



# Towards a critical pedagogy of global citizenship: Breaking the silence as a trained dancer in post-apartheid South Africa

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**Abstract** This article reveals a reflective journey of a dancer through unpacking two performances experienced over the course of two years. It examines and navigates ways of decolonizing oppressive dominance and investigating the ramifications of indoctrination in dance. It depicts how a trained dancer evolved and became more conscious by breaking the “culture of silence” and changed in becoming a more critical reflective dancer in a post-apartheid South Africa. This project aligns itself with global citizenship education (GCE) as it re/imagines traditional forms of civic and citizenship education in a more critical and decolonial perspective. In writing this paper, we are reminded of “the myriad shifts of thinking, strategies and back-and-forth debating” with each other and can also see our “encounters as a dance” (Waghid in *Dancing with doctoral encounters: Democratic education in motion*, African Sun Media, 2015). In breaking the silence surrounding dance and its conservative elements, we question the technocratic practices and accepted norms in the performance arts and the dancing arena. How does a classical dancer redress the colonial past in a performance arts classroom? The significance of this paper lies in the argument that decolonization becomes an imperative within GCE if one is striving for social justice and intends to commit oneself to a more equitable society where crossing borders must be a seamless act.

**Keywords** Global citizenship education · Critical pedagogy · Culture of silence · Trained dancer · Decolonization · Post-apartheid South Africa

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This paper stems from a global citizenship education (GCE) master's research project that focused on the challenges and complexity of changing and decolonizing dance in the Global South. In South Africa there has been a gradual shift in the debate and discourse from the apartheid era, through to transformation, on to social justice and now to decolonization. In this paper, we intend to clarify our involvement and attempts to decolonize dance in contemporary South Africa. We do not claim to have the solutions to all the societal challenges faced but would like to bring some lived experience to the fore and share ideas in an attempt to enhance a pedagogy of dance for all in our pluralistic and diverse society. This paper aims to reveal a reflective journey of a dancer through unpacking the two performances experienced. It is a journey where every dance experience continued to evolve by delving into the dancer's own psychological interiors, reuniting the self with the world. Humanity needs to continually discover the "indisputable, indestructible connection" to our creative impulses (Cameron, 1997, p. 4). The main questions of this project were: (1) How do teacher-performers prepare dancers to reinvigorate critical pedagogy and GCE simultaneously? And (2) How do we break down the culture of silence emanating from our colonial past in our dance performance/s?

## Global citizenship education, critical pedagogy, and a culture of silence

Global education is the term used internationally to describe a form of education that (1) enables people to understand the links between their own lives and those of people throughout the world; (2) increases understanding of the economic, cultural, political, and environmental influences which shape our lives; (3) develops the skills, attitudes, and values which enable people to work together to bring about change and take control of their own lives; and (4) works towards achieving a more just and sustainable world in which power and resources are more equitably shared (Hicks, 2003).

Global citizenship education (GCE) aims to empower both educators and learners, and high on its agenda is the building of peace, tolerance, and inclusivity. Moreover, we think a GCE informed by critical pedagogy begins with the assumption that knowledge and power should always be subject to debate, held accountable, and critically engaged (Giroux & Bosio, 2021).

In this case we challenged and resisted the colonial heritage of dance that was offered and tried to reform the pedagogical practice that we had to experience as dancers from the Global South. Central to the very definition of critical pedagogy is a common concern for reforming universities and developing modes of pedagogical practice in which educators and students become critical agents actively questioning and negotiating the relationships between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change (Giroux & Bosio, 2021).

Given the ongoing attack on democracy, the social contract, and the welfare state, critical pedagogy can play an important role in reclaiming the public good and producing civic education, literacy, and GCE (Bosio, 2019; Torres & Bosio, 2020a, b).

Critical pedagogy at its essence is about the struggle over power, agency, authority, desire, and what it means to prepare people for learning how to govern rather than be governed. It is not a method per se but a theoretically informed set of assumptions about the centrality of education to politics and envisioning a world in which justice and economic equality become a thread informing and connecting a larger global universe.

A key development in postmodern/poststructuralist and feminist research has been the introduction of issues of silencing and voice into research on schools and schooling (McLaren, 2006; McNiff, 2006, 2007a). Globalization, a feature of the postmodern era, in its many manifestations, including a “culture of silence”, has presented challenges and opportunities for activists working for social change (Fullan, 2003, 2005). According to McLaren (1989, p. 171), the term culture signifies “the particular ways in which a social group lives out and makes sense of its ‘given’ circumstances and conditions of life”. Once a social group is curbed and prevented from expressing its dreams, desires, and that which makes sense to them, it could then be assumed that it is caught up in a “culture of silence”. This is also expounded in the works of Paulo Freire, as pointed out by McLaren (1989, p. 195) who states that Freire’s theories grow “out of a ‘culture of silence’ where people are victimized and submerged in ‘semi-intransitiveness’...[and] engaged in a struggle against oppressive and dehumanizing structures”. “There is a direct relationship between the dominant model of education and the ‘culture of silence’. That means we have the word inside us but do not have the right to utter it, because we follow the prescriptions of those who project their voices on us” (Vittoria, 2018, p. 43). “Why not develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for you that you are silenced?” (Spivak, 1990, p. 62)

## Addressing the culture of silence as a trained dancer

For years I have been silent about how my body was receiving dance. I was confused by the various opinions of what dance is supposed to look and feel like, what constitutes a “real” dancer and what personifies a “trained” body. Studies addressing issues of bodily autonomy and the external influence culture has on the body confirm how Western culture as the dominant hegemonic culture created people in oppressed groups to distrust their own sensory impulses and give up their bodily authority (Green, 2002). By producing docile bodies in dance classes there is less likelihood of ending up with political artists who question norms of ideology as well as practice (Green, 2002). There are many other valid dance genres that typify a “trained” body in dance, such as contemporary, African contemporary, hip-hop, and break dance, but it seems that the classical ballet dancer is still perceived as the supreme, professional dance physique.

“I can think of no other physical training method that produces, teaches, and instills quite the same refinement of shape, muscle control, stamina, and controlled flexibility, invisible to the audience; and unquestionably, a professional ballet dancer must have a streamlined shape” (Triegaardt, 2011, pp. 95–96). Does this viewpoint that ballet unquestionably requires a specific shape and a physical training regimen like “no other” not fly graphically in the face of anybody ever wanting to be considered for classical ballet? Triegaardt (2011) then painstakingly explains how and why ballet differs from other dance forms, and how dancing in the corps de ballet requires self-awareness and awareness of others; having special skills of knowing exactly where one is in relation to other dancers, specifically when performing the pas de deux; and developing special skills of tolerance and consideration of others, discipline, dedication, and physical and mental humility.

We fully agree that the acquisition of these all-important life skills fully endorses the concept of developing the whole dancer, but we argue that this viewpoint is not unique to ballet. It is generic to all dance forms. In fact, the dynamics of awareness, self-awareness, tolerance, and consideration of others, as well as discipline, dedication, and physical and

mental humility are life skills that all dancers, athletes, sportsmen, sportswomen, people in all other disciplines of movement, and the rest of humanity require to create an environment of physical, emotional, and social well-being. Triegaardt's (2011) argument lends itself to an interpretation that ballet is an "elitist" art form.

Pather (1991) contests and opposes the elitist status of ballet and addresses this highly contentious issue when he asks this pertinent question: "What is it that has been created as a blueprint for body type and body movement that is so exclusive, that is so difficult to attain that so few actually fit this description?" Xaba validates this point when maintaining that she is still regarded as a stereotype on European stages (Sichel, 2011).

The tension between professional dance and dance as development or community dance is noteworthy as it implies that in South Africa, as in many other places, professional is valued differently and more than community dance or development. When one considers the field of concert or theatre dance in South Africa, it is community dancers who are not considered artists and who are marginalized. "However, in South Africa, what is considered 'culturally marginal' or 'low art', and 'culturally central' or 'high art', has to a large extent been determined by South Africa's legacy of colonialism and apartheid" (Johnstone, 2012, pp. 147–148). Clearly community dancers are relegated into a culture of silence.

South African rapper, poet, composer, hip-hop dance teacher, and founder of Black Noise and Heal the Hood Project, talks of how the usage of terminology like "high art" exposes the status quo's resistance to change (Jansen, 2008). He proclaims that hip-hop is all about changing perception of what is considered normal by society and experimentation with the intent of creating what is your own. He believes that hip-hop has been deliberately marginalized, undervalued, and negatively portrayed by the media with the intent of reducing the perception of hip-hop to uncultured street dance. Jansen (personal communication, 2017) expresses how despite its initial low ranking as an art form in comparison to classical ballet, hip-hop has managed to permeate and threaten the stranglehold of colonial forces such as capitalism, globalization, and resistance to change. Unlike ballet, which developed its roots under the political manipulation of colonialism and then further flourished as a high art form under the divisive rule of apartheid, hip-hop developed its roots in Africa. Put differently, Jansen (2017) confronts the culture of silence in his profession.

## Locating the study on dance in a post-apartheid South Africa

Dance, like education, was an institution in the apartheid era. Now that we are addressing the ills and ramifications of GCE it should only be apt that we address colonial influences in the performing arts. In the process of decolonization, we also need to address what is accepted as normal in the performing arts arena.

Pather (2015, p. 1) notes "the student-led protest in 2015 was not about Rhodes or his fall" but "rather a symbolic physical representation of all that is wrong with our universities and the country". #RhodesMustFall highlighted the impact of imperialism and the human tragedy of colonization. #FeesMustFall was activism directed at socioeconomic inequality and redressing access for learners from poorer communities. Based on these two justifications, has dance progressed enough through social introspection, cultural transformation, and community inclusivity?

Indulging in this dance project was an opportunity to break the culture of silence and to decolonize dance as I came to know it under my years of dance. The location of the study was a dance studio at a poverty-stricken high school in Wynberg, in the Southern Suburbs area of Cape Town. The composition of the performer population included nine

young people who came from different areas but were mostly “untrained” performers and dancers. There were limitations that we anticipated in the study. These included, amongst others, that the study was small scale, within a single context, in one dance studio. The conclusions cannot be generalized to all dancers, but although conducted on a small scale, our study manages to script the decolonization of dance in South Africa.

## Methodology and resources

In the original master’s study, we used various resources to gather data, including literature reviews, participant observer reports, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, field notes, student diaries, and a reflective journal. The theory gathered from the literature, together with the performances and choreography in practice, forms the basis of this qualitative action research project. When we selected reading material, we consciously assigned ourselves reading about and around the issues of the topic. To guide our decisions and activities in practice, we reviewed and reflected on the work of some critical theorists. One of us served as a critical participant-observer and was involved in the activities, events, and workshops with the cast. Interviewing the cast was quite useful. Unlike a questionnaire, an interview is an engagement between two or more persons, allowing for more interpersonal interaction between interviewer and interviewee. The performers were actively engaged in both the drawing up and moderating of reports, which made it the ideal research tool for doing research “with” instead of research “on” participants. In this research, we had the cast collect initial responses from the performers. The questions were probing and opened to stimulate contrasting viewpoints. The use of field notes provided a record of evidence in our reflective journal. Finally, the performers provided interesting feedback and this was indeed useful for our reflective research journey as well as answering the first research question: how do teacher-performers prepare dancers to reinvigorate critical pedagogy and GCE simultaneously?

## Performance 1: *Amputation* (2018)

*Amputation* aimed to address the political, unethical, and historical damage done by colonialism and apartheid, and how as a “trained” performing artist in a post-apartheid South Africa I am still constantly experimenting, reworking, and attempting to conscientiously analyze the dance training that for a long time caused me great internal stress and actual physical discomfort. By this I mean that I was constantly instructed and incessantly harassed to do something about my low-arched feet and to tidy up my very big Afro (hair-style), and at one stage I was recommended to have X-rays taken to check if I had a hip disorder because of my poor turnout. I came to understand that ballet demanded perfection.

I was always aware of my instinctive reaction to move outside the confines of what I was being taught in my ballet dance classes. It is what I now term my organic body response. This movement, I believe, comes from my embryological relationship with dance, as my mother would often tell me how she danced throughout her pregnancy with me. I was however constantly suppressing my yearning to obey what I identified as my natural impulses in exchange for what I was being taught and trained to do in ballet. I started burying my soulfulness and kept resurfacing as an empty canvas to be filled in (as I understood at the time) with things someone else wanted me to do.

In my experiences at school, in my ballet classes, modern dance classes, contemporary dance classes, and during my undergraduate studies, I was often told that my Afro needed to be neater so that it would not be too much of a distraction. By neater I was often told that I could try putting it into a ponytail as long as the “fro” part would not be “too big”, and this may be the reason my neck tension in class increased. To create the perfect bun, I was forced to use large quantities of hair gel. My hair became a painful experience, and I used this very experience in my *Amputation* project of 2018.

I start my performance by playing a tune on the piano as the audience enters. The tune I play is reminiscent of my despondency with dance. I struggle to find the right key. I go back to the clothing rail where memories of being incessantly reprimanded during ballet classes come flooding back. A recording of voices of instruction cuts through the thick silence: “Hair in a bun Danny, don’t tense your neck Danny, don’t be fake Danny, where is the honesty in your work Danny?” I grab the pair of leg warmers dangling from the clothing rail and use it to tie my hair into a bun. At the same time, I hear the voices of my mother, father, sister, and little niece calling me. Their voices are encouraging and sweet, but gradually they collide with the harsh instructions and cynical questioning. This collision creates a cacophony of confusion and anxiety within me. I release my wild curly hair from the bun I struggled to perfect. In her article about “Hair Politics”, Erasmus (2000, pp. 389–392) states, “Hair carries the constant presence of ‘race’ ... ‘Race’ is always present even if only the detour on the way to new creations. It is always there because, whether we like it or not, we are still living in the shadow in the history of colonialism, slavery, and genocide, and their cultural and political aftermath”.

In an attempt to deconstruct the categories that have framed the “trained” body, my choreography originates from my personal relationship with dance. In this project, I performed a piece that took place in Room 1 of UCT’s Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies; I deliberately chose to perform in a small, square room with limited space, like that of a prison cell. The cold, bleak space resonated with the numerous occasions I felt isolated and left behind in my ballet technique. An old, battered piano in the corner resembled the way I felt—injured by repeated blows, pounding, censure, and criticism. Against the other wall a white rope hung from a clothing rail—the rope being symbolic of me hanging on to ballet despite my discomfort and confusion. My toxic relationship with ballet resonates with that of African dancer Mamela Nyamza’s love-hate relationship with ballet, and she challenges conventional notions of beauty and how, in reality, many women feel they fall short of these sought-after ideals (Collins, 2010). In her rendition of Michel Fokine’s renowned *The Dying Swan* (1905), Nyamza describes how this ballet “made her feel evermore like ‘a black swan’ in that she felt separated from the ideals of the white delicate Western ballerina” and that “she will never realistically fit that mould and knowing that affords her a feeling of autonomy that makes it possible to re-imagine these ballets” (Mahali, 2016, p. 9).

Erasmus (2000, p. 381) states, “Western racisms in their various mutations make claims about the body: about beauty and ugliness, and about sexuality. The politics and violence of this racism operate in and through the body. This legacy has meant that, in general, white bodies have been graced with beauty while Black bodies have been relegated to ugliness.” It is this stereotyping that Piccirillo (2011) believes has negatively influenced the “Black mind” as to how they view themselves and other Black people. She therefore feels that the problem, for her, as she says, is not how Westerners view me or us, it’s how Africans then view themselves, or how we look at ourselves, and how that becomes a standard of how we see Black beauty.

Once my hair is let down, I am faced with the painting, an image of a dancer's amputated leg. The dictionary definition of the word *amputation* is "the surgical removal of all or part of a limb or extremities such as an arm, leg, foot, hand, toe, or finger." Once the limb is amputated it can never truly be replaced again. Did colonization amputate the minds and hearts of a subjugated people?

Within my performance, once I removed the leotard from the nails, a painted leotard with the words "Save Yourself" was revealed. Beneath these words are hands begging for water under a closed tap with a balloon hanging from it. The concept behind this image is that the balloon is filling up with water, denying the thirsty soul from quenching their thirst. Has colonization left behind a nation of hungry, thirsty souls? Nudelman (2012, p. 1) answers this question as she states, "Despite the dismantling of apartheid and a new dispensation, many citizens do not experience basic freedoms such as housing, running water, electricity, health care or a decent education." Freire's questioning whether the hunger for food extended itself to a cultural hunger again strongly resonated with African people torn away from their pasts, propelled into a universe fashioned from outside to suppress their values and dumbfounded by a cultural invasion that marginalizes them (Freire, 2018). Therefore, the balloon in the painting, preventing the hands from receiving water, leads me to ask the following: In whose hands is the future of dance in South Africa?

I turn to the mirror and start my ballet routine by standing in *bras* position: both arms down and rounded with both hands just in front of the hips, fingers almost touching. I start performing a pliés exercise to the accompaniment of classical piano music. Suddenly, the music changes to a remixed version of classical piano music with vocals, symphonic sounds, and beats. The words "I keep on falling" from the R&B American singer-songwriter Alicia Keys in her song "Fallin'" resonates with how my body instinctively falls in love with certain rhythms. Keys's album *Remixed & Unplugged in A Minor* (2003) inspired me to revisit my early childhood vision of Michael Jackson, whose dancing, to this day, still floods my memory. I feel my body move effortlessly as I explore moving in different ways. I start to play and flow from distorted pliés to flexed feet and curve my spine into abstract and eclectic gyrations and turns. I am still lost in the music and the moment. I move impulsively towards the piano, and I play the tune that I initially struggled with. This time I find the right key, and I am one with that moment. My entire being celebrates as I hit the note. This achievement elevates my spirit, and I fearlessly further explore the movements that have been spontaneously rising from within me.

It is towards the end of this performance that we discussed and outlined that by finding your own voice and questioning your subjugation and oppression, and by acting and opposing it, you are on a path of being empowered, and it's definitely a decolonial moment.

## **Performance 2: *When Memories Break* (2019)**

*When Memories Break* set out to navigate ways of decolonizing oppressive dominance and investigating the ramifications of indoctrination in dance. Spivak (1990) asserts the importance of being able to learn from below: we want to open our minds to be haunted by the aboriginal. To echo Spivak's views, my intention with this second performance was to not "idealise a 'grand narrative' or fall into the trap of 'sentimentalizing the oppressive experiences of the subaltern'" (Zembylas, 2018, p. 116). If an important element of hearing subaltern oppression is to feel it viscerally and emotionally (Zembylas, 2018), then through the performance of *When Memories Break*, I intended for the cast and myself to achieve this: "the visceral enables our abilities to affectively register and comprehend time, space,

and place; it helps us make sense of the social, political, and economic world around us, individually and collectively” (Micieli-Voutsinas, 2013, p. 40).

Research for the performance *When Memories Break* started with a process of deconstructing a physical object that takes the form of a metal dome structure. The structure consisting of eight metal leaf-like pieces initially represents a traditional ballet tutu wrapped around a center dancer pirouetting like a traditional spinning ballerina found in a music box. This dancing ballerina in a music box represents a toy that for perhaps the last hundred years has been a universally popular gift to children, and ours maintained the typical spinning ballerina as a white dancer in a pink tutu. The heavy metal leaves also represented an oppressive force that made moving outside of it very challenging and obstructive, thereby curtailing the dancers’ freedom to explore the space spontaneously and effectively. Eight dancers and the pirouetting ballerina perform a dance journal of revelations that is ventilated through each performer’s personal journey of struggle and oppression. As the overall performance progresses, attention shifts to a child standing by the window on the outside of the Playroom venue. The nine performers on the inside desperately try to engage with the child by constantly running to a window and then frantically scaling the burglar bars. This section of the performance aims to problematize the long-term ramifications of early childhood trauma and deprivation. As psychoanalyst Alice Miller describes in her book *The Drama of Being a Child*, “every child has a legitimate need to be noticed, understood, taken seriously, and respected” (Miller, 1995, p. 31).

The use of the Playroom venue, which is situated at University of Cape Town, Hiddingh Campus, was suitable for the performance as it embraced all aspects for the story to unfold as a music box, a sacred space for individual expression, and a barrier between inside and outside. The venue also provided an intimate setting for the audience to be in close proximity to the performers and for the performers to engage with the audience.

The dome is positioned in the center of the Playroom. The dancers are inside the dome, and I am positioned in a spot at the center of the dome with my top half exposed. The dome represents my tutu. The dancers are “echo chambers” of my various memories of dance. The room is dark with a spotlight on me, a pirouetting ballerina.

Outside the Playroom is a child peering into the room through one of the windows. She is my past and still my present memories of how I perceived dance as a child. She is also reminiscent of my mother and all those who, during the apartheid era, lived on the outside waiting to come inside.

Music prompts the ballerina to start pirouetting, and this becomes the catalyst for the breaking of my memories. The ballerina in the musical toy box starts to turn. She is mimicking the famous music box where a fair-faced ballerina doll in a pink tutu with blonde hair in a perfect bun was the template for what a trained dancer looked like.

The dome segments start to move away from me as if tearing away my tutu to expose only one active ballet leg. My other leg is held up as if amputated. I ask again: did apartheid amputate the minds, limbs, and hearts of a disenfranchised people? The dancers interrogate their dome segments as they move into different spaces of the room. Here, the dancers and the ballerina start revealing their various relationships with dance through a variety of movements that are at first restrictive, repetitive, and docile. They then move around the room exploring through their own dance language the challenges, victories, conflict, revelations, pressure, euphoria, tension, and all that they have come to believe, experience, and understand about dance. At different moments in the piece, the dancers and the ballerina sporadically run to windows in desperate search of the little girl outside. At a specific moment in the piece, the ballerina comes face-to-face with the little girl looking through the misty window. The



ballerina, hounded by memories of having the “wrong” hair for a perfect ballet bun, the “wrong” hips for a perfect ballet turnout, and a neckline fraught with tension, when face-to-face with the little girl, is forced to confront her vulnerability. When the ballerina makes eye contact with the little girl, there is an intrinsic connection that invites the little girl on the outside to come inside the room. The entire cast experiences this reconnection individually in absolute silence as if acknowledging the sacredness of the reunion. Vittoria (2018, p. 40) notes that “our manner of experiencing words depends on how we experience silence. Silence can signify submission, abnegation, resignation, but also reflection, poetry, creativity, culture”. The little girl walks through the debris of the dome while the cast starts to recite a poem that questions the geographical, political, and physical land of humanity: Ask someone whose land is this where poetry fails to capture the grief of loss and love, of tied up tongues, speechless, stumbling around in dirt and dust amongst fallen cradles with bloodied identities... where conversations fail to explain how some live watching strangers build walls around a mountain stream that once quenched thirsty souls...swearing away what truth lies between two worlds of unrepentant greed and an executed life. Whose footprints would be found in the excavated soil? And whose stories would be found deeply preserved in mud and glory? How can we trust the wealthy storyteller that sells the seeds of grief stories to travelers whose desires then become the subtle disease of capturing land, in a land where the landless are forced to sing an empty song, drink from a river that no longer laughs, and forced to live in a place bankrupt of air, a place without oxygen? They then walk to the windows and place themselves alongside the burglar bars in a straight line. This line represents the conformity of docile bodies in dance classes. They stare out the window whilst Louis Daniel Armstrong’s song “What a Wonderful World” plays in the background.

The motivation for using the song “What a Wonderful World” came about after I watched a biography of Louis Armstrong. During the height of the Civil Rights Movement, he was performing in venues demarcated for “whites-only”, and he was the only African American member of an all-white band. Armstrong vehemently defended his stance because he felt that his music had the power to unite America. Black people in America boycotted his shows because he was seen to be a “sellout”. As Riccardi (2014) notes in his Louis Armstrong biography, Armstrong was on the outside of his own race as Black people refused to support his stance of playing in an all-white band for an all-white audience while claiming he was an activist for Civil Rights. In 1957, Armstrong made his first political public statement condemning the Little Rock Nine integration crisis as well as vigorously criticizing President Eisenhower as a man of “no guts”. Despite these comments, the Black community continued to boycott Armstrong. The lyrics of “What a Wonderful World” were written by two white composers, George David Weiss and Bob Thiele, and it’s sung by Armstrong.

I found the repetitive use of lyrics from “What a Wonderful World” hypnotic, with the power to seduce the listener into almost believing that we do live a wonderful world. However, it is when the song stops that we are back to facing reality. In *When Memories Break*, this song, for me, strongly resonates with the state of South Africa. For the people who have plenty, it is a wonderful world. For the marginalized, oppressed, and landless, it is a dream. This part of the project provided the practice to the theory. It depicted theory in action. This was the phase of the research when the voices of the cast were being heard and the silence was being broken.

## What have we learnt from this research?

Reflecting on the *Amputation* and *When Memories Break* project performances helped us to reenvision and reimagine the role of dance education and to focus on the outcomes of the research. We began to see ourselves as teacher-artists, and we began to see the performers we worked with as artist-teachers. Through this collaborative force we have come to understand the potential to create fertile soil for innovative and original conceptualizations in dance. Given the carnage apartheid, oppression, and victimization have left behind, with real-life negative consequences, we find it imperative to recreate a space that will generate optimism, healing, and a sense of security. We also discovered that the dancers reveled in their freedom and autonomy to create movement and that it catapulted them to new heights and achievement.

The projects aimed to address the political, unethical, and historical damage done by colonialism and apartheid, and as teacher-performers we need to constantly experiment, rework, and attempt to conscientiously analyze the dance training that for a long time caused much great internal stress and actual physical discomfort. In this way, we break down the culture of silence emanating from our colonial past in our dance performances.

Yes, the #FeesMustFall uprisings in 2015 invigorated our quest for highlighting social justice through dance. As part of our teaching practice, we collaborated with the cast of *When Memories Break* by encouraging them to rely on their own creative impulses and lived experiences, which were ultimately incorporated into their performances. We discovered that the connection with art, music, poetry, and social and political systems is dance literacy itself and that if we continued to trust our instincts, we could experience greater freedom by accepting that failure is paramount to success and that recovery is critical, especially in South Africa where so many have and still are being oppressed and marginalized.

In preparing dancers for performances in a post-apartheid South Africa, we need to give them the necessary agency. The tension between professional dance and dance as development or community dance is noteworthy. These projects revealed that given the opportunity there is a space for all types of dancers, and once we become all-inclusive our growth as a dance community in our Rainbow Nation and planet becomes limitless. When one considers the field of concert or theatre dance in South Africa, it is community dancers who are not considered “artists” and who are marginalized. It is as if their legs are amputated and they can’t breathe! This decolonial project contradicted that notion.

## Conclusion

This reflective journey of a dancer of the Global South has been revitalized and reinvigorated by critical pedagogy and GCE simultaneously. Throughout the journey she questions the conservative element of dance and engages with GCE critically as she attempts to break down the culture of silence emanating from a colonial past. Knowledge is a powerful tool for acting “in social movements and elsewhere to deepen democracy and to struggle for a fairer and healthier world” (Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 13). We are constantly aspiring to make a significant contribution to achieving a healthier and more just world, a wonderful world. Through our practice, our research will continue to strive towards questioning power relations and the elitism that still exists in dance so that all other dance forms are valued and not muted nor amputated. In the words of Louis Armstrong, “Seems to me it

ain't the world that's so bad but what we're doing to it, and all I'm saying is: see what a wonderful world it would be if only we'd give it a chance" (Riccardi, 2011, p. 253).

*When Memories Break* performed for the history and arts students at Westerford High School on September 14, 2019. We wrapped up our performance with the song "What a Wonderful World", which expresses hope to our South Africa and the world.

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