

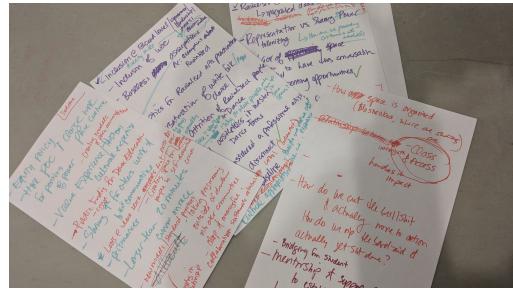
## Molly Johnson responds to RACE, facilitated by Rodney Diverlus



First up, this discussion was COMPLEX - beyond a summary listing of what we got into, I don't have the means with which to fully share it. The following is one distillation of my experience and what it sparked for me - I could offer many others.

**I'm a witness at the race table and as a white person talking about race, my cheeks are pretty fucking red as soon as I speak.** I don't want to fuck up, you don't want to fuck up - there are different measures of what that means at this table. Discomfort is necessary. Discomfort is something I have spent a lot of my life avoiding. **Discomfort is a thing some of us get to avoid and some of us are thrust into, and that becomes real apparent real fast.**

The speed dating vibes are almost useful in that there's no time to waste and we get to it as quickly as we can but it feels a little too emblematic of [my experience of] the dance community - and the white capitalist hetero-patriarchal society from which it takes its cues - AKA as a place where good intentions and conversation starters abound but very rarely result in meaningful change. The system is in full effect even in environments like this where the intention, I believe, is wholehearted.



One of the prompts Rodney gives us is to answer what is missing in the conversation on race in dance. I look around the room and think not so much about what topic is missing but about who is missing: 99% of the white men in the dance community are missing, dance artists over the age of 45 are missing, the power holders in the dance community are missing - the two previous categories and the educators, presenters, funders, and artists who are on operating are missing. **These people are not in the room. These people need to be in the room.** I take my sharpie marker and write this down on my little post it note. But then what? I write it here and maybe somebody reads it and feels called out but then gets over it and pays attention. Or...business as usual.

It's weird and informative and enlightening and troubling to see Rodney run the same drill for each session. All I can think about it is how many times he's had this conversation. He's civil and articulate and kind. I recognize these things and how I appreciate them and then recognize the scary mental space of appreciating racialized people conducting conversations about something that is actually pretty fucking abhorrent in a civil, articulate, kind way so that white people can feel okay inside the conversation about the thing they created and continue to perpetuate but mostly avoid discussing. None of that is exactly what it is but it's also not not that.

What is missing in the conversation on race in dance? White people are missing. Urgency on behalf of white people is missing. The point is very often missing. We are still getting confused between having enough and having privilege. **We are still crying meritocracy at the same time as knowing full well that meritocracies are a fallacy when each of us begins with very different resources, very different access points, and that this dance world is still being built for a certain kind of person to thrive.**

→ **Resources** "[White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)" by Peggy McIntosh, Jonathan Osler on [Moving from Actor to Ally to Accomplice](#)