

## Notes from October 5 2020 General Membership Meeting

Present: Rebecca, Michelle, Emily, Kristin, Cat, Elizabeth, Angela, Antuan, Dalton, Lily, Ann, Michael, Alex, Megan, Evvie, Nick, Sarah

Notetaker: Megan

We began with an acknowledgement that we had discussed DANC's ongoing inaccessibility during our Thursday steering committee meeting. If attendees' access needs are not met, we will postpone this meeting and hold it at a time and in a way which is accessible.

Alex began with our introductions, in the following format:

*name, visual description (if camera on), pronouns, artistic identity (plus maybe your job w/DANC), city (location & land acknowledgement [Alex: Munsee Lenape & Canarsie Lands now known as Brooklyn]), Are your access needs met? why you're here/your hopes and dreams about dancers unionizing/organizing*

Alex shared DANC's mission and tenets, noting that they are open to revision, clarification, and expansion. He proposed that we begin by discussing DANC's history, to understand where this group came from.

Evvie introduced herself and shared a history of DANC: she had written an article for Dance Magazine about the question of whether or not freelance dancers need a union, reached out to AGMA for a quote, and was put in touch with Griff Braun; Griff then connected Evvie with David; David and Evvie then met Alex during a series of freelance dancer focus groups. DANC had meetings for about a year before Antuan and Megan joined (they both began attending meetings at the end of 2019 and were asked to join the steering committee in February of 2020). Cat was introduced to DANC through Antuan, who reached out to her and the company manager of the company she works with an invitation to come speak to the group about benefits. She continued to attend meetings regularly and after some conversation, particularly about the time commitment required of SC members, joined.

Alex invited anyone who was on a focus group to share about how they got into that work.

Evvie further explained her perspective on how folks joined the steering committee.

Michael shared that he was part of the Working Conditions focus group. He first heard of DANC when the first few members of the Steering Committee had a presentation at Steps on Broadway, and watched a Facebook Live event. He didn't have time then to attend meetings but a lot of time has opened up for him in the past few months. He joined the Working Conditions focus group in the middle of the process but was welcomed.

Dalton shared that he had joined DANC in the wake of seeing issues with Northwest Dance Project and LAUNCH. He jumped into the negotiating focus group, which has since put together one "messy" draft on negotiation; he's looking forward to continuing that process. He and Réka also put together a Miro ideation board for DANC:



<https://miro.com/welcomeonboard/VbhUkbQ5hN5Q02Rru6OVnjng60PTIzSqRYwL7FiwI5EjWV0S5j1trJbQHsx aVmrh>

Angela started attending in April of this year and joined the Benefits and Equity focus groups. She has continued to work in that direction, particularly with regards to supporting international dancers working in the United States.

Alex moved us into a presentation by Joy-Marie and Michael about outreach.

Michael shared his screen, to this presentation:

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1SuYeB9a86MPoKZsLexLnBxv--uJGDPqrQsYqa09oS0Y/edit#slide=id.gcb9a0b074\\_1\\_0](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1SuYeB9a86MPoKZsLexLnBxv--uJGDPqrQsYqa09oS0Y/edit#slide=id.gcb9a0b074_1_0)

Notes: a month-long campaign to boost membership and visibility.

- Grow membership — not just numbers but in diversity.
- Infographics and templates for social media posts and text messages.
- Seeking members who can contribute to the labor of creating templates and doing outreach — to ten people each.

We moved into the discussion portion. April began the conversation.

April shared that the reason she's primarily here is that DANC's mission and tenets are up to great things, but that she's experience cognitive dissonance between them and what actually happens. That isn't unusual around disability, but when you set out to create safe, equitable, and sustainable working conditions, disabled dancers are included in that; and they're not included in this space. Should there be a committee formed, or another group? Otherwise, the DANC tenets resonate as false. There's other things happening as well: the second tenet talks about wages, but folks who do DANC work go unpaid. The "no position on issues" is also problematic. If we don't have an anti-racist stance and anti-ableist stance, people won't come. You can't steam forward if your work doesn't represent what your tenets say. She didn't feel on board to join a recruitment effort because it's a lot of labor she wouldn't want to put on any other disabled individual.. She's balancing her whiteness here as well — trying to avoid being a savior. These are her concerns. There's a pattern of white people starting social justice organizations that do not take an anti-racist, anti-ableist stance.

Dalton asked: do we solidify or further define our structure and our systems before the membership drive, or do we wait to resystematize/restructure until we get more people in the room?

Cat shared that she thinks there needs to be a balance. We really need to genuinely weigh what it looks like for the people we're inviting in *while* we're figuring things out. She understands the logic behind that and wanting to grow numbers, but is immediately concerned for what this space looks like and what it will be for anyone we're not making our meetings accessible to or representative of. There needs to be clarity in our tenets. What words are we using, what language are we using, especially as we discuss labor, funding, who we're talking about, etc. DANC is a great name, but not all dance artists feel welcome in the first place. Our LOA is centered around dancers, and performing dancers. A lot needs to be fleshed out and clarified.



Evvie suggested that we start an accessibility committee and a fundraising committee. She has heard that people feel that there are issues with the tenets, and offered to start a Google doc for folks to share thoughts.

Emily connected with what April said, about the ambiguity of saying “we don’t have positions except the positions of our members.” No person told her about DANC; she went off the website. It wasn’t clear to her exactly what the position was, on any kind of thing. But she was interested in educating herself on dancer advocacy. She didn’t sign the solidarity statement for a few meetings. The ambiguity meant that it took her some time to understand whether or not this was a well-intentioned group of people. What if it said: “We stand for these five things, *and* we take input from our members very seriously.” It’s hard to make a vague marketing ask.

Rebecca noticed that the numbers in our meetings have been way down. It’s saying something to all these issues that we’re talking about, that we’re losing people and losing interest. As people go back to work, should we reconsider the time? What about the work that happens outside this meeting? We only have 20 people at this meeting and used to have many more.

Megan (me) shared that she’s wondering about the legal structures we might need to adopt in order to be eligible to seek funding.

Evvie reiterated that anyone who wants to join a committee to do some of this work can put their information in the chat.

April asked for clarification on what the steering committee does.

Alex, Evvie, and Antuan shared more about what the steering committee does collectively. Antuan shared that by design, steering committee *does* have to make a lot of decisions for the group. There are little pockets of decisions that do have to be made.

Emily asked: what about a small group to redraft tenets?

April shared in the chat and verbalized: do the tenets need to be redrafted, or do we need to get in alignment with them?

Emily feels a little bit of both. She will be point person.

Cat wants to speak to the privilege of people in this room. She’s wondering if we should ask: are you all interested / give consent to sharing all your individual emails out to folks who aren’t present?

Evvie shared that she can hand over newsletter writing to different groups.

We left this meeting with a few new committees on tap:

### **Accessibility**

Lily Binns

### **Fundraising**



Megan Williams

Lily Binns

April Biggs

**Outreach**

Joy-Marie

Michael

Lily Binns

**Values - Tenets - Mission**

Emily Hansel

Ann Chiaverini

**Structure/Legal/Stuff**

Megan

Rebecca

Megan

Juma (will share knowledge over email)