



Dearest Barefoot Community,

As the director of Barefoot Dance Center, I want to acknowledge the terrible injustice exemplified by the recent murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and countless others. Barefoot Dance Center grieves over these tragic and indefensible murders that are deeply rooted in American racism, I see, hear, and stand with the Black Community.

These events, combined with the fact that black and brown people have suffered disproportionately from the current COVID crisis, illustrate that structural changes are necessary to dismantle the systemic racism that we may trace back to the very founding of this country. As a center for dance education, we acknowledge that dance history itself has erased the stories of many Black artists, while white artists have appropriated and taken credit for styles that are rooted in Black culture and stem from the African Diaspora.

I love and support all of our Barefoot students and faculty members and particularly stand in solidarity with those who identify as Black or non-Black People of Color. While the physical separation we are experiencing during the pandemic makes coming together and supporting one another more challenging, I am impressed by the degree to which students find ways to share their concerns, questions, and insights as they process, make sense of and even seek to change this confusing and unjust world as dance artists. I am proud of our students who are finding creative ways to improve society and amplify Black voices at this critical time, and for using the virtual dance studio as a way to use dance as a tool for social change.

The faculty and I hope that our mission to explore movement through creativity, somatics, and identity continues to help our students gain a better understanding of who they are, as well as a strong sense of empathy and compassion toward themselves and others, and use their creative and critical thinking skills to build a more just world.

With solidarity and love,

Jessie Levey (she/her)

Director, Barefoot Dance Center