IMMIGRANT AND INDIGENOUS DANCE ARTISTS: EXPLORING THEIR DIVERSITY AND IMPORTANCE FOR DANCE EDUCATION

Since the 1970s, there have been increasingly large numbers of immigrant and indigenous dance artists teaching and performing all over the United States, but there has been minimal research regarding their methods, ideas, and survival. The authors developed a qualitative survey and conducted interviews with diverse individuals from the above communities. As many in the dance education and performance arena are currently interested in exploring varied dance heritage, this study should help them move in that direction with greater understanding. These dance artists are eager to share their dance forms and culture. They want to be accessible to and included in the broader community. They discussed their views of tradition, equity, social justice, contemporary dance, collaborations, funding, and outreach. It is hoped that this research encourages others to seek out these dance artists in the spirit of mutual learning and sharing.

IMMIGRANTS: LARGER NUMBERS; INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS: GREATER ACCEPTANCE

There are important highlights in understanding the large increase in immigrant populations here in the U.S. For a long time, immigration was very limited due to the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act. The Act established a national quota system, based on the numbers of nationalities living in the U.S. This meant almost no immigrants were coming from Asia, Africa, Latin America or the Middle East. This changed with passage of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, which abolished the quota system in favor of family ties with lawful permanent residents and U.S. citizens. Another component was the inclusion of labor market qualifications.

There was additional legislation in 1976, 1980, and 1990, that changed the landscape and added numbers. The acts passed in those years allowed for immigration determined by humanitarian relief; legalization for those undocumented; increased limits on family sponsored visas; a diversity visa lottery; new high skill categories; allowances for persecuted religious minorities from a range of countries.

From the 1960s until now, the United States has witnessed greater activism on the part of indigenous populations. It is worth highlighting two things that have been important in terms of greater acceptance of numerous aspects of indigenous life. In 1978 Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, granting tribes the right to conduct traditional ceremonies and rituals. In 2007, the U.N. Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was passed and it "delineates and defines the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples, including their ownership rights to cultural and ceremonial expression, identity, language, employment, health, education and other issues. The ownership extends to the protection of their intellectual and cultural property." [i]

RESEARCH SURVEY

The authors decided that a survey would best serve the needs of this study, and it would be addressed to dance artists from a wide array of styles, many of whom were known to the authors: teaching in home studios, commercial venues, schools, community centers, and universities; directing companies, working as independent artists; teaching mixed populations or the communities representing their own heritage. We decided to ask a range of questions: some that would provide specific data including date of birth, country or tribe of origin; date of arrival

in the United States; specifics as to teaching, performance, and outreach. Other questions focused on: collaborations; preservation of traditions; relationships to communities outside of their heritage; difficulties faced by these artists and their thoughts for the future.

The survey was on Google-docs, sent by email, and a deadline for return was established. The final survey had forty questions, was sent to thirty-two artists, and seventeen responded. The seventeen individuals who responded included a wide range of age, country of origin, heritage, arrival in the U.S., and goals. Countries of origin were: India, Africa, Cambodia, China, Egypt, Mexico, Thailand, Turkey, and Bolivia. There was one individual of indigenous Polynesian and Hawaiian heritage.

In spite of all the differences, there was strong unanimity in answer to the question: "What would you like to accomplish through your art?". It was clear that one of the most important things driving these dance artists was the desire to have others understand and appreciate their heritage, crossing the barriers of isolation and fear that occur when people are unknown to others. What follows is a sampling of answers to that question using first names of respondents.

"Be an artist who gives voice to the voiceless." (Adjetey). "Sharing my culture." (Mohamed). "Preservation and accessibility of the traditional arts." (Kamala). "Connect people, promote my culture, help youth and women gain confidence." (Demet). "I hope my art can deepen the inter-cultural understanding among people." (Ling). "Cultural harmony and intercultural appreciation." (Paromita). "Large access to community and bridging cross-cultural engagement with local organizations." (Gabriel). "Art for healing. Art for reconciliation."

(Suteera). “A better understanding of its cultural, historical and philosophical context, leading to a better understanding of the art form, the people, the culture. An understanding based on mutual respect, patience, and tolerance.” (Asha). “My ultimate goal is to establish a center for dance and movement where I can offer a comprehensive range of dance and movement-related services specific to the needs of individuals and community.” (Nalini).

A related question was asked: “What did you do to increase the wider community’s understanding of your art form.?” We had two answers that were representative and thorough. Asha wrote: “I kept the communication lines open with the wider community. I consistently invited members of the wider community to see our performances, to visit our school, our foundation, to see the work we do. All of this continuous effort resulted in being recognized with the North Carolina Heritage Award in 2018. It is the highest, Lifetime Achievement award given by the artists for their outstanding contribution to the cultural heritage of NC. The award was immediately followed by an invitation from the Governor’s office to serve on the North Carolina Arts council… Both these events…contributed significantly in making the wider community more aware of Bharata Natyam and the other Indian art forms. The recent emphasis on DEI… has given further impetus to support organizations like ours…”

Nalini answered:“ We extended our artistic reach to younger audiences in schools and universities, where we provided arts education by sharing the rich history and nuances of the art form. We also offer workshops to the general public, providing opportunities for them to experience and embody the movement of the art form. Our performances also underwent transformation by shifting away from traditional storytelling and instead emphasizing sensory experiences. We aimed to create an atmosphere where our audiences could immerse themselves

physically and emotionally, allowing them to feel rather than overthink. We also actively sought out alternative and unconventional venues to showcase our work, with the goal of bringing our art directly to the audience rather than expecting them to come to us. One such successful outcome was a series of performances at the Smithsonian Museum."

Shorter comments about outreach included: "Prepare handouts on the different dance styles." (Mohammed). "Collaborative programs" (Kamala). "Consistency and presenting quality and culturally sensitive work." (Paromita). "We do workshops, lecture presentations, and have partnerships with the Mexican Cultural Institute and the Kennedy Center's Culture Caucus." (Gabriel). "Educational lectures about the background of my dance form." (Ling). "Partnered with arts organizations and develop websites and social media." (Meki). "Participate in locally organized performances." (Tina). "Introduce them to dance and music that anyone can appreciate – something they may not have heard or seen before." (Suteera). "Create games and festivals for the community." (Adjetey). "Currently I am working the World Cultural Festival conducted by the Art of Living group." (Jayantee). "I would like to share the dances of my beloved country Bolivia." (Nelly).

An open question evoked these responses:" Please add any additional information about your current dance activities here." For Asha this was relevant to her personal development as "a student, a performer, a teacher, a choreographer, and now an administrator or more a steward of the arts…. Founded and developed an Arts nonprofit organization, called Leela Foundation, to promote the rich art forms of South Asia for the enrichment of the community, and for them to become an integral part of the cultural landscape of the U.S… At Leela School and Foundation,

we are deeply committed to unearth the transformative powers of dance and make it a compelling agent of change. To touch as many lives as possible and engage and inform our audiences. To this end, we collaborate with dance companies, visual artists, scholars, and students to unearth the power of dance."

Nalini wrote about the various phases of her dance life: student, independent solo artist, Master's degree in India, formation of the dance company Spilling Ink with co-founder and artistic director Vijay Palaparty. She wrote: "One of Spilling Ink's primary missions is to foster inclusivity by actively engaging in collaborations with artists in the community. Our collaborations have included both established and emerging artists specializing in different Indian dance forms, ballet dancers, visual artists, musicians form diverse genres, and theatre artists. We constantly explore innovative avenues to unite the artistic community. These collaborations also align with our overarching goal of delivering a comprehensive sensory experience to our audience." Bonavy echoes thoughts about outreach. "After years of performing in prominent venues.. our traditional dances and music are accepted. There is an audience for our form of artistry."

Several questions dealt with the issue of how these artists with traditional heritage worked with contemporary forms and influences. Many scholars and artists have written that these forms change over time, with new ideas connected to older ones. For some dancers, preserving what they learned as tradition is the primary goal. In the United States, many are now incorporating new ideas through collaborations. This is a fascinating arena, and there will be further discussion later in the article. We asked the following questions: "Are you working solely in your traditional dance technique?" and "Do you incorporate contemporary or other dance

forms?". There was a range of answers but a sense that many are actively exploring ideas discovered in the American dance world, either through collaborations or personal research. Some related answers were:" Yes, we will often use props in our work which are outside our traditional forms." (Paromita). "Collaborations with contemporary and other forms." (Kamala). "Yes, contemporary modern themes of queer, immigrant and social issues." (Gabriel). "Yes, I incorporate contemporary themes, collaborate with other cultural dancers and musicians." (Ling). "Native Polynesians develop new techniques of dance and music aspects as times change and teach to new students. Their signature work is what keeps it evolving and fresh." (Meki) "Sometimes will include Contemporary Egyptian styles." (Mohammed). "I have done Thai traditional and contemporary mixed dances, also have collaborated with Indian dances and Broadway dancers." (Suteera). "Yes, modern, ballet and Cuban." (Adjetey). "Yes, a little bit, because traditional dances and costumes in Turkey are changing too." (Demet). "Creative dances from India and folk styles." (Jayantee). Ana and Paco, responded that they have added "Argentine dance and Spanish folk dance" to their Flamenco collaborations. Fabio noted he "adapted and used… art forms."

Nalini's response indicated a multi-faceted approach. "While I do not directly incorporate contemporary or other dance forms into my performances, I consistently push the boundaries and challenge the constraints of the traditional art form by exploring different ways of moving that resonate with my body." Asha drew on her Master's degree in contemporary American dance and also her high school teaching post-master's in a North Carolina public high school. "While I do work solely in Bharata Natyam, I use my learning and exposure to Modern Dance as I create

choreographies and new works… Using the idiom of Bharata Natyam, create works that celebrate the richness of the dance tradition while questioning the inherent moral ambiguities of gender, race and color. The question that drives our thinking is: Can dance be at once the mode of transmission of culture, traditions and values of the past and at the same time be a vehicle to receive that knowledge and wisdom and adapt and apply it to create a future that is different is some ways and similar in others. Our vision is to create a space where artists, scholars and students come together, to explore these questions, issues and create works of extraordinary beauty and meaning."

We asked these two questions: "Have you worked on issues related to social justice?" and "Are there other contemporary issues that you have worked on in connection with your dance activity?". Asha wrote: "Yes, we have. We took the traditional story from the Indian epic Mahaharata that puts spotlight on a searing moment in Indian mythology – the disrobing of Queen Draupadi in the royal court after she was lost in a dishonorable game of dice by her five husbands. We connected this to the powerful MeToo Movement and presented it at the Heritage Awards to a standing ovation. Encased in all the traditional stories that provide content for Bharata Natyam are messages that are timeless and universal. Whether it is the arrogance of power "Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely" or Prejudice Bigotry and Hatred arising out of Man's total disregard for Planet Earth's Beauty and Bounty or the Futility of Unrestrained Anger – all these issues that were true then but are equally true now. They can be found in separate pieces or in one piece like the Dasavataram, the ten Incarnations of Krishna, a literary work written in 12 century India. It is a piece that gives us the scope to unearth layers of meaning we have continued to work on it over the years."

For Nalini the questions elicited a broad response. "… My work is centered around social justice and fostering peaceful communities. Through my doctoral dissertation I studied the impact of dance and movement on building positive intercultural relationships between children to reduce the ethnic bullying and violence particularly in the school environment where children spend most of their lives interacting with their peers. My primary goal is to make significant impact on the lives of individuals and communities and to create a more equitable society that is safe for everyone to exist in peacefully. Recognizing the importance of early intervention my research is based on the youth to raise an awareness on the impact of violence and ethnic bullying on immigrant and marginalized youth."

There were other comments about inclusion of social justice issues. "Yes, I joined the Mosaic Network of small arts organizations of color." This was a comment by Kamala who then added she has worked on issues related to "Native American recognition." Demet responded that her work on social justice is currently aimed at "children's causes" and "women's issues" Adjetey wrote: "Yes, one of my dance pieces named "Inter" spoke about discrimination and social justice in black communities. He added that he is also working on issues of "advocacy, women power, sickle cell." Suteera wrote: "My latest work on Cambodian music at Sandy Spring Museum highlighted music at a crossroad/border area of Thailand and Cambodia -highlighting similarities and differences between culture and how we can use arts for better understandings. The work attempts to show appreciation of people of different background, cultures, ethnicities…" Ling wrote that in terms of social justice she was working on issues of "immigrants, Anti-Asian Racism.'

EQUITY

At the end of the survey, we posted the following open question: “Please add your additional thoughts here”. Asha answered with a discussion of “equity”. She had previously made the distinction between “Diversity and Equity” in making a “level playing field all arts.” In answer to the question about additional thoughts she wrote as follows: “The focus needs to be on Equity. So that artists and art forms that have been marginalized become equitable players. To make this happen, people in power must be made aware that these artists and their art forms need an extra boost, an extra advantage, extra creativity to make them visible, to make their voices heard. So that the artistic landscape is a true reflection of the cultures that inhabit this country. This will in turn, make the current artistic landscape richer, more vibrant and dynamic.”

Dance is always a difficult career for young people getting started, as they have to find their way into a world where jobs are difficult to find, salaries are low, and often they have to create their own opportunities. They do have some pathways, for they either have degrees from colleges and universities, connections with dance studios, or with individuals in the field. For those who are immigrants and working in the area of culturally rooted dance, they often come to the United States and do not have connections with others in the field. This creates a situation where they want to pursue dance, but find they have to undergo new training in the field while simultaneously being educated for a career in something else: business, law, medicine, engineering or technology.

This means that if they try to start up a dance school or company, time off work is spent in studio or community center, or the basement of their home, teaching and rehearsing. On their own, they need to navigate the process of forming a non-profit or an LLC, in order to become eligible to apply for grants. For those coming from a different culture, it is often an

insurmountable task which they never are able to overcome. The intricacies of the funding process are daunting even to some who have grown up speaking English and living in this country. To those who have not had much formal instruction in English or background in American non-profits and institutions, these are a mystery. Often this forces them to work on the borders of the system, or eventually get assistance from students or relatives who can step in and complete their grant applications.

The question of creating a dance company, in order to fulfill ambitions of sharing their particular dance traditions with the community at large, is also challenging. Culturally rooted dance is often passed down through families. Meki, for example, learned Polynesian and Hawaiian dance traditions from his father and mother, who were professional performers. Meki inherited a band called Island Breeze, which performs at luaus and other engagements, and a dance troupe called Meki's Tamure Polynesian Arts Ensemble, from his parents, his father also bearing the name of Meki. Now the third generation, Meki junior and two daughters, all dance and play music with their parents. In this way, they are able to present professional shows in a variety of settings.

The problem of rehearsal space is another element that leads to problems of equity. Ballet and modern dance teachers have opportunities to teach in established studios, which often allow those teachers to use their studios for rehearsals free of charge. However, it is rare that commercial dance studios create opportunities for teachers from culturally rooted styles to offer instruction to their mainstream clients. Thus, these teachers need to rent space, using their own funds or student tuition payments to cover the costs that are quite high. This is a big obstacle for dancers at the beginning of their career. Three of the respondents in the survey (20%) cited difficulty in finding rehearsal space that they could afford.

In some cultures, especially in India, dance is a time-honored tradition, taught in the teacher's home. This practice stems from the gurukul tradition, in which students actually lived in the teacher's home. This replaced paying tuition, and they would be expected to help around the house or do farming chores while being trained in dance. In the U.S., many Indian teachers create a dance studio in the finished basement of their suburban home, and routinely conduct their classes from there. However, other culturally rooted artists do not have this luxury, not only because they do not have this traditional approach to their own culture, but also because they live in apartments or townhouses with very limited space. For them, to pay between $30-60 per hour as rental of studio space is prohibitive. In the survey, Nelly stated that she routinely teachers outdoors, in backyards and parking lots.

In the survey Nalini wrote: "Securing funding and performance opportunities, cultivating a dedicated audience, and gaining recognition within the mainstream were some challenges we faced. Also, an ongoing struggle persists whenever we engage with western dance organizations that often overlook the significance of providing appropriate spaces for makeup and dressing. They seem to consider restrooms are an adequate space without understanding the cultural implications and the intricate details involved in our makeup and costuming process."

The co-authors of this study have experienced lack of understanding by many presenters here in the U.S. regarding off-stage requirements of culturally rooted dancers. These performers are expected to appear in authentic traditional attire, and perform highly refined, centuries-old compositions, with elaborate props and deep spiritual content. However, they are not given a private dressing area, mirrors, green room, table or chair, costume rack. They are expected to carry elaborate silk and velvet costumes into public bathrooms. Here at any moment, they could be interrupted by members of the public using the toilet, washing their hands, or asking questions

about the pending presentation. This is in spite of the fact that many traditional artists are accustomed to meditating or praying as part of their preparations Many of these dancers purify the stage by lighting lamps or burning incense, or even installing the image of a deity on stage or in the green room. Because of these conditions, it has become common for these dancers to complete their entire preparations and don their costumes at home. They then drive themselves in full regalia to the performance location. This is very awkward, and makes them feel like second class inhabitants of the dance world. As Eurocentricity causes lack of equity, these artists are treated in ways that show greater respect for ballet, modern dance, opera, than for their culturally rooted forms and heritage.

THREE DANCE COMPANIES:

CAMBODIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE DANCE TROUPE; INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISE; BALLET HISPANICO

The survey focused on individuals, but research related to dance companies was also important. All three of these companies have extensive performance schedules, and are involved in a significant amount of teaching at all levels. It was important to understand how these companies developed; their philosophy about the role of tradition in their cultural treasures and how this related to bringing in collaborations and contemporary ideas. What were their perspectives on equity, funding, management? Since these companies find themselves performing for a wide range of audiences, it would be valuable to discuss the ways in which they share their culturally rooted forms and how they are received. Two of the companies were

developed by immigrants from very distinct cultural traditions, and the indigenous company was comprised of Native Americans from a variety of tribes.

CAMBODIAN AMERICAN HERITAGE DANCE TROUPE

We observed this company at rehearsal and performance, June 11 and 25, 2023. The company showed a strong attachment to preservation of tradition, identification with being a Cambodian immigrant in America, and keeping heritage alive, but also indicated that change was inevitable. They were reaching out to larger audiences with new choreographic ideas and they were allowing non-traditional performers to participate. The company's founder, Madame Tes, was a court dancer before the notorious Khmer Rouge seized power, and she and her husband escaped to the U.S. Bonavy, her niece aged fifty, is now primarily in charge. She and her mother were sponsored by her aunt and uncle as new immigrants after her father and three siblings had been killed.

The rehearsal on June 11 was held in a room at the community center in Arlington, Virginia and turned out to be an all-day event. When we entered the room, there were two Buddhist priests, the Cambodian ambassador to the United States, local volunteers, and an impressive orchestra of traditional Cambodian instruments. The day began with an elaborate Buddhist ceremony, where food was blessed as were the orchestra, dancers, and even the dance masks. It was clear this group was an important force in giving pride and identity to all of Cambodian heritage. However, they are also welcoming others to work with them, as two of the lead musicians are of American origin. There also students from African and other Asian

heritages. As the actual rehearsal began and progressed, we saw performers of various ages and levels of artistic and technical ability.

The performance on June 25 was at Kenmore Middle School in Arlington, Virginia, where rental is available for community events. We were told the performance was meant to be an outreach event, but there were many issues. There was no way to buy tickets in advance, and upon arrival, tickets were only available for cash. There were few non-Cambodians in the audience, and many were parents of the student performers who were of mixed levels. There were two people introducing the event: one spoke in Cambodian and the other in English. This made for a very long preamble, and unnecessary if the goal is to reach a wider audience. Traditional Cambodian dance often depicts stories from the Sanskrit Ramayana, portraying themes of good and evil. This performance featured a "peacock" dance, choreographed with some contemporary elements. Court dances were performed only by women, who played male and female roles, but now some men want to participate. The group has a transgender woman of Cambodian origin, and although they initially had a hard time accepting her and she would never play princess roles, she was cast in other roles. This is one example of a challenge facing these companies as they assimilate and try to remain relevant to current issues.

This group does not pay its performers, and Bonavy holds a full-time job and has her Master's in accounting. They are the recipients of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and this helps pay for productions. Bonavy does not take a salary, and she organizes many teaching and performing projects. She does not yet have full control of the company, but in her interview with us, indicated she would at some point and was anxious to institute changes, particularly in the area of technology. This would allow the company to have a working website and offer online payment services.

INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISE: A NATIVE AMERICAN COMPANY

Indigenous Enterprise is a Native American company based in Phoenix, Arizona. It grew out of the national powwow circuit, with dancers from different tribes and locations, and officially became a company in 2015. They performed at George Mason University in Virginia on April 29, 2023. One of the co-authors of this article attended their performance, and also the extended post-performance question/answer period. Kenneth Shirley, who founded the company, says his mission is based on the "Three P's – preservation, performance, and progression." He has said that he is "trying to bring indigenous representation to new heights" and "to show that Native Americans are still thriving and the culture is very much alive".[ii] The aim of the group is to look both backwards and forwards. Drawing from their heritage, they want to make it exciting and meaning for the twenty-first century. When Shirley appeared on the program "World of Dance", he described the group's style as "Native American with a little bit of hip-hop."[iii]

There is a long and sad history connected to banning Native Americans from practicing their culture and taking pride in their history. In 1883 the U.S. government passed the Religious Crimes Code, banning Native American communities from practicing their ceremonies and doing any of the dances. There were also forced assimilation programs. One that is getting significant notice today was the practice of removing children from their parents in the Native American communities, and forcing them to attend residential schools. These children were not allowed to speak their languages or practice any of the customs or rituals. The idea was that their Native American heritage made them bad Americans and inferior human beings.

Fancy Shawl Dance; Jingle Dance; Hoop Dance; Prairie Chicken Dance: all of these from various tribes and regions are on Indigenous Enterprise programs. The company performs these dances that many of them grew up learning from their elders, but they add their own ideas and movements. These were usually healing dances, and as Red Elk, one of the dancers said "we still feel the spirit."[iv] The question of a balance between traditional Native American arts and the infusion of modern elements caused considerable debate when the National Museum of the American Indian opened in 2004, in Washington, D.C. Non-native viewers wanted to see Indian artifacts of the past, whereas Native American activists wanted to promote indigenous art work as a living continuum. The Native American anthropologist Beatrice Medicine wrote: "Pairing traditional and contemporary implies they are opposites. If contemporary is new, then traditional must be old. One of the most persistent stereotypes of Native peoples is that we live in the past." She used the term "ethnographic present" to describe how tribes are "presented in literature as forever frozen in a pristine past that only exists in the imagination of anthropologists."[v]

This company does many school and community programs, and also has been very successful on various national and international stages. In the post-performance discussion, it was clear that the director and dancers feel they are educating and healing people with their programs. The dances they are doing and creating are important statements about their heritage. Their programs show that Native Americans are alive and well, bringing spirit and creativity to their lives and work. This is a company with professional dancers and management, successfully reaching large and varied audiences and making a living teaching and performing.

BALLET HISPANICO

The last research component of our article focused on Ballet Hispanico, founded in 1970 in New York. A Zoom interview with the current director, Eduardo Vilaro, was conducted on November 8, 2023, and discussed the history, goals, and challenges of the company. They are internationally acclaimed, presenting high quality original choreography drawing from the diverse Hispanic/Latino backgrounds of many countries and artists. Founded as a grassroots organization serving the needs of New York's economically and socially deprived Bronx neighborhood, Ballet Hispanico provided pride in identity and heritage. Ballet Hispanico is an important study in both maintaining traditions and going beyond. Originally founded as a culturally rooted group, it now transcends labels and limitations. In 2020 Ballet Hispanico was recognized by a consortium of funders led by the Ford Foundation naming them one of America's Cultural Treasures, and designated to receive $4.5 million over four years.

The founder of the company was Tina Ramirez (1929-2022), an immigrant of Mexican and Puerto Rican heritage, who had studied dance and performed professionally on Broadway and in touring companies. The catalytic event which led towards the founding of the company occurred in 1963, when Ramirez fulfilled a promise to her former teacher, Lola Bravo, to take over her studio in the Bronx. During our interview with Eduardo, he stressed the context and importance of Ramirez taking over this neighborhood studio. He spoke about the immigrants in the 1960s coming to New York from countries like Puerto Rica and Cuba and finding that no one valued their heritage and history, and they were thrust into situations where their identities were questioned, misunderstood, undervalued, and their families were faced with very difficult economic situations. He himself came as an immigrant child of six from Cuba in 1970, and remembers all too vividly his sense of not belonging and not valuing who he was. He spoke with great pride of the ways in which Ramirez began to develop the programs in her studio, and

finally in 1967 received federal funding for an anti-poverty program for younger students called "Operation High Hopes." Here in addition to teaching, she also arranged performances for her young students, and began reaching out to larger communities and attracting greater interest and attention.

In 1970 Ramirez formally established Ballet Hispanico, creating a company, a school, and educational programs. During her years as artistic director, she invited over fifty choreographers from many different backgrounds to develop work that addressed many aspects of Latin/Hispanic culture, and utilized a large range of techniques, including those based in ballet, modern, and post-modern dance. Eduardo Vilaro was the first in his family to attend college. In 1988, he was a senior dance major at Adelphi College on Long Island in New York when he was offered a position as a dancer with Ballet Hispanico. He stayed with the company through 1996, earned a Master's degree of interdisciplinary arts at Columbia College in Chicago, and then became founder and director of Luna Negra Dance Theater in Chicago. In 2009 he was asked to become the Director of Ballet Hispanico, only the second person to lead the company in its history. In 2015 he also was appointed the CEO, taking on full leadership and all the challenges.

Describing what he brings to his leadership of the company, Eduardo said, "It's all generational…Tina Ramirez came from the nightclub world…She was very attracted to the cis gender-ness of the Latin male and female…I came from post AIDS, post gay resistance…she came from a white Latin world and I come from an Afro-Latin world." He wants to share that intersection of diasporas and "Reclaim stories appropriated." He has been able to address Black Lives Matter and the Me Too movements through the work of diverse choreographers.

Eduardo was open about questions and challenges. As a choreographer himself, and as someone who feels strongly about the diverse cultural treasures in the extended Hispanic/Latin heritage, he has strong opinions. He feels that any new choreography can take many directions and forms, and the heritage will always be present in some way. He stated that one must, "Combat limits with exceptional work." He feels the company is very strong now, and has appeals to a diverse audience. This is also true of the new choreography: it speaks to many and in different ways. He acknowledged that there are those who do not fully agree with his views on reaching out in new directions, and feel that this will spoil the original focus of the company. He also noted controversy about the title of the company: Ballet Hispanico. There are those who feel that title is outmoded and does not fully reflect the issues surrounding terminology today. There are many discussions as to the appropriate words to describe the large range of heritage that is encompassed by the Spanish speaking world. For many the words Hispanic and Latinx are limiting and not clear, however, Eduardo embraces all existing terms. "The correctness comes from the dialogue", Eduardo stated. For Eduardo, it is important to honor the depth of history of the name. Ballet Hispanico is symbolic of how the company started and what it has accomplished.

CONCLUSION

As authors of this research study regarding a selected group of immigrant and indigenous teachers, artists, choreographers, we hope to stimulate further work in this important dance area. As three independent scholars with no external funding, the choice was to study a small group of the above population and work with individuals and groups who were familiar. As noted earlier, legislation dating from the 1965 and later created high immigration numbers and increased

activism for indigenous artists. It is interesting to note that a recent book on immigration, One Quarter of the Nation: Immigration and the Transformation of America, mentioned nothing about dance as part of its research. Chapter 5 of the book is titled,“ The Territory of Culture: Immigration, Popular Culture, and the Arts”. There are discussions of music and theatre, but none of dance. In communication with the author, sociologist Nancy Foner, she regretted this omission, ands felt it would be an important area for further writing and research.

Similarities and differences were found with the individuals and groups in the survey and those interviewed. They were mostly grassroots activists when they began: working within their communities, strengthening identity and heritage while clarifying their own objectives and goals. As their work progressed in terms of acceptance, many started reaching out to broader communities through teaching and performance. For those who did, it became clear that sharing “cultural treasures” was an important part of their mission. Uniformly, these artists felt welcomed by audiences for whom this was often very new, and discussed the joy of having people learn their culturally rooted heritage. This was not always easy, and we heard many stories about lack of equity, wherein treatment in terms of facilities, funding, were often not equal for them, in contrast to those working in the well-established areas of ballet, modern, and post-modern. Funding was and still is a problem for many, and we were told how difficult it was to learn about systems and protocols for getting money here in the United States, and not being part of what had always been the mainstream.

The pandemic was stressful for the arts in every conceivable way. Many small dance studios went out of business, yet others found a new life with virtual classes and performances. The lock down highlighted the need for artists to be technologically savvy for their future survival and success. There were groups in this study who were struggling because of their lack

of online interaction and others thriving because of their use of it, yet there are concerns for all about the developing use of AI and how that will impact intellectual property rights and copyright law. The use of images and choreography will be affected. The younger generations' dependence on technology is also influencing the way traditional dance forms are taught. As Eduardo Vilaro said regarding technology and young company members, "The new generation is here and they think very differently."

Some in our survey were devoted to passing on their heritage in ways they had learned and knew. This seemed to be a minority, and we found that more were interested in bringing in new ideas they were discovering. Their goal was not just to reach larger and newer audiences, but came from a belief that heritage never remains completely fixed, although basic components are always there. Ballet Hispanico and Indigenous Enterprise are part of this group, and the Cambodian company seems to be in a transitional phase.

This article aims to help teachers, choreographers, performers be more aware of the treasure trove of dance that is available to them in their communities. These art forms need to be valued as equal to Ballet and Modern dance. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, are essential for our society as are the rich possibilities afforded by learning about the way people dance and have danced all over the world, expressing themselves, their cultures, and their spiritualities.

ENDNOTES

[i] Https;//en.wikipidea.org. "Reclaiming the Rights of Indigenous Peoples'."
[ii]"Indigenous Enterprise Brings Powwow Dancing to the World Stage" by Mangula Vargehese, Adam Conte. May 12, 2022. Accessed on internet.
[iii]"With Spirit, a Troupe Educates and Heals: Indigenous Enterprise Mixes Native Traditions with Hip-hop." by Brian Seibert. *New York Times* 11/3/2021.
[iv] "With Spirit, a Troupe Educates and Heals: Indigenous Enterprise Mixes Native Traditions with Hip-hop." by Brian Seibert. *New York Times* 11/3/2021.
[v]Beatrice Medicine. *Learning to be an Anthropologist and Remaining 'Native': Selected Writings.* Champagne: University of Illinois Press, 2001. P. 92.