani Nwando Ikeriona Collins, Diedre Nyota Dawkins, Iquail S. Johnson, Bridget Moore, Daryl Spiers and Keon Thoulouis. Renee Redding-Jones is Associate Artistic Director, and Brown is the Choreographer and Artist Director of the Company. He also dances in many of the pieces that he creates. The subjectivity of who is part of Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* is important to Brown's goal of *creating an encounter with a collective black body* because Brown believes that

*When black people are on stage doing dance that derive from a European aesthetic, there are all kinds of dynamics...black people*

*infusing a European aesthetic with everything that we have inherited as folks of African descent born in America” (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 3/13/02).*

Brown has also created dance works for other (black) dance companies, such as Alvin Ailey American Dance Company, African American Dance Ensemble, Philadanco, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company (in collaboration with Donald McKayle, an African American choreographer), Jeune ballet d’Afrique and Ailey II. Whether he is creating dance for *Evidence* or other companies, his work embodies Blackness, its history, culture, and aesthetic and therefore places it front and center as the point of critical connection across race. Brown writes,

As a creative artist, I am grateful that I am able to express my feelings and observations through dance, music and text. I desire to handle each assignment with a sense of responsibility, accountability and an understanding of purpose and the interconnectedness of everything. I see the performing and cultural arts as tools of excavating, sharing and learning how to respond to one’s purpose on a creative level. (Brown, Artist Statement, 10/02)

In the following interview excerpt, he elaborates:

*RAR: You mentioned Evidence. How did you come up with that name?*

*RKB: I had a solo in '84, '85 a solo called Evidence and in it I came out and said, I was born in Bed-Sty, but I always wanted to marry a girl with long hair and was just this idea, she was Black with long hair but still, the idea that that was still the ideal, the pretty woman with the long hair and until I was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade my mother had this afro and she was beautiful, so that I think it was this idea that we were taught what to prefer, what to think, and that we are a product of all the things that we learn. So the solo felt like a confession of, well I’m a product of all of these things I’ve learned, this is what I’m going to fix, reprogram. So I wanted...I wanted...the work...[with Evidence] to be a reflection of*

*all the—to be a reflection of legacy, things we learn, of things we need to unlearn, the challenge, so I wanted the company to be proof of all of this. (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02)*

Indeed, the summary of the works that Brown has choreographed for Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* since 1994 (See Appendix H) takes up critical contemporary social issues, such as the growing HIV-AIDS pandemic, issues facing gay black men, and black migration from the South to the North and from Africa to the Diaspora. His works also take up issues that are deeply rooted in his own experiences “*as a Black man [defining who he is] and collective experiences of people in the Black community living in the diaspora and on the continent*” (R. K. Brown, 2002). Through dance he conceptualizes himself, indeed dances a set of collective stories. Notice the “we” when Brown speaks of the birth and purpose of his company at the beginning of this section, as a *reflection of legacy, things we learn, of things we need to unlearn* (R. K. Brown, 2002). Notably, each piece described in Appendix H uses the language of group/collective—“community,” “family,” “collective,” “women,” and “men,” or a shift from “self-consciousness to a physicality that is more connected to the ground and ultimately to each other.” The dance pieces are evidence of layers of history, borrowed, imported—his own and that of his group, both inter-and intra group relations that he confiscates as he makes his path. The storylines are deeply rooted in African American experiences of migration, assimilation, slavery, death, mourning, family, and spirituality. Brown likes to spend a year and a half creating a dance piece, doing research, and bringing to bear his continued training in dance, which now focuses but did not always focus on continental and diasporic African dance. Each piece is a way to “*get connected to the history, the collective.*” Brown

continues, *“cause I feel like we’re suffering from not understanding the connections, not being connected and so the whole time we’re here [on earth] that’s what we are here to do is get connected and get the information [about what’s happening] worldwide...”* (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 4/2/02). Brown is getting connected so that he can create encounters with ghosts of a troubling past and bring them into the present so that they can be contended with as a function of social change.

As Brown takes one road, he goes back to go forward, strategically borrowing along the way and recognizing that freedom from oppression and domination is not only an individual but collective project. Like Dunham, Brown feels the weight. He says, “I have the desire to be free and I understand that my liberation is deeply linked to the liberation of my brothers and sisters around the world and in the Americas” (Brown, 10/2/2002). Brown feels the weight—the weight of responsibility, the weight of experience, the weight of the past, the weight of the strategic borrowings, the weight of the collective and consciously takes it on, transforming it into sharable knowledge. For Brown, being free cannot be accomplished unless it is a collective and shared project of desire. Martin says, “...meaning remains as a nag but a rather inert one, disembodied and in need of some force to propel it. This is precisely what desire provides. A collective and shared project of desire is the motion of social interaction, the physical agency of activity” (Martin, 1990, p. 73). This is a critical move of action, when the weight is transformed into critical knowledge as it is felt and embodied to serve a collective body. It is also a strategic rather than natural move of embodiment. Brown is connecting with others to produce a collective body as “as a tool of reengineering the past, get in there, fix

it up, guarantee the future, with history, conveniently declared deceased—an untimely death to say the least—even the less conspiracy-minded of us can't help feeling that it has been murdered in order to prevent us...from resuscitating it, exhuming it, performing an autopsy, doing whatever it takes to get to bear witness to atrocities and triumphs to which it's been privy..."(Kennedy, 1998, p. 108). Brown's desires to be free of the oppressive and dominating experiences that weighs the body when they are brought into consciousness as sources of knowledge that must be relearned, or in his words "reprogram[med]." Therefore, agency and intent must be enacted for the individual body to enact and practice critical consciousness and/or produce a collective body for the sake of social change. Critical also is searching out and finding the peopled social spaces that will support the process of embodiment. Brown has searched out and found—connected with such a place in dance.

A glimpse into the sources Brown uses to create a dance piece. Follow the thread of connecting and borrowing—retrieving from all of these sources of experience—the image in his head, the water in his bathroom, and interactions with Ibo and poet, Cheryl Boyce Taylor, interlocking, weaving together all of these sources to create.

*RKB: I had this image in my head of people running down the street with bloodied clothes and they were carrying other people, but in the dream I couldn't tell whether they were fighting each other, trying to kill each other, or whether they were trying to save each other. And so that was kinda stored in my head as a piece of an idea...and then I was talking to this brother named Ibo, who said, "Oh, you should make a contemporary Dundun Ba piece, you know this piece where these brothers are running down the street and you don't know who is chasing who and they're close to each*

*other and one pulls out a gun and he shoots' um...all of a sudden these spirits come and they climb into the brothers and redirect their warrior nature." And I'm like (laugh), you know, all of a sudden trying to make... those two things kinda came together for me. And then Cheryl Boyce Taylor, who I just fell in love with her work and we wanted to work on something [together] and didn't know what it was. All of a sudden I started having dreams about water—people getting married in water, people—bodies floating in water... Water was turning on in my house without any...*

**RAR:** *This was in a dream or in reality?*

**RB:** *No, this is real. A friend is staying over night and turns the shower on and it would never turn off. My super won't come fix it and my apartment flooded. I was like, "What is this?" I called Cheryl, "Cheryl, there's something about water. There are bodies in it, people getting married in it, people being saved in it." And she sent me 15 pages of text...that she wrote based on the conversation. And so from then we started to try and pull all the pieces together, this sense of responsibility to each other, blood being on our hands, the people who's lives are lost kinda of at our expense, uhm...*

Following the "gang-gang"

Each day, I am rewarded with more clarity regarding what the work is. There are times when I must ask myself, "What is the assignment today?" but in general my instructions are being whispered pretty loudly, I just have to listen and obey... (R. K. Brown, 2002).

*When I took Ghana dance for the first time, I was like oh my god, why does this feel like this belongs to me, why do I feel like I'm connected to me (Brown, 5/29/02).*

Brown says,

*When I first saw Urban Bush Women I had this sense that. Oh that's how black girls dance when they just want to dance, before they even know any...that's just how your body wants to move. And I feel like all this time that I was dancing, before I was studying, or before I trained, I was dancing like myself, whatever memories, you know the remnants of whatever and you know, what you see, you're free with it. But then you*

*start training and then its something else, its somebody else and so when I would go to see performances, I didn't recognize anything, anybody, it was almost like it wasn't really about people...When I saw Urban Bush Women, that was cool...I recognize that, but Urban Bush Women was [an] all woman [company]. Bebe Miller, I think I auditioned, but...her aesthetic for the most part, is from that European Trisha Brown, release...Ailey was still about proving that you could do this thing that was in this European form...I wanted to make work that was a little bit more raw, more real...that people would recognize themselves on a real simple level" (Brown, 5/29/02).*

The training Brown is narrating is his training in ballet and modern dance forms. While Brown acknowledges that the body of his work reflects his work with these and other artists, he writes, "It has been important that I not rest and allow my work to be a derivative of Jennifer Muller or a bastardization of West African Dance..." (Ronald K. Brown, 10/02). Brown finds himself compelled to study the past in order to locate himself in the world through his cultural and historical roots and create an encounter (Cross, 1971) that both affirms Blackness and resists the universal rule, doing so by following the *gang-gang*. During one of our conversations, Brown tells me that

*[I]t's the physical, right...the physical memories that are in your body, my ancestors...I think that black people, feel some kinda gang-gang in their brain. They don't know where it comes from but you know whether they (clapping his hands and stamping his feet in a polyrhythmic cadence), they try and find it...It's just this thing you want to get out" (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02).*

Brown wants to *bring into consciousness* or return to a time when he was dancing himself, when he was dancing memories. Brown travels to West Africa, Brazil, Cuba, following the *gang-gang* and he traces it back to his own Diasporic backyard. In the U.S., through the *magic of confiscation* he will locate memories, histories, and stories that he will use to create encounters with *a collective black body*.

Brown took his first West African Dance class in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1992 with Yousef Koumbassa. Around that time, Brown was teaching at Fareta's Dance School in New York City. Lamine Thom, a dancer from Senegal, living in New York and also teaching at Fareta's, took Brown's class, and Brown took Lamine's class. West African dancers living in New York, such as Marie Basse-Wiles and M'Bemba Bangoura, were also among his teachers. At first, his passion was Sabar, a dance form from Senegal. Brown says, "...on a worldly level, I connect with Sabar, the freshness, the sexual part of it, the showing off dancing in the club part of it. That hip-hop part of it that's really accessible..." (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02). Brown's description of Sabar as a fresh and show off club dance derives from his experience in a dance club on the Ivory Coast. He witnessed young people creating dance drawn from traditional West African dance, U.S. hip hop dance, mixed with popular West African dance. This experience, which signaled the effect of globalization on culture, relaxed Brown's concerns about bastardizing West African dance. When Brown was working in the Ivory Coast, he found that

*everything is such a mix, you have the Malinke folks but the drummer, Moumed, is from Guinee, so all the rhythms he would play if I was teaching class were all Guinee rhythms. If, they were like, "oh we have this panther phrase, and we want you to choreograph the next section that takes them here before the singers come on." So the rhythm was Guinee, what they were doing was Guinee, [even though I was in the Ivory Coast] right and so, I wasn't studying it, but I was learning what it is, so I could say, "okay lets do this thing that makes sense and connects to it (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02).*

Following the *gang-gang* to the Ivory Coast, Brown found a version of the *magic of confiscation* in action, both when he was choreographing and in the clubs. Similar to

Miss Dunham when she traveled to Haiti, Brown also found that people were identifying him as one of their own. People were calling him “Tree.” Brown says, *“They think I’m a tree person, [a descendant] of the Mula, Jeje, down on the inside, so that makes more sense to me...the Senegal, Sabar stuff...is the city part of me (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02).* At the urging of his friend and dancer Nancy Smith, who one day whispered to him, *“you need to study the Guinee stuff” (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02),* Brown has been focusing his study on the dances of Guinee for the past two years. What Brown is after is not only traditional West African dance movements; he also wants to know what people were thinking about when they danced. He says, *“...in the Arara...it’s a farmer dealing with harvest or the plants. But is he praying to God” (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02)?* He wants to know and feel into the movements beyond the function of the dance so that when he choreographs a piece that draws from all that he has studied, the connections between the movements relate to the meaning and visceral experience he wants to communicate. Brown is reaching for the ghosted story of the dance so that he can embody them in the present.

When Brown was working on *Water*, a piece which deals with themes of violence and rituals of initiation and healing from a community’s self-inflicted injuries, he came across the ritual music of Shango and Oshun, two orisha, or deified forces of nature, considered aspects of God in the Yoruba pantheon. He decided to use the ritual music in *Water*. After seeing *Water*, Nancy came to Brown, once again whispering in his ear something like, *“yeah, that was all right [that you used the music], basically you need to...learn the material” (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02).* In 2000, Brown and

Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* traveled to Cuba, one of the places in the African Diaspora where orisha music and dance has been preserved and practiced ritually and non-ritually since the Yoruba were enslaved there. Heeding Nancy's advice, in Cuba, Brown and his company studied intensively with Kutumba, a folkloric dance company from Eastern Cuba, learning the relationship between movement and embodied sacred stories of various orisha. Kutumba produced a CD recording of orisha ritual music and gave Brown the right to use it in choreography. He situates his study of orisha dance in Cuba and Kutumba's recording in the second part of *Walking Out the Dark*.

From his travels in West Africa and the African Diaspora and his studies of West African dance with continental Africans in the U.S., Brown finds that African forms "make most sense to [his] body and sensibility" (*Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 3/13/02*). Traditional African dance is also "...often directly connected to life and the expression, celebration or mourning connected to life's events" (*Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 3/13/02*). He has borrowed something from each artist that he has worked with to create a way of dancing that is very much Ronald K. Brown. His principal dancer, *Diedre Nyota Dawkins*, who is trained in ballet, modern dance, and West African dance, names it as Brown's gift to find the organic connections between Western, traditional and contemporary, African, as well as popular forms. In a critical turn, Brown makes European dance forms and vocabulary serve his work. He confiscates from European dance its African origins (Dixon Gottschild, 1996), creating what he calls "Contemporary African Dance." During our first interview, I asked Brown about the significance of including African-derived dance. Brown responded, "I think that

*audiences see that European is not the root of everything. There may be judgments, but there is no denying that there are different sensibilities in the world, and different aesthetics that are affected by heritage, history and nationality” (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 3/13/02).* When Brown creates encounters (Cross, 1971), he is in part protesting the dominance of the Western aesthetic and the ways it disallows him and those who look like him to be Black and define who they are as individuals and as a collective. As we sat together during a break from rehearsing *Walking Out the Dark* in a black box theater space at the NYU Tisch School of the Arts, I asked Brown, “What are you protesting?” He replied, *“That everything that we are and is of value is rooted in Europe...That I have to be anyone other than who [I am], to do my...art. Most of the stuff we learn is coming from other lenses, pulling you away from yourself. And so I feel, no this work is about black people and the liberation of black people” (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02).* Later in the interview, he said,

*Everybody wants to be free and royal. On one level when people see that it's kind of affirming, depending on where people come from and then you have all the stuff that people might bring to it. There are no White people on stage, this is not about me, why...all the honest things people feel about African music...oh this music is too loud or they look sexy, or all the nonsense people bring... For the most part, I think that it is clear that it is about us, on stage, black people, being rooted, in black...” (Ronald K. Brown Interview, 5/29/02).*

Indeed, it is about black people rooted in a black experience. Brown continued,

*...I think that you have a whole lot of people that want it to be something new that I just made up and so you have those people and then I think that it's the rest of the folks that are just like (gasp), “they want to be free, I want to be free too, oh they are free, oh they look royal, look at the king up there, oh look at the queen, I'm a queen...its that kind of seeing your reflection at little bit that gives people hope...I was watching this tape last*

*night and Bernice Johnson Reagon, said that black people—I'm paraphrasing—we have the magic of confiscation because we have to take everything from everyone and come out as myself, to speak as myself because we don't have that salvation, so I feel that especially the dance I'm doing is...evidence of that. I have to pull on these different forms to speak as myself. Because in America, "who am I?" but this man made up of all this. Whereas, in the plan I was suppose to divorce myself from all of African and hold up what is Europe so that I could be weak. Because if I'm not connected to my people, I'm weak" (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02).*

Brown believes that it is a different historical moment than when Miss Dunham was creating her work. He says,

*It's a different time...I went to the library to watch [Miss Dunham] and there is one film where this European and his friends, they pretended that they were with a news magazine and they were doing this thing legally, but they were trying to film Katherine Dunham. They went there to see her in Canada--to see her in her regalia back then. [She] receives the guy talking to her, while one of them can up and spoke and the other one was there...she was caught off guard, the camera is right there and its not that I don't have those kinds of experiences where some European person might try to step to me and exploit me and my work. But I can be different because the time is different...I don't have to be caught off guard. Even though my mother said you meet everyone with love and as a friend, if someone steps to me and they're rude, then I don't have stay in their zone. Even in Mr. Ailey's work where he had to straighten out the lines so that it's European. African dance is in there, [but] it's kind of ironed out. I don't have to do that now (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02)*

The *magic of confiscating* relates to a dynamic process of critical consciousness, involving deep meaning that is awakened through feeling the weight of lived experience. It involves making sense of those meanings through strategic excavating activities, The connections that Brown makes for himself and for others through the *magic of confiscation*, are strategic. The connections that Brown narrates, those he makes and

yearns to make, are forged and cut through the intricate web of unequal power relations and integration. Ultimately, he aims to create a sense of “we.” Brown says,

*I think about people, now, in terms of, you know, the situation in Afghanistan, we don't really understand anything about being willing to put your life on the line for what you believe in. We don't understand anything about feeling like you are in danger, like your people are in danger. We should. Some of us (laugh), acknowledge it, but its, that's the “we.” And so it's more global... (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 4/2/02).*

They are uneasy, jagged rather than smooth and “ironed out,” grounded at once in the past, present, and future. The encounters he creates for a viewing public are designed to be provocative. They are made through a creative process and a passionate commitment to move/shift social structures of racism, domination, and oppression. Following the *gang-gang* roots Brown to his Blackness and works European dance toward his end. Knowing that these organic connections will still be read as rooted in the established standard language of dance, Brown uses them as a way to turn an exclusionary “us and them” social dynamic, into an inclusive sense of “we” and collective with his audience. He has to connect with all the forms that he has learned from in order to “learn” what he has to “unlearn.” With his feet firmly planted in at least two worlds, one in the *in-group* and one in the *out- group*, he dances and creates dance to connect these two worlds. He seeks to create a shared sense of “we.” It is connection to a world that is not yet...a world he wants it to be. By putting intent and yearnings for freedom into dance, he hopes that it will come about. Brown, like Miss Dunham is creating inclusive spaces—in the body, within and between groups, in the state and in the globe, to contend with the specificities of history.

## CHAPTER 5: DUNHAM AND BROWN'S PEDAGOGY OF EMBODIMENT

### Introduction

Miss Dunham retrieved cultural and historical knowledge and cultivated it. Ronald K. Brown engaged in making meaning through the *magic of confiscation*. Their radical projects however did not stop there. They each transformed their critical insights through the dynamics of dance into a set of embodied, in-motion stories for an audience. In this chapter, I explore the process of creating encounters (Cross, 1971) for viewing audiences. I examine Miss Dunham and Brown's pedagogy for developing a set of embodiment practices for their dancers and the way these practices, when enacted in performance, create a collective body.

Recall the scene when Dunham dances with Damballa, Teoline, and Degrasse. Remember when Brown travels to West Africa, following the *gang-gang*. Recollect Belafonte's narration of Dunham Company members joining the all-night Cumbia and Brown and Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* members dancing among Orisha in Cuba. These scenes are evidence of a kind of embodiment where the choreographer and the dancers retrieve and archive cultural and historical knowledge, make meaning of them, and transform them into embodied stories for the concert stage. Miss Dunham's development of Dunham Technique and creation of a geography of inclusive spaces are possible through embodiment. Brown's life journey--walking his path, committing to dance, and telling his collective grandmothers' stories--are also made possible through embodiment. Embodiment is an electric, catalytic, energizing, reorienting set of processes of production and performance of critical consciousness. Miss Dunham trains

her dancers to study host cultures with and through their bodies; both Miss Dunham and Brown retrieve cultural and historical knowledges through their bodies, and Brown defines his path as he goes, through a variety of interactions and embodied experiences. In this chapter, I focus on foreshadowed processes of embodiment that Dunham and Brown employ in order to create a collective body through encounters (Cross, 1971) with black diasporic culture, aesthetics, and troubling aspects of U.S. history. The first step involves both teaching about, and practice at, the embodiment of story, a necessary condition for the second. The second step involves the actual performance and the creation of a collective body in which both dancers on the stage and people in the audience become one. The collective body Dunham creates is strategically universal, contending with difference without marking it, in order to respond to critical issue of her time--segregation. On the other hand, the collective body Brown creates is strategically racialized in order to respond to the critical issue of his time--integration as assimilation. Brown contends with difference by marking it, indeed placing it front and center. Although they create a different collective body, these two choreographers, dancers, and educators engage in a similar set of processes and utilize a similar set of artistic strategies to accomplish their respective radical projects. I will now consider the theoretical ground of embodiment for looking at the two dance pieces that I will focus on in this chapter, Miss Dunham's *Southland* and Brown's *Walking Out the Dark*.

Embodiment begins in the choreographic process that takes shape in the rehearsal, some time before the actual performance for an audience occurs. Significantly, the choreographic process anticipates an audience that has not yet come to be (Martin 1990).

The audience is implicated both in the rehearsal process and the occasion of the performance. When the dancers set foot on stage, the audience will encounter (Cross, 1971) embodied, in-motion stories and, together with the dancers, may be transformed into a collective body, united by means of performance (Martin, 1990). During the choreographic process, the choreographer socializes the dancing body to become one with the story. Unless the dancers feel the story from the inside, the audience will not and a collective body will not be performed or produced. Dancers and audience become a collective body through the embodied, in-motion story. With a mix of invitation and provocation, the dancers draw the audience from the edge of the unfamiliar to the depths of the familiar. Carrying stories across national and international borders, in and through collective bodies from the African Diaspora to Europe and from Cuba to the U.S., Dunham and Brown infuse their dance with critical social meaning. In this chapter, I focus on two dance works *Southland* and *Walking out the Dark*. We now turn to the stories.

#### The Story of *Southland*: The Story behind the Story

In 1951, amidst the cold war, anti-communism policies, racial segregation and the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement, anthropologist, dancer, educator, and choreographer Katherine Dunham created *Southland*. Researched, composed, choreographed, designed, and rehearsed at the end of 1950 in Buenos Aires, *Southland*, a dance drama and protest dance, was conceived by Miss Dunham in response to the lynching of African-Americans in the South (Valis Hill, 2002). In the face of warnings from the State Department, which

did not want negative images of American life exported abroad, *Southland* was performed only in Chile and in 1953 toured in Paris. *Southland* has never been performed in the United States

The Stories: *Southland* and *Walking Out the Dark*

At the world premiere in January 1951 at the Opera House in Santiago de Chile, Miss Dunham narrated in Spanish the following prologue:

The man who truly loves his country is the man who is able to see in it the bad as well as the good, and seeing the bad, [denounce] it at the cost of liberty and life. For countries are no different than men, and all men are made of good and bad, and must see these things within themselves, and strive toward the good if there is to be any upward moving. North America is a great and wonderful country. I know it and love it from the hills of San Francisco through the prairies of the Middle West to the rugged puritanism of the East sea coast. The people of North America are great and wonderful too, in their newness and youth and energy. But there is a deep stain, a mark of blood and shame which spreads from under the magnolia trees of the southland area and mingles with the perfume of the flowers. And though I have not smelled the smell of burning flesh, and have never seen a black body swaying from the southern tree, I have felt these things in spirit, and finally through the creative artist comes the need of the person to show this thing to the world, hoping that by so exposing the ill the conscience of the many will protest and save further destruction and humiliation. This is not all of America, it is not all of the south, but it is a living present part. (Dunham, 1951)

The first scene of *Southland* opens to a Greek chorus of singers “who reflect the stage action in song and mime, represent the fundamental simplicity, the earth-dignity of the Negro” (Dunham, 1951/1978). They ask “with a certain amount of ironic doubt ‘Is it true what they say about Dixie? Does the sun really shine all the time?’” (Dunham, 1951/1978). Against the backdrop of an antebellum southern mansion, one of the chorus members sings “Swanee River.” Another sings “Carry Me Back to Old Virginie.” “Then

one steps forward to sing “Steal away” with the ecstatic force of the true Negro spiritual and another unifies the group in the revival hymn ‘Dry Bones’” (Dunham, 1951/1978). The southern mansion gives way to a magnolia tree. The chorus stands at its base, observing the scenes that follow. “First a group of fieldhands on their way to work. Afterwards plantation square dances and the more African “Juba.” Lucille and Richard, lovers, linger behind and after dancing together separate reluctantly. The pleasant flow of the lazy magnolia-scented afternoon is interrupted by the appearance of Lenwood and Julie, who have been in an embrace behind the magnolia tree. A moment of ridicule, a reaction of resentment, and the warm southern atmosphere becomes one of violence, which leaves Julie lying unconscious under the magnolia tree after the attack of her companion. The fieldhands enter again. Despite the mute warnings of the chorus and the flight of his comrades, Richard remains, torn between his natural instincts to help and an awareness of the taboo situation which exists between White and Negro people in this community” (Dunham, 1951/1978). Richard is taken away by the crowd and hanged from the magnolia tree. “In her solo dance...[Julie] epitomizes the folly of all acts born of hatred and fear and guilt” (Dunham, 1951/1978, p. 119). Strapped into a harness Richard, swings across the stage. This is the first time that Julie sees a full view of Richard’s body suspended from the tree. Visible to the audience but invisible to Julie, the Chorus responds in horror. She “feels the full impact of the crime that she has committed” (Dunham, 1951/1978, p. 119). Julie and Lucille cross, momentarily holding one another in one another's gaze. Lucille continues across the stage as Julie exits. As she walks across the stage holding a single magnolia, Lucille sees her beloved dead for

the first time. Claudia McNeil sings “Strange Fruit.” The third and final act takes place in a nightclub. Everyone is dancing, and having a good time. Delores Harper sings “Basin Street Blues.” “The character of a blind man emerges, carrying a cane. He is the only one who sees the true fact at the moment of the passing of the cortege” (Dunham, 1951/1978, p. 119). The action in the nightclub freezes as the chorus walks through the space carrying Richard’s body. After the cortege or funeral procession passes, the nightclub comes alive again, and all the characters return to dancing and having a good time. The drama ends there.

Brown describes *Walking Out the Dark* as a dance piece, which “examines some of what impedes our individual and collective progress/work” (“*Walking Out the Dark* Performance Program, Dance Theater Workshop,” October 2002). He continues, “I built the work as a danced conversation considering what contributes to the inability to reach a brother or sister in need. The dance will use a series of letters/poems written to Mother, Brother and Sister, offering confessions of sin and apology. When I began imagining *Walking Out the Dark*, I saw it set in a mourning room, similar to The Rothko Chapel in Houston. I was also inspired by the initiation ceremony in Burkina Faso, during which the adolescent male initiates are buried in the earth. When they emerge, they are on their way to being men, but they have also grown to understand their place in the world” (R. K. Brown, 2002). *Walking Out the Dark* opens with Brown reading the following poem:

*Thank you for meeting me here*

*I exit my door  
Walking buried in pain*

*Covered in the earth of grief*

*Terrified to cry for freedom  
Too obedient to cry for long*

*Strength truth  
Can't contain it  
We must speak the truth  
To each other  
Or else stay  
Buried in the dark*

*(Walking out the Dark. Ronald K. Brown 2002)*

### Comparing and Contrasting the Two Stories

These narrations are taken from the performance programs of *Southland* and *Walking Out the Dark*. *Southland* and *Walking Out the Dark* differ in descriptive detail. Miss Dunham opens the dance drama with a prologue, which frames the story in socio-historic and political terms and provides her audience with a narrative that details the story and the characters. In the *Walking Out the Dark* program, Brown uses poetry to narrate the performance. He tells the reader about his inspirations for the piece and his choreographic process. While they narrate the performance differently on the level of detail and the features of the story they focus on, both tellings momentarily keep the story *still* and *in place* and reveal what the choreographers want the audience to know and *get* from the dance. That is, by narrating their stories, they promote their strategic interests (Bell, 2003) to teach the audience how to “read” the world and the social meaning that is being danced and name and reclaim the forgotten (Morales, 1998). In *Southland*, Dunham is naming and reclaiming lynching as a violent, unjust, and destructive act. Turning the stereotypical story of the black man predator/victimizer and white woman

victim on its head, Miss Dunham names the antagonist as white southern society as embodied by a white woman, and the protagonist as a black man. Brown is naming and reclaiming the black family as the model for truth telling and for communication across pain, grief and suffering (Ward, 2000). Both stories boldly name and reclaim in a public, collective setting, relationships, loving, grieving, joy, pain, and passion as human through black aesthetics, culture, and lived experience. Both stories are encounters that reveal the ghosts of a nation's trouble past—its commission of atrocities that turns the nation away from accepting a positive view of black life. *Southland* and *Walking Out the Dark* resist dominant historical and contemporary notions of Blacks as non-human while affirming their humanity.

#### Embodied, In-Motion Stories

[D]ance seeks continuously to capture moments of life in a fusion of time, space, and motion, the dance is at a given moment the most accurate chronicler of culture pattern. The constant interplay of conscious and unconscious finds a perfect instrument in the physical form, the human body which embraces all at once. (Dunham, 1963/1978, p. 215)

In addition to telling the story in a program, the story is danced and performed by cast members and aimed at connecting with, engaging, and drawing an audience into the story. Now imagine these stories in a live performance, as they would be viewed and experienced by an audience. Stories are transformed for and in performance.

Dialectically related concepts, such as the beauty and stain of the magnolia tree in *Southland*, and movements, such as the angular and fluid in *Walking Out the Dark*, are compressed into three-dimensional images. Normative historical and cultural content

that is familiar to the audience, mixed with cultural and historical content that is unfamiliar to the audience is also compressed into three-dimensional images. These compressed images compose the embodied story. Compressing the images makes the content more concentrated, alive, and vivid, which “confers on them a power to help [the viewing audience] notice what [they] might otherwise miss seeing (Eisner, 2003, p. 25). Through an embodiment process, which I will detail shortly, the performing bodies are engorged with the images. As it is danced, the story spins out momentary, three-dimensional compressed images. The compressed images are composed of the familiar (aesthetically, socially, and historically normalized) and the unfamiliar (aesthetically, socially, and historically different). The audience, like the blind man in *Southland*, can see and feel the ghosts of the troubled past as they are brought into and embodied in the present. The embodied and in-motion story invites and provokes the audience to get inside the story so that they can understand and connect with it collectively. Indeed as Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992) writes, “to further our kinship relationship...it assists greatly if we understand stories as though we are inside them” (p. 25). From the inside of the story, the audience is invited and provoked to make meaning. Dancer and audience, having come together through the story, a collective body is created. Turning now to their choreographic process of *Southland* and *Walking Out the Dark*, I look at how Dunham and Brown socialize their dancers to embody the stories of resistance and affirmation that they aim to tell.

The Process of Creating Encounters: The Messiness and Uneasiness of Embodied Practices

In *Southland*

When I spoke with Miss Dunham about the making of the dance drama,

*Southland*, she said,

*Well, Julie had an especially difficult assignment because she had lived as an activist and so had her parents who'd been in an atmosphere of breaking down not only in theory, but in action, the restrictions imposed by our society in America on interrelations--intercultural relationships. And this was her life and to have that something thrown at her as a role in which she would take the exact opposite stand was not easy. And she wept and she refused and she resisted and she resigned and she did all sorts of things but she went right on. And really, it was one of the most rewarding experiences that I have in my life because I would say, "Julie you hate this man because he's Black." Well, she'd worked with that for a day or two. Julie you hate him because he's a nigger." Oh that did her in. That was the sort of thing that we worked on with everyone in the company. What they were--they had to forget what they were in their own lives what they were like, what they thought, what they believed and become what they were in the script and that was not easy, not easy at all (Interview with Katherine Dunham, 9/7/02).*

Belafonte remembers the process of Miss Dunham directing her in her role as white southern society in vivid detail. She says,

*Miss Dunham would be sitting in the theatre, and our conductor was at the piano and I was on the stage and she would direct me... She didn't help me in any way to find how to do this, but she was so insistent, I mean I just had to do it. And the first horrific thing for me was the having to absolutely scream from my gut the "n" word and I just couldn't do it. It kept coming out in this little weak voice. Until finally I realized that I had to call upon this—transferring myself to her, when I really belted it out...In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Act, the girl that plays southern white society, I always say the girl because I could never, could never, it was a very difficult thing for me to finally get it because I had to, through the process, transpose my hatred for this character as an acting problem to the character or I could*

*never, ever have done it. I always felt it wasn't me it wasn't me doing it so I always refer to it in the telling as the girl and "she," so...we'll she's sort of a slut and she and some boyfriend are making out in the woods and they're laughing and they come forward and as they're laughing, in a sort of adlibbed conversation, they get into an argument, which ends up in a fight and the guy gives her a good sock/punch and she's knocked down to the floor and in the meantime there's a change in the music and the field hands are on their way back home in the background and the young man who's the lover—who's the boyfriend of the girl sees a human being hurt and so he leaves the---his girlfriend and the other dancers and comes forward tries to help her come to. And as this happens, she quickly, but she has to really go through it in her mind, so it seems like an eternity but for the audience it was probably very fast. What a wonderful thing, I could really be somebody in the community, I know I'm going to accuse him of rape. (Interview with Julie Belafonte, 10/15/02)*

Two aspects of the process of embodiment stand out in Dunham's and Belafonte's tellings. The process is difficult and complex. For Belafonte to become white southern society, she had to transfer the weight of the character to another, "a girl," and find the voice in her body to scream "nigger." In the scene that precedes the lynching, Miss Dunham directs Belafonte to "*just start thinking, hey this could be something, if you say he raped you...conjure up a lie—what a great idea. Just think about this and live the idea. It gets better and better to you...*" (Julie Belafonte at Jacob's Pillow, 6/25/02). Having been through a process of embodying "white southern society," including dying a blonde streak in her hair to give her "*more identity*" (Julie Belafonte, 6/25/02), Belafonte turns to an imaginary crowd to tell them that she has been raped. Through the provocative gesture of grabbing her hair and wrapping it around her neck, Belafonte tells the imaginary crowd, "*it would be wonderful*" (Julie Belafonte at Jacob's Pillow, 6/25/02) if the black man who has raped her is lynched. Dunham directs Belafonte to "*respond [to the lynching] as if she had an orgasm and thinks to herself that she wants a*

*souvenir. She tears a piece of his shirt, sauntering off stage” (Julie Belafonte at Jacob’s Pillow, 6/25/02). Underscoring the difficult task of becoming “the girl,” Belafonte tells me that she “came from a political family. Case in point and I’m proud of it, during the Spanish Civil War, I told [Dunham that] I would not tour with her in Spain as long as Franco was a dictator there” (Interview with Julie Belafonte, 10/15/02).*

### In *Walking Out the Dark*

I witnessed and felt analogous difficulties of embodiment when I attended a Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* rehearsal of *Walking Out the Dark*. I took the following fieldnotes soon after I videotaped the rehearsal. I added Brown’s words to the fieldnotes after reviewing the videotape.

*The Company is rehearsing a segment of Walking Out the Dark in a dance studio in Soho. Ron is sitting in a chair studying the dancers intently. Sometimes he writes in the notepad that is resting in the palm of his left hand. When the dancers finish rehearsing, their faces gleam with perspiration and their breathing labors from the physical exertion of the last ten-minutes of a long day of rehearsal. Ron gets up from his chair, pensively walking through the space, as the dancers sit throughout the small studio-- on the floor and chairs in anticipation of the notes to come. Slowly walking around with his head cast down, chin in one hand, notepad in the other, Ron stops at one end of the studio, locating himself approximately center of where the dancers are seated. He puts his left hand, which is holding the pad, behind his back and begins to address the dancers. The air feels heavy with tension and anticipation. Ron looks at the pad again and says, “There are a lot of things, a lot of things” Ron pauses, then adds. “One is, do you think its easier to do the shape, move your arms and legs, do the physical and try to act--try to get the intensity in your face? Do the motion of the arms and legs and then intensity in your face? I’d rather you mark it—all the nuances and details rather than do the mechanics. I’d rather you use the rehearsal to get closer to the work. For real! You have to go for the details, or when else are you going to get it in your body?” He tells the group that he wants this session to be a conversation. He wants to understand what the dancers*

*are going for. He asks one of the dancers what she is going for? She responds that she's going for the physical movement and the story. Brown responds that he wants her to show him how she got to the shape. He demonstrates a step and says, "Let yourself be disturbed by it. [Ask yourself] what does the step feel like in my body? Let yourself be disturbed by it." (Fieldnotes, 4/3/02).*

That the video camera was rolling during this conversation undoubtedly added to the tension in the room. What also accounts for the tension is Brown's frustration that the dancers were only physically moving and not embodying the story that he was asking them to feel through the movement, the "detail," the "shape--" "When else are you going to get it in your body?" According to Brown, the dancers were not allowing themselves to be emotionally moved by the feeling and quality of the movement either. The dancers expressed their frustration. Although they danced with great physical intensity, they had not connected to the "it" of the movement--the felt experience of the movement beyond the physicality of the movement (moving arms and legs). At times some of the dancers responded to Brown's notes, or critique, by getting up and repeating a dance sequence, trying to "correct for" his note to them. Brown continued to press the dancers to connect to the feeling of the movement in their bodies. He reads through another set of notes, telling a dancer about a dance sequence where dancers are running. He wants to see them run as if they were in slow motion. Brown adds, "*I'm calling it slow motion because I want you to feel like you are in slow motion*" (Videotape, 4/3/02). There is a long pause and pensive quiet settles in the room. One of the dancers interrupts the silence, attempting to respond to Brown's yearning to understand what the dancers are "going for." The dancer tells Brown that she wants her movements to be clear and when she's in the emotional realm, she feels that the movements are not clear. Brown retorts with an

example, pressing again this time with his body and voice. Both his hands come together at the center of his torso. One hand moves up and other moves down. Then they come together in the center of his body. As if they've been transformed into two machetes, his hands slice through the thick air. As he performs this gesture, Brown tells the dancer that the shape of cutting doesn't magically appear. Indeed, in his demonstration, we see the action of his hands, body and breath as he prepares to make the shape. He makes the shape, and then it dissolves and evolves into another shape. He shows the dancers that he wants to see one movement inform the next movement, posture, or gesture. He demonstrates to make another critical point: emotions evoked by the movement, as well as the feel of the movement, change. Once again, demonstrating with movement and voice, Brown speaks through the sequence: *"You can't have the same feeling....You've just finished running through this field. Now you're backing up (Brown runs backward, while his hands caress his forehead, nose, lips and neck in a downward motion). [The feeling] has to change. And if you get there, if you get there, it will change. Be in the moment with it... Allow yourself to be in it and be touched by the moment"* (Video tape, 4/3/02).

Brown teaches and urges the dancers to embody the story, and the feeling that the movement embodies. As Dunham does when she's directing Belafonte—"Julie you hate this man because he's Black--" Brown is trying to provoke the dancer to connect to the emotion of the piece in each word, in each movement, posture, and gesture. His demand that the dancers "be in it" requires being in each and every movement fully. He doesn't want to see the physical body moving in a manner that is disconnected and disembodied

from the story and the emotion of the movement. He also doesn't want any "play acting." Brown says, "*I want the dance students in class to come to the dance as themselves. We are doing, what we are doing. Sometimes I might use an image to let us know what things should feel like, but I don't encourage play-acting. And that goes for double on stage. NO PLAY ACTING*" (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 3/12/02). Rooted in continental and diasporic African dance, the choreographic content—movements, postures and gestures—is already full of meaning and historical significance.

Using words and provocative dance directives, Dunham and Brown socialize the dancers to connect deeply to the story and to volley back and forth for each level of the connection: feeling to feeling, feeling to movement, body to mind, mind to spirit and spirit to soul. Brown adds that he wants dancers to "*go straight to it. And it's not this holding back and I'm over here, my soul is over here and my body is doing this stuff. It's so obvious to me when we're working in the Western model, because its linear, you can separate things and that doesn't feel natural to me to separate*" (Interview with Ronald K. Brown, 5/29/02). The work of the dancer is to "*allow yourself to be in and be touched by the moment.*" Through their direction, Brown and Dunham insist that the dancers get to the "soul" of the piece--the weighty, burdensome, embodied places of repulsion and desire, hate and love, cunning and vulnerability. In her latest book, *The Black Dancing Body: A Geography from Coon to Cool*, Dixon Gottschild (2003) makes the point that

The universality of pain and suffering is made specific through the particular life experiences of black Americans. This is what I say when I say that soul is what it takes to be black and survive. The style and aesthetics that evolved from this soul character have given the world—not only black people—artists and movement that help us navigate the perilous waters of life. (p. 229)

That is not to say, Dixon Gottschild continues,

that soul...[is] exclusively black propert[y], but they are signposts of a culture-specific vibrancy in the dancing bodies of...African-American artists and have become universal because they can so specifically address the bittersweet, paradoxical human condition (Dixon Gottschild, 2003, p. 231)

Here I would add artists who are willing to take on the weight of a painful historic and ghosted experience that Dunham asks Belafonte to embody. The following excerpt from an interview with Bridget Moore, a dancer who has been a member of Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* since 1999, provides further insight into the complexities and difficulties of the process of embodiment:

*It was last year. It must have been summer of last year. Around this time last year. Because we were here at NYU and working on Walking Out the Dark, the beginning part. And originally it was like eight people and it was so challenging so difficult for me because of the relationship I had with one of the dancers-- the relationship that Ron... created for me and for this other brother, Edward Franklin. My character is more like this woman who is trying to give all, I give you everything, I give you my soul, I'm giving you everything, why don't you want to be with me? Was the question. And his character was like, I have all these other things that I'm so much interested in, all these materialistic things that I can't concentrate on you because I need to do these things which happens in our life a lot. You're in relationships with people and you're just totally on two different levels, like I'm more giving and you're more about self and he was more about self and I was more about, I'm giving my heart to you, I'm trying to love you and that's painful to experience...There was this one thing that I couldn't do... There was this one gesture where my hand had to go down my face and I was just pouring my heart out to him and I couldn't do it. When [Ron] would do it, like I could see the emotion, I could feel what he was trying to get me to do, but I couldn't open up. I just couldn't open up and I was like dead inside but I understood it. I understood the gesture, and I understood what he wanting me to do but I couldn't reach inside to bring it out of me. And that's so hard because that's letting me know that there was something blocking me. There's something about me that I can't even express that to him. Oh that I'm*

*giving all of me to you. I never, I can say that now because Ron and I had a talk about it and I was like, I'm feel like I'm giving all that I can give you and I said and at that time I took it very personally, because, it was like, I don't know what to do. I'm doing all that I can and I just can't bring it out (Interview with Bridget Moore, 6/4/02).*

Moore goes on to narrate a personal, emotional journey of transformation, the details of which are beyond the scope of this study. However, as Belafonte had to find her way to the character, Moore had to find her way to the character. Moore had to get to the feeling of “giving her heart” to the other character and embody that giving as Brown choreographed it in a gesture (hand running down face). Finding the way to the characters is critical to getting to the soul (Dixon Gottschild, 2003) of the story. For the dancer, the process of embodiment is marked by uneasy connections that are not easily and smoothly arrived at. For Belafonte it is the uneasy connections with a character, white southern society, that is the antithesis of her personal mission. For Moore, it is a connection with a set of emotions that she could not bring out. Remember that she could not, at first, physically run her hand down her face. In both cases, the choreographers, applying their pedagogy of embodiment, press and provoke them to find a way to enter the story through connected, felt experience.

#### Critical Connections: Being Affected and Affecting the Audience

Art...is framed on the one hand by those who conceive of it and on the other by those who consume it. These relations are not the beginning or the end of art, but conditions of its production (Martin, 1990, p. 82)

The process of socializing the dancer to embody is an interactive and interdependent process. That is, it is in the give and take between the choreographer and

dancer that a story is embodied. Dunham and Brown rely on the dancers to spin out the meaning as they dance initially in rehearsal and later in the performance space. In the performance space, the interaction shifts from choreographer-dancer to dancer-audience, where the story is made vibrant and alive through the action of connecting with the audience where the collective body is performed and produced. As Belafonte tells us, when the dancers perform on stage, their aim is that the piece will be "*electrifying to the audiences*" (*Interview with Belafonte, 10/15/02*). For the piece to be "electrifying," dancer[s] cannot only feel the weight of experience, history and emotion for themselves. Moore's journey was personal, but its influence could not stop or end at her personal transformation. Through the rehearsal process and then in performance she has to allow herself to be affected by the movement of running her hand down her face, the feeling she had, and meaning she makes each time she performs the movement. Likewise, Belafonte had to allow herself to be affected by screaming "nigger" each and every time she did it. As Jackson (1989) argues,

Knowledge belongs to the world of our social existence... We must come to it through participation, as well as observation and not dismissed lived experience, the actual relationships that mediate our understanding of, and sustain us in, another culture, the oppression of illness and solitude, the frustration of a foreign language, the tedium of unpalatable food—as "inference" or "noise" to be filtered out in the process of creating... (p. 9).

Making meaning as a function of the pedagogy of embodiment is not only internal to the individual dancer. Dunham and Brown's pedagogy teaches that making meaning is a difficult process. It is also a continuous, active process, wherein each experience of movement, gesture or posture is transformed into sharable knowledge. Sometimes the

story is found through personal recollection. Sometimes, through the story, personal experience is found. Sometimes the dancer is required to find the story through the feeling the movement evokes. Somewhere between the story, and the dancers' felt experience of the story or what the story evokes and provokes, a story is danced.

### The Collective Body Remembers

Most of the time when I remember, it is others who spur me on; their memory comes to the aid of mine and mine relies on theirs... There is no point in seeking where they are preserved in my brain or in some nook of my mind to which I alone have access; for they are recalled externally, and the group of which I am a part at any time gives me the means to reconstruct them (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 38).

The collective body happens through the embodiment process begun by the dancers in anticipation of performing for a live audience. At the point of performance, the *encounter* is evoked within and across racial, cultural, class, and gender divides, with the hope that the viewing public will experience a sense of collective (re)membering (Apfelbaum, 2000; Billig, 1995; Roberts, 1998) of what is haunting, ghosted (Gordon, 1997), and forgotten. There are at least two encounters. One aim is to educate or (re)educate by (re)membering American history and experiences from a Black perspective and through black aesthetics and culture. The second aim is to provoke a larger viewing audience by educating them about the significant contributions of black peoples as historic, social and political actors. You will now view a four-minute film entitled *Collective Body and Collective Remembering*. I draw your attention to a set of necessary conditions for the performance of an encounter with collective (re)membering.

These conditions are critical to the pedagogy of embodiment as it shifts from choreographer –dancer to dancer-audience.

**Invitation.** Dancers invite the audience to witness and remember the unfolding of the embodied, in-motion story and to connect viscerally to the performance.

**Witness.** Remembering requires witnesses to the unfolding of the story.

**Working Out Meanings.** Together engaging in the labor of resistance and affirmation as the dancers give shape to the ghosts of the forgotten.

**Messengers.** Dancers model the active process of embodying the story so that it can be passed on and the remembering can continue.

**Remembering.** The critical connections made with forces, seen and unseen, the forgotten, the troubled past and present, the material and non-material and remembering the connection between self and a collective body.

**Repetition.** For the sake of emphasis and for the sake of remembering in the face of forgetting.

**Provocation.** Dancers provoke the audience to join in the labor of remembering

**Return.** Remembering is a cyclical rather than linear process. The hope is that a collective body will be produced again. Even if not in the same place, a collective body will return to begin to remember again.

In both Dunham and Brown's radical social change projects, they create a public space within which individuals are invited, even provoked, as a collective body, to remember their own experiences of injustice and/or the role they play in perpetuating injustices. Hope lies in a project such as *Southland* and *Walking Out the Dark* that invites, even provokes, the viewing audience to participate in the labor of critically engaging with forgotten histories and experiences that take the shape of restless ghosts waiting to be acknowledged and contended with. No matter what social, political, and economic resources are put to the service of obscuring and forgetting the experience of

dominated groups, those experiences, rather than disappearing, hover like restless ghosts of a troubled past. In this public space where the collective body has been produced, the ghosts of a troubled past have a chance to be encountered and contended with.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND FINAL THOUGHTS

When I have presented aspects of this study, across a variety of audiences, I've been asked some version of "what about the audience?" My response -- "this study is examining the educators and the theory and practices of educating toward critical consciousness--" has grown increasingly unsatisfying. The researcher in me also knew that a discussion about performance would be a slippery slope toward questions of audience. In this final chapter, I wish to address questions of audience in two ways. First, I invite you the reader and viewer of this work, to be the audience to a discussion of what this work means for psychology. More specifically, I review how this study has linked the provocative notions of **encounter** by Cross (1971) and **opening** by Greene (1995) and extended them into the realm of dance. Further, I press open how psychology might benefit from a thorough integration of bodies and the study of embodiment. Finally, in this section, I theorize one last piece of 'data'-- an image of an embodied encounter-- making the case for its place in empirical psychology.

To conclude, I discuss the implications of this work for future research, particularly as it relates to audience. In addition drawing on the findings of this study, I draw on my experience as Artistic Director of *Echoes of Brown: Spoken Word, Dance and Video Performance* and the Arts and Social Justice Institutes, leading up to the performance. *Echoes*, a multi-genre performance, in the tradition of Katherine Dunham and Dunham Technique, blended history, social science, and cross-generational experience of public education and social justice work

### On Encounters of A Provocative, Radical Kind

In the face of small triumphs and big continual obstacles, across a half-century, Miss Dunham has stayed with her radical project of creating inclusive spaces for teaching and learning. Consistently, albeit across a shorter span of time, Ronald K. Brown has boldly challenged the heavy weight of Whiteness in the name of integration as the standard culture norms and aesthetic and road map for living a life of meaning in a complex multi-cultural world. Making intellectual, embodied, and soul level connections to produce historical and cultural knowledges through encounters, these two choreographers designed encounters.

Cross (1971) developed the notion **encounter** to describe a significant and compelling personal or social event that could provoke critical consciousness, particularly black identity consciousness. Whether the content is positive or negative, an encounter is dramatic and has a "personal impact on the individual, and in a powerful way" (Cross, 1991, p. 200). An encounter has the feel of "being turned around by it" (Cross, 1991, p. 200). It "engenders a great range of emotions; guilt, anger, and general anxiety (Cross, 1991, p. 201). In this study, I borrow Cross's notion of encounter to describe dance performance, as conceived and presented by Dunham and Brown for a group or an audience. Dunham and Brown conceive of audience as "hosts" to a provocative encounter of affirmation and of resistance. Through dance they become witnesses to contemporary experiences of racial injustice. Furthermore, they see new representations of black life and culture as complex and human.

A Dunham or Brown encounter challenges the notion that critical consciousness will only benefit members of dominated groups. With all that has been written and theorized about critical consciousness, much of it has "focused on 'raising' disadvantaged group members' consciousness, or otherwise ridding the oppressed of their false consciousness" (Burns, 2004, p. 376). One of the consequences of focusing on the dominated and away from the dominating and privileged is that the burden of talking about, dreaming about, and acting upon critical insights is not viewed or experienced as a shared project. Dunham and Brown carry and act upon an intent to provoke critical consciousness in all, and particularly in those so privileged as to not notice, not incorporate black history into the full "American" experience. For Dunham and Brown, encounters create a dramatic and powerful occasion-- what Maxine Greene (1995) would call an **opening** for an audience to contend with, "to extend, and deepen what each of us thinks of when he or she speak of a community" (Greene, 1995, p. 161). As Patricia Williams (1998) reminds us, however, "creating community...involves th[e] most difficult work of negotiating real divisions, of considering boundaries before we go crashing through, and of pondering our differences before we can ever agree the terms of our sameness." (p. 6). Dunham and Brown's encounters are created thorough the retrieved black historic and cultural knowledges and magic of confiscation. This too is a critical move. In the context of unequal power relations, their encounters defy an erasure of Blackness, an "erasure of responsibility and accountability" (hooks, 1992, p. 14), and open the possibility for creating a sense of "we." Into this shared sense of "we" Dunham and Brown invite a diverse audience to contend with performance. This "we" moves

beyond the alienation that Dunham addressed in her radical project and beyond the erasure of Blackness, in the name of integration, that Brown addresses.

Dunham and Brown have dedicated their life projects to educating toward critical consciousness, not only for their own group, but for all. Having lived their own lives in the service of a project larger than self, their pedagogy and practice teach the difficult and uneasy process of connecting an embodied self to the realm of collective history, culture, pain, suffering, and triumphs in anticipation and the making of a collective body. For both Dunham and Brown, if there is to be a just world, the dominating, privileged group must take up its end of bearing the burdens of injustice and the responsibility for creating a world where troubled histories and responsibility and accountability are understood, indeed experienced, as shared. They provide a public model, through performance, for taking on and bearing the weight of injustice.

Bearing the weight of injustice is a messy, laborious, and uneasy feature of creating the "we" through performance. The performers' aims to connect to the audience through embodied stories, inviting them to join them to share the collective body and be moved to action, are also in service of a project larger than self. For the sake of social change, in each instance of performance, audiences are invited to take on the weight of lived experience (Greene, 1988). Whether or not it is their individual experience, all are invited, even provoked to be vulnerable, name their own experiences of injustice and/or the role they play in perpetuating (and redressing) injustices.

### On Bodies, Embodiment, and Encounter

Psychologist Jane Ussher (1997) argues that in many conceptions of the body “there is a perennial material discursive divide...to one camp it is a matter of physical flesh, to the other it is a matter of symbols and signs.” (p.1). Across the discipline of psychology, there is a problematic privileging of the mind. The manner in which the body is viewed in dance allows us to move to an understanding of body as corporal, as soul (Gottschild, 2003), as sentient (Martin, 1990), as disciplined (Dunham, 1963/1978) (Martin, 1990), as free (R. K. Brown, 2002), as symbolic, as individual, and as collective (Haug, 1987). Embodiment is a central theme in this study. It is central to the process by which Dunham and Brown retrieved and cultivated cultural and historical knowledges. Through the Dunham Technique, Dunham responds to the social problem of alienation. Through making his path as he journeys through his dancing body, Brown brings into consciousness his life work, and through dance, he responds to the problem of integration as assimilation. Through enacting their pedagogy of embodiment, both Dunham and Brown create and produce encounters.

For Dunham and Brown, the body is also a means through which consciousness is developed and taught. The collective body that Dunham and Brown create through performance is a diverse body, brought together to share a sense of “we” through collective remembering a set of experiences which counter the common stock history that is available in mainstream history books, curricula, and media. Even if the encounter is momentary, lasting only the duration of the performance, the power of remembering, the power of connection made between dancer and audience and the visceral experience of

the moment is meant to awaken the imagination of a diverse audience toward a sense of "we" (Greene, 1995).

An explication of what is clipped from the frame of the live performance, that which the audience does not see and that which gives the work its dynamism (Martin, 1990), the pedagogy of embodiment, is critical. Embodiment that occurs in anticipation of the performance translates thought into feeling and the weight of the story into shareable knowledge. Recall Julie Belafonte had to take on the deep and horrible history of a single, but powerful word, often the last utterance that a black person heard before she/he was lynched. The viewing audience does not witness all of Belafonte's sentient work to embody the story leading up to the performance. Nevertheless, during the performance, her practice of embodiment is unleashed in a single utterance of the word "nigger" and a gesture--head tilted up and as she wraps her hair around her neck. The viewers and the performers as a collective body have to contend with it and together make meaning via thought and sentience of the word and gesture that embody and bring the troubled past into the present. As I will illustrate in the next scene, sentience transforms the concept segregation into a felt experience of the burden of segregation.

In the final days before the *Echoes of Brown* performance, the choreographer Ronald K. Brown instructed the youth to respond to an utterance of the word "segregation" by dividing themselves into racial groupings, Whites on one side and Blacks and youth of color on the other side. We had spent ten-months having long discussions about the effects of segregation on Whites and on people of color. The adults in the room who had facilitated those conversations, myself included, were not prepared

for the level of distress and discomfort the instruction to embody segregation unleashed in the youth. The white youth were among the most uncomfortable with the act of embodying segregation. While we had many conversations about the history of segregation and its present trajectory in their schools and neighborhoods, they were being asked to go beyond personal narrative to collective narrative, to feeling the momentary weight of segregation. After an hour of discussion, the youth, who had been trained to embody stories within the pedagogy of embodiment, agreed to segregate if they could embody their discomfort with segregation and anger at the effects of segregation on all of them. When asked to embody segregation in the context of the performance, the white youth shifted from segregation as a set of ideas and experiences that had happened to others to a felt experience of segregation from the youth of color whom they had come to know and be/feel in community with over the course of ten-months. In performance, the white students, the Latino students, the Black students, the American born Palestinian student practiced the embodiment of segregation. In so doing, they connected with the audience in one of many moments of connection to create a collective body between themselves as performers and the audience as viewers. This was a critical move of meaning and action when the burden was shared and transformed into critical knowledge as it is felt and experienced, differently so, and embodied to serve a collective body. It was also a strategic, rather than a natural move of embodiment. I tell this story to illustrate what is possible: when outside the bounds of a concert stage, the weight of lived experience is not only contended with intellectually, but contended with through the senses and through the body.

### On Encounter as a Site of Collective Remembering

During the initial Arts and Social Justice Institute, a research to performance institute, I was talking to the young people about the pedagogical template for our work together in creating *Echoes*. I began with a story. In the 1940's Miss Katherine Dunham and her company were performing in Louisville, Kentucky. When she came out on stage, she was horrified when she realized that all the Blacks were sitting in the theater balcony. At the end of the performance, after the rousing applause ended, Miss Dunham graciously thanked the audience and told them that she would not be back until people that looked like her could sit with Whites. The next day, Amir, who had not told the youth that he was tracked into special education, shared his writing of *Classification* with the group. In part, *Classification* says,

*Soon after being in my 6 person class...I remember South Orange Maplewood school district classified me. It was December 2000. She said 'I was eligible for special education.' Possessing this label they gave me, I swallowed the stigma and felt the pain of being seen in a room with 6 people. Yeah it fell upon me and the pain was like stones raining down on me. From the day where school assemblies seemed segregated and I had to watch my girl Krystal from balconies...Away from the normal kids (Billups, 2004, p. 56)*

*Classification* was not only a response to the story of Dunham's experience. Listen to Amir link (the past) 1940's segregated balcony of Louisville to the (present) segregated balcony of South Orange Maplewood where he sits, with the rest of the "special ed kids," away from the rest of his class. Listen to Amir's textual description of his felt, embodied experience of being segregated from his schoolmates or embodied text (Markula & Denison, 2000), like "stones raining down on [him]."

I told the Dunham story to the youth performers that day because I wanted to create a moment of production (Eng & Kazanjian 2003) within an encounter site (Cross 1971). Amir, in his writing and performance of *Classification*, created additional moments of production; and audiences of students and educators listening to him have gone on to create yet others. As conceived by Eng & Kazanjian (2003), these moments of production bring the troubled past of segregation into the present so that all who were present and part of the collective must contend with it. Through contestation, we must all challenge, transform, reframe, call into question, and critically engage with our past. Over the course of ten-months, Amir together with eleven youth performers, diverse along lines of race, ethnicity, class, and learning opportunity, not only wrote but embodied their individual narratives of public education at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through a close study of the history of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, the findings of The Opportunity Gap study, which included data from 10,000 youth responses to a survey administered across the United States, the youth performers responded to surveys, focus groups and individual interviews (Fine et al., 2004). I witnessed Amir's awareness and knowledge of segregation deepen. He drew upon Miss Dunham's experience, the history and contemporary trajectory of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, and the experience of other youth who have been stigmatized, indeed, expected to carry the burden of the "special education" label. Amir, studied, wrote and danced the weight of segregation, from the concert stage to schools to the classroom and back to the concert stage. At some point over the course of ten-months, all the youth performers involved in the Institute shifted. From creating narratives based on

individual experience to creating narratives, they linked the individual to the collective, the present to the past, and disembodied ideas of segregation and its historic trajectories to embodying segregation.

Avery Gordon (1997) writes that "a ghost is not simply a dead or missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life" (p. 8). I've invoked Gordon's notion of ghosts as those aspects of a nation's troubled past and present that have been forgotten in mainstream historical and contemporary accounts but that nevertheless hover over the everyday, the ever shrinking public, waiting to be acknowledged. Dunham and Brown's dance performance is a public site where the ghosts of a troubled past and forgotten present are embodied to create a moment of production (Eng and Kazanjian, 2003) for a collective body to remember. The collective remembering that occurs in performance can be based on a fictionalized, dramatized rather than an accurate representation of the past. Recall that Dunham tells her audience that *Southland* was not based on an actual lynching. Rather, she used lynching to draw attention to the "beauty and the stain" on America. Brown's *Walking Out the Dark* was also not based on one historical event. Instead, he uses a biographical experience to draw attention to a collective experience of failed connections between people. Even his most historically based pieces, such as *Incidents* or *High Life*, can be described as moments of production for collective remembering, not because they accurately depict a historical moment.

Wertsch (2002) would consider these a "usable past" (p. 32). "The driving force behind public memory is not accurately represent[ative] of the past. Instead it has to do

with the present and future" (p. 33). That is, remembering is better understood as recollecting a past in the present that will be usable in the future. Theoretically, remembering has a reconstructive value (Bartlett, 1932/1967; James, 1890; Wertsch, 2002). Apfelbaum (1997) has persuasively argued when forgotten events are remembered publicly, in a group setting, they are capable of moving people to social justice action. How the action of recollecting moves through a diverse group is the subject of future study. The second and third point I wish to make about collective remembering has to do with the homogeneity and stability of the group that is remembering and extrapolating from individual memory processes to group processes of remembering.

Halbwachs and Bartlett presume that remembering occurs in a stable, homogeneous group, slowly over time. I argue that the content and dramatic embodiment of the content as well as the intent of encounter, which is to create a collective body, creates an occasion for remembering in a heterogeneous, fluid grouping. However, I do not presume that individual memory processes are the same as group memory processes. While I do provide data for a kind of embodied remembering that Brown engages in and calls "following the *gang-gang*" or Dunham's retrieving of a set of historical and cultural knowledges which she uses in creating her encounters, I suggest that the necessary conditions for collective remembering are social processes that are likely to occur in group settings. Thus, I do think it is important to understand the social processes of remembering for individuals in a collective setting.

I hope that this study and its findings provoke an opening within social psychology and educational research to the important role the body and embodiment play in (re)membering to the social imagination a “we” rather than an “them and us.” In effect, when Dunham and Brown are creating a collective body, they are creating a “we” or collective based on solidarity, through performance (Greene, forthcoming). It is a growing, evolving sense of “we” that Dunham and Brown are awakening in the audiences beginning long before performers and viewers are brought together to make a collective body and continuing long after the performance.

#### Looking Back to Look Forward: Implications of this Work on Methods and Future Research

##### On Methods

According to Avery Gordon (1997), “to study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it” (p. 7). Inspired by Social Psychologists Apfelbaum (1997), Billig (1995), and Cherry (1995), my work has been developing along the lines of defining and giving shape to forgotten experiences and histories of the marginalized. Most recently in the context of this study, my inquiry shifted to dancing bodies that give shape to the ghosts Gordon (1997) and absences (Fine, 2001). Alas, I have situated this psychological inquiry within dance, a marginalized art form. I have systematically searched for the ghosts of our troubled past and attempted to make visible what is consistently under threat of erasure in U.S. history and culture, black humanity and within psychology, the body. In undertaking this inquiry of a marginal subject, invisible

histories and mostly erased bodies, I found useful multiple methods, layered analysis, text mingling with movement, and an acknowledgment of visceral knowing. Based on the Listening Guide (L. Brown et al., 1988; Gilligan et al., 1990), I created a framework for analyzing dance for its social meaning. I hope that this framework is a generative one for psychological, qualitative research to study multi-dimensional modes and sites of meaning making.

The weighty historical and lived experiences that Dunham and Brown draw from to create, indeed embody, in dance performance “overflow the boundaries of any one concept, any one person or any one society” (Jackson, 1989, p. 2). During an encounter, a slice of troubled past is spun out and remembered in the present; a moment of production (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003) is created, and process is enacted and unfurled. These are at once moments of wholeness, forging links between individual and collective, past and present, remembering and forgetting, domination and resistance, and of openings for meaning making (Greene, 1995). Conceptually, individual and collective, past and present, domination and resistance, rather than single binaries can be understood as dialectically related (Jackson, 1989). When these shifting and fluid dialectics are danced, they “deny any sure steady thought by placing it always with the precarious and destabilizing fields of history, biography and time” (Jackson, 1989, p. 2). These moments of production (Eng & Kazanjian, 2003) at once mark and transcend time and place. They also present challenges to observational or other data collection procedures that privilege sight over the other human senses and that insist on stable, rather than fluid sites of study.

I collected data about what Dunham and Brown both had to say about teaching critical consciousness and their practices and acts of teaching critical consciousness. These two levels of data collection have important implications for understanding the process of meaning making about self and about the world. For instance, Miss Dunham considers, indeed calls herself, a humanist. However, in action, Miss Dunham's humanism does not appeal to the color blind, assimilationist tendencies of humanism. Acts of inclusion rather than acts of assimilation define her radical project. Rather than working toward black integration into a white supremacist, segregated America through assimilation, she insisted on declaring that black people were entitled to being a part of the human family. Significantly, Miss Dunham's self-definition of humanist was happening at a time when Whites did not consider Blacks a part of humanity. Her project aimed at and created multi-racial, inclusive spaces and fought against indeed she walked out from segregated spaces. Dunham Technique, which she developed in the context of racial segregation, is founded on the concept that one of the ways of decreasing negative psychological effects of segregation, alienation, is the understanding that the world is multi-racial and multicultural. The content of Dunham Technique is an integration of material from European ballet, African-American vernacular dance, and West African dance, via the Caribbean and Haiti. While, it is unlikely that Miss Dunham's project could be characterized as appealing to identity politics, it could be characterized and misunderstood as being color-blind and assimilationist. However, her project was neither. That is, by collecting spoken and action data and by examining both her words and

action, I came to a nuanced understanding of humanism as a strategic move of self-definition and how, through action and words, Miss Dunham "means" humanism.

### On Questions

How and what we teach in schools and outside traditional educative sites in terms of audience is related but not the same question as an inquiry of what the audience is learning. This study and the scenes from *Echoes* inspire an inquiry examining how a radical pedagogy of embodiment moves through an audience during and beyond the encounter. By shifting the unit of analysis to the audience, the dynamic relationship between performer and audience or teaching and learning could be further examined.

It has been shown in this study and argued elsewhere that education does not only go on in schools (Fine, Weis, Centrie, & Roberts, 2000). Indeed, this study and the *Echoes* project were undertaken outside of schools. However, a study that looks at small progressive schools and classrooms where art is integrated into the curriculum and where brave and courageous teachers are resisting the deadening teaching mandates of "No Child Left Behind" could create opportunities to learn more about engaging teaching and learning with mind and body. These questions could shape the next generation of research and theory making at the intersection of Social Psychology, Education, and the Arts.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

**African-Derived Movements, Postures and Gestures****WHOLE BODY**

angular (“straight line in the back through the neck and head, set over buoyant knees and stable feet. The implication of flexible potency at the hips and knees is striking”

(Thompson, 1979, p. 10)

hands on hips, elbows akimbo, knees slightly bent, legs ~hip width apart

bent knees with torso tilted slightly forward

planting and harvesting movements

sweeping curves

swaying body

Blacks mimicking Whites copying Blacks (as in cakewalk)

**HEAD TO WAIST**

head tilted upwards

head tilted downwards

crossed hands or wrists

clapping hands

hands and arms pointed towards the heavens and down towards the earth

hand(s) in fists

fingers spread widely apart

undulating spine

contraction and arch in torso (whip cracking on back)

torso articulation

shoulder articulation

shouts

**WAIST TO FEET**

barefeet

flat footed shuffle motion:

    small, quick restricted movements

slow, shuffling movements

pelvic contraction

swaying hips

one hip thrown to the side

**OTHER ELEMENTS**

call and response (between choreographer and dancers and dancers and music/musicians).

getting down (deeply inflexed, crouching position, virtuosic—honor, respect, salutation and devotion)

physical suppleness (has no bones, bent knees, oscillating hips)

cuts in dance (in time to rhythm)

dancing in circle, moving in a counterclockwise direction

-two dancers or solo improvised dance

repetition for emphasis and building intensity

attitude

-coolness

-smoothness

-balance (reaching for midpoint)

a group dancing in unison with rhythm

juxtaposing contrary elements, gestures, movements, poses

## Appendix B

### Interview Protocol

#### *Introduction*

I'm going to ask you some questions about you as a dancer and dance educator, your methods of teaching and how you convey meaning to different audiences such as dance students and performance viewing audiences. I'm also interested in knowing what dance has taught you and what you think it teaches others about life. Okay? Lets begin?

#### *Significance of Dance*

Tell me the story of how and why you became a dancer and a dance educator? When did you begin your dance training and who were your teachers? It has been said that dance can teach you about life. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not? What can dance teach a student about? (Probe: i.e., culture, history, social norms, attitudes) What can it teach a performance audience?

#### *Dance Pedagogy*

I'd like to hear about your method of instruction and what you want a dance student to learn?

I'd like to know the same information for viewing audiences. Do you feel that your method of instruction and the mode of communicating with dance students and viewing audiences is the same or different than the way(s) you were taught?

If I were to take your dance class, what should I expect for it to look like? What tools would you use to teach with?

How have methods and learning goals changed over time?

Do methods and learning goals change depend upon: (Probe: location, audience subjectivities, i.e. racial make-up, age).

#### *Critical Consciousness Content*

Do you have a teaching philosophy? If yes, what is it?

It is well-known that you use African and African-derived movements, gestures and postures as part of your dance vocabulary. Why?

I've compiled a list of African and African-derived movements, gestures and postures.

I'd like for you to study them and tell me if recognize any as ones that you use? What meaning do they convey to students and members of a viewing audience? Do you think

that the impact they might have is different if you dance them than if you watch them being danced? What is missing and should be added?

*Encounter*

Do you think dance can create change? What kind of change? (Probe: social change, individual change?)

What significance do you think dance which includes African derived movements has for audiences to learn about the world we live in? Do you think it teaches anything about relating to different people?

What opportunities do you create for students to reflect upon what they've learned? What opportunities do you create for performance audiences members to reflect upon what they've learned?

Do you think what is learned is learned differently if you dance rather than view or view rather than dance?

Do you think the lessons are different for dancers than for viewing audiences?

## Appendix C

Data Analysis Codes I

Pedagogy	Content	Encounter
<p>Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Philosophy</li> <li>• Technique</li> <li>• Content</li> <li>• life lessons</li> <li>• awareness</li> <li>• goal</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• philosophy</li> <li>• choreography</li> <li>• story</li> </ul> <p>Instructions Conveyed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written</li> <li>• oral</li> <li>• danced</li> <li>• metaphor</li> </ul>	<p>Resistance</p> <p>Struggle</p> <p>Dominance</p> <p>Connection</p> <p>Liberation</p> <p>Sexuality</p> <p>Sensuality</p> <p>Confidence</p> <p>Protection</p> <p>Burden</p> <p>Isolation</p> <p>Weightedness</p> <p>Weightlessness</p> <p>Joy</p> <p>Pain</p> <p>Humility</p> <p>Greatness</p> <p>Spirit</p> <p>Unity</p> <p>Collectivity</p> <p>Support</p>	<p>Historical remembering</p> <p>Black expressions</p> <p>Dancer Students</p> <p>Location</p> <p>Time period</p> <p>Viewing Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make up</li> <li>• conversations with</li> </ul>

## Appendix D

Revised Data Analysis Codes

Pedagogy	Content	Encounter
<p>Teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• philosophy</li> <li>• technique</li> <li>• awareness</li> <li>• goal</li> </ul> <p>Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• philosophy</li> <li>• choreography</li> <li>• story</li> </ul> <p>Instructions Conveyed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• written</li> <li>• oral</li> <li>• danced</li> <li>• metaphor</li> </ul>	<p>Resistance</p> <p>Struggle</p> <p>Dominance</p> <p>Connection</p> <p>Liberation</p> <p>Sensuality</p> <p>Confidence</p> <p>Protection</p> <p>Burden</p> <p>Isolation</p> <p>Weightedness</p> <p>Joy</p> <p>Pain</p> <p>Humility</p> <p>Collectivity</p> <p>Beauty</p> <p>Stain</p> <p>Costumes</p> <p>Set</p> <p>Dancers:</p> <p>Race/Ethnicity</p> <p>Phenotype</p> <p>Dance Form:</p> <p>-(see MPG)</p> <p>-traditional</p> <p>-contemporary</p> <p>-traditional/contemporary</p>	<p>Dunham/Brown talk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aim of piece</li> <li>• relationship between dancer and audience</li> </ul> <p>Historical remembering</p> <p>-past</p> <p>-present</p> <p>-past/present</p> <p>Black expressions</p> <p>Dancer Students</p> <p>Location</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• theatre</li> <li>• rehearsal</li> <li>• dance studio</li> </ul> <p>Viewing Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interactions</li> </ul>

## Appendix E

Themes

<b>Pedagogy</b> <b>P1.</b>	<b>Content</b> <b>C1.</b>	<b>Encounter</b> <b>E1.</b>
<p><i>Choreographer/Educator making a path as he goes, learning, feeling, making meaning</i></p> <p>Studying Roots</p> <p>Studying the Past</p> <p>Studying Ghosts</p>	<p><i>Making Uneasy Connections</i></p> <p>Familiar and Unfamiliar</p> <p>Manageable</p> <p>Contradicting what Dunham and Brown perceive the audience/world thinks of them and Black People</p>	<p><i>The Public Viewing of the Embodied Stories</i></p> <p>Past and Present Converge Individual to Collective</p>
<p><b>P2.</b></p> <p><i>Interactions in Performance/Teaching</i></p> <p><i>Connection through body, Emotion/visceral, ghosts of the forgotten, the denied</i></p> <p>Refusing Binaries</p> <p>Instructions conveyed Orally and through danced, embodying stories, using African-derived MPG and other forms</p>	<p><b>C2.</b></p> <p><i>Externalizing The Weightedness and Embodied Stories are particular and abstract, personal and political</i></p> <p>Compressed and Packed with Meanings</p>	<p><b>E2.</b></p> <p><i>Two Encounters of (Re)claimed and (Re)membered Stories based upon a shared sense of past/present</i></p> <p>Provoking questions: who are you? Who are we?</p>
<p><b>P3.</b></p> <p><i>Dancers take in/on stories, growing/expanding to meet/touch audience</i></p> <p>Insists that dancers Feel the Weightedness</p>		

## Appendix F

**Building A Theoretical Construct: Magic of Confiscating**

P1	<i>Choreographer/Educator making a path as he goes, learning, making meaning</i>
P2	<i>Interactions in Performance/Teaching, Connection through body</i>
P3	<i>emotion/visceral, ghosts of the forgotten, the denied</i>
C2	<i>Dancers take in/on stories, growing/expanding to meet/touch audience</i>
E1	<i>Externalizing The Weightedness and Embodied Stories</i>
E2	<i>The Public viewing of embodied stories</i>
	<i>Two Encounters of Recovered (Re)claimed and (Re)membered Stories based upon a Shared Sense of Past /Present</i>

## Appendix G

**Psychological and Socio-Cultural Functions of Haitian Dance**

In 1942, Dunham (Kaiso, pp. 203-204) reported her findings of her West Indies fieldwork and anthropological studies at a lecture demonstration. Miss Dunham delivered the lecture and her dance company demonstrated through movement what she had lectured. She described what she found. "...I wish I could give you an adequate definition of dance. The closest one that I can figure out is to think of the dance as "rhythmic motion singly or in a group, for any of the following purposes:

- a) Play – the Bushman of South Africa will often dance around a center pole for several hours of the day in one direction and then for several hours of the day in another direction, for no apparent reason other than it amuses them.
- b) The Releasing and Building of Emotional and Physical Tension – the sacred dances fall primarily in this category: for example funeral dances release the emotion of grief, and there are many religious dances whose chief function is to build the participants to the point of ecstasy. War dances serve to increase physical and emotion tension.
- c) Establishment of Social Cohesion or Solidarity – the carnival dances popular all over the West Indies serve as a good example of this.
- d) The Exhibition of Skill—this exhibition may be either in solo or group form, and may be either a demonstration of amateur spontaneity or of professional virtuosity.

Since form is the most important external feature of any dance. I can illustrate its possible variations by calling on members of the company to demonstrate. In Haiti, the natives have descriptive terms which I found very useful in differentiating one type of dance from another.

Grouilliere [Swarming, grinding, hip winding crowd dance. A Vaudon and adapted social dance characterized by lascivious pelvic movements] from island possessed.

Collo—any dance done close together, usually in crowds. Imagine the effect of a great mass of people dancing a dance grouilliere as at carnival.

Do-bas [a dance movement that is a part of Yanvalou, with the back low or down, parallel to the floor] from dances of Haiti glossary.

Zepaules [A ceremonial dance with accent on shoulder movement] from *Island Possessed* glossary.

By 1954, (Dunham, 1954, Kaiso, p. 211), her definition had grown to this: Dance is a rhythmic motion for one or more of a number of reasons: social cohesion, psychological or physiological catharsis, exhibitionism, autohypnosis, pleasure, ecstasy, sexual selection, play recreation, development of artistic values, stimulus to action, aggressive and non-aggressive, extension and affirmation of social patterns and others.”

## Appendix H

<b>Dance</b>	<b>Physical Characteristics</b>	<b>Feeling State or Quality</b>	<b>Storyline</b>
Yanvalou	Slow, undulating, continuous movements of the torso, that move through the entire spine.	Humility and assurance. Fluidity and completely relaxed state.	A religious dance honoring Damballa, the serpent diety of the Vaudon religion.
Zepales	Rapid downward movements isolated to shoulders. The rest of the body remains centered and still, except for the feet that move in the same rapid tempo as the shoulders.	Excitement and anticipation.	A religious dance honoring Legba, the gatekeeping diety of the other deities of Vaudon religion. Purification of the air in preparation of ritual or ceremony.
Congo Paillette	Bent knees and isolation of chest and hips.	Joyous and Flirtatious	A secular partner dance. Men and women maintaining eye contact, approaching each other with sexual intent.
Petro	Isolation of the upper torso and the feet in a fast tempo.	Urgency	A religious dance of resistance and violence.
Banda	Pelvic isolations	A common means of expressing emotional release for mourners.	A Funeral dance performed so that the spirit of the dead will be happy and depart feeling entertained.

## Appendix I

**Partial List of Ronald K. Brown/*EVIDENCE* Dance Works**

<b>Title of Work</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Storyline</b>
<i>Walking Out the Dark</i>	2002	“examines some of what impedes our individual and collective progress/work... I built the work as a danced conversation considering what contributes to the inability to reach a brother or sister in need...”
<i>High Life</i>	2000	“built as a series of images of migration, a discovery of decadence and a statement of self-determination. This dance looks at the movement, stories and music that describe the journey of the African American from the rural south to the north, suggesting shared aspirations with Africans moving from their villages to the city for a better life...”
<i>Water</i>	1999	“comprised of images of violence, rituals of initiation and healing. The work aims to heal a community from self-inflicted injuries in preparation from the shift required to properly focus their warrior nature...”
<i>Incidents</i>	1998	“inspired by several historical texts including” Linda Brent’s <i>Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl</i> .” The images in the work allude to residual manifestations and emotional responses that have helped to shape the character of women of African Descent...”
<i>Better Days</i>	1998	“...examine(s)” the ways in which some Gay men of African descent have tackled issues around AIDS, masculinity, faith and sustenance.”
<i>Upside Down</i>	1998	“...begins with a premonition of a community mourning...[followed by] a race that reflects the impetus that drives an individual towards their own destiny...Sangare’s <i>Kun Fe Ko</i> (The Uncertainty of Things), a song which says [in part that] the role of the community is to stand guard and guide. The remainder of <i>Upside Down</i> ...tells a story of chaos and corruption because of the abuse of power and the very strong desire for wealth.”
<i>Ebony Magazine</i>	1996	“begins with a parade of individuals pre-occupied with their own façade of beauty. The mantra in the score, “do you see what I see” is a challenge to question one’s own perceptions. The movement allows the dancers to shift from their self-consciousness, to a physicality that is more connected to the ground and ultimately to each other...”
<i>Lessons</i>	1996	“...challenges points of view, satirizing politically correct rhetoric while also reviewing text and lessons handed down orally, in families and throughout history...”

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