The final two articles of the collection deal with the aesthetic basis of jazz dance; each author describes his or her own personal vision and practice of the form. Billy Siegenfeld writes about an aesthetic of explosive energy shared by dancers as disparate as Gregory Hines, Jack Cole, and Fred Astaire, and defines a style he calls American Rhythm Dancing. Jill Flanders Crosby distills decades of research and discovery about the links between African and jazz dance in her article, including insights from her travels to Africa and Cuba.

Readers are invited to listen to the voices of today's jazz dance practitioners and scholars as they share their approaches, techniques, viewpoints, and concerns. Jazz dance in the twenty-first century is a driving force of artistic expression that is certain to continue evolving in dynamic and varied directions.

Discussions about the history of the United States eventually wind their way to the subject of racial biases. Comparably, conversations on jazz dance, either its aesthetics or its history, slide head first into the world of racism. To discuss jazz dance and not acknowledge the issue of race greatly diminishes the truths that exist in the art form. Racism, with both its oppressive and facilitative qualities, is perpetually woven into the lineage of jazz dance. Marshall and Jean Stearns and Brenda Dixon Gottschild have demonstrated this in their extensive writings on American vernacular dance. Their scholarship eloquently reveals, directly and indirectly, the inherent racism in jazz dance. For example, the Stearns' comprehensive book, *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance*, guides the reader through the intricate shifts in American popular dance from the late 1800s to the mid-twentieth century. Personal anecdotes and accounts of history drive these chapters, and while the writing rests comfortably within the confines of storytelling, the inference of racism is apparent.

Gottschild is more direct. She challenges the reader with her continued identification of the failed acknowledgment of the African-American presence in materials that document dance. In her review of the documentary film *Free to Dance*, Gottschild speaks to the manner in which it, or shall we say the film producers, perpetuate racial preference through acts of omission and the adopting of a mode of thinking that is hierarchical and Eurocentric. The PBS documentary, in three sections, focuses on the contributions of African-Americans to dance in America. To illustrate her point, Gottschild notes the omitted acknowledgment of dance figures who appear...
The Term Jazz Dance

What does jazz dance look like? Present this question, even to those who have studied the dance form extensively, and the responses received are likely to be varied. A reply may come in the form of a demonstration that encapsulates the vast world of jazz dance into a few short iconic moves. There is the quintessential outstretched hand with rigid fingers that may or may not shake. This is likely to be followed by some sort of hip or rib cock resembling an isolation and an undeniable head pop. Another response is the detailing of some movement qualities and a recitation of vocabulary that is synonymous with jazz dance. Isolation, contraction, syncopation, rhythm, strong, powerful, percussive, explosive, low carriage, sultry, and seductive are but a few of the terms gathered to express the look of jazz dance. Yet another response, and perhaps the most telling, is a reply that could be coined the “hmmm factor.” It is that moment when there is a lull in conversation as individuals stop to collate the multitude of information they have stored in an effort to formulate a definition that encapsulates everything roaming their minds.

The term jazz dance has relinquished its specificity to assume a meaning that is generic. One could even argue that in present society, with the immense popularity of hip-hop, jazz dance represents some sort of nostalgic way of moving. The previously mentioned responses, and perhaps many others, are befitting. Jazz dance is all of these responses singularly and all of them collectively. It is eclectic and very much the offspring of American culture. This enigmatic definition of jazz dance has every bit to do with its tumultuous peregrination over the past century, and as the exploration of society’s improprieties enters the discussion, the term jazz dance will be used in its broader sense.

Racism as a Filter

Identifying the effects of racism on the evolution of jazz dance, the way it has developed as a social icon and as a technique, is not difficult. One need only dissect the mechanics of racism at any moment during the past century to uncover the intertwined relations of jazz dance and racism. The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s ushered in a wave of new white interest in jazz dance. Socialites from high society (white society) could be found “slumming” in the jazz clubs and speakeasies uptown in Harlem. They wanted to experience the phenomenon of jazz. Considered low class by the elite, jazz dance was marginalized as a less sophisticated dance form created by people of lesser
intelligence. Still, the music and dance were hot, and many white Americans were interested. White-only establishments featuring black entertainers performing jazz dance and music became a lucrative business, and with the introduction of talkies (films with sound), the movie musical began to soar and jazz dance was a necessary staple in filmmaking. The omission of the black presence in both of these venues is an example of the systematic and overt racism historically present in America.

Black and white people were not permitted to convene together in white-only establishments, and it was considered equally inappropriate for the races to mingle in black-owned establishments. The silver screen was not encouraging of the black image, either. Black performers were not permitted to star opposite white performers, and when the two races did appear together on film, the black artist was subjugated to a subservient role, such as a domestic or shoe shine man. The alternative option for black performers was the appearance in all-black film productions, which were produced and distributed by white-owned major production studios. Jazz was a commodity, and the goal was to make money, not to preserve jazz dance in its original form. Even if preservation were the intended goal, the racial intolerance that plagued the United States during the jazz era made it virtually impossible for the greater masses to be exposed to jazz dance as seen on the black physique.

Exercising power through a system of racism forged a praxis of preservation through appropriation and marred representation. The visual composition of jazz had been forever altered. What was disproportionately translated forward was the white notion of jazz dance. It was a skewed version of information passed through a filter of limited perspective. The first few decades of the twentieth century cemented jazz dance as an icon in cultural history. Simultaneously, the movement vocabulary, aesthetic sensibility, and cultural understanding of the black race were gradually and systematically being diluted, recast, or expunged. The practices continued as swing music and dance rolled through the big band era, at its height in the mid-1930s, and the popular boogie-woogie sound of the early 1940s.

Rock 'n' roll hit America in the 1950s, revolutionizing the way youths danced. The Lindy and Swing-out were set aside to make way for the Jitterbug and the Twist—done to the electrified guitar and rhythm and blues. The Motown sound soon followed, and by the end of the 1960s, the United States had witnessed a generation ignited by the amplified soulful music and the dance that accompanied it. While popular music was shifting, so was family entertainment. The television was becoming a household fixture and introducing an era of variety and music programs. Dance was a key ingredient with shows such as American Bandstand and Hullabaloo, featuring dance to popular songs. In a carryover of ideology about race mingling on screen, it was common practice to maintain segregated programming. When integration was exercised, it happened on such a diminutive level that the predominance of Eurocentric movement virtually rendered any existence of the African movement obsolete. A look at the 1960s British television series Ready Steady Go! underscores this point.

On this show, British songbird Dusty Springfield, who is Caucasian, hosts a Motown revue with several of the great acts of the decade: the Supremes, the Temptations, Martha and the Vandellas, and others. Throughout the show, a company of dancers lends its dancing talents as backdrop to each of the musical artists. The dancers are all white. Each dance number is choreographed to resemble Jack Cole's technique and is augmented by dances of the 1960s: the Twist, the Monkey, the Jerk, etc. Each move is executed with style, grace, texture, and clarity. The dancers are engaged, and their attention to the musical interpretations of the artists deserves accolades. They grind and contort, twist and jerk with great panache. The last scene arrives and disillusion sets in. One by one, each of the Motown performers joins a communal freestyle dance that echoes African lineage. There is a visible shift in the dancing as the carriage of the bodies drops, the torsos become more articulated, and body parts move in syncopated rhythms. In that instant, it is clear that all the dancing in the earlier portion of the program was created and performed in the absence of the African aesthetic. The position to consider is whether or not the inclusion of dancing that is cloaked in the black dance vernacular in the program's finale is an affirming nod to the importance and uniqueness of the black aesthetic in dancing.

Without question, the decision to film and display this exchange is to be applauded. Many programs would have commenced and ended with no reference to images that are black and dancing. The redemptive value pales, however, when considering two points: the positioning at the end of the program and the roll of the credits before the dancing has finished. The positioning supports the notion of an inferior African aesthetic. At the same time, the credits rolling across the dance signal a subliminal message of the accepted eradication. While the producers of Ready Steady Go! may not have had exclusion as a blatant discussion. However, application does not always accompany awareness. If the producers were unaware of what was being suggested by the placement of this African-based movement that eloquently illustrated the Motown sound, then it was racism in its subtle form. Misrepresentation
was present in this instant, throughout the remainder of the century, and appears to have forged its way into the new millennium.

Racism and Technique
The jazz music of early twentieth-century America that had been synchronous with popular culture stepped aside for rock 'n' roll in the 1950s. Jazz dance followed suit and virtually disappeared until the resurgence of swing dance in the late 1990s, where it existed in social gatherings or clubs specializing in the music and dance of the early years of jazz. Today jazz dance, exempting the case of the swing revival, resists outside mainstream America. Choreographic stylings definitely reflect what is in vogue in popular dance at a given period. The dance form, however, is taught primarily as a technique for creating concert dance, dance in film, and dance on Broadway. The technique featured in these venues, and perhaps inadvertently propelled forward by them, holds only faint whispers of the African aesthetic.

The development of jazz dance as a codified technique during the latter half of the twentieth century has blurred or completely erased movement that does not emanate from white ideas of artistic value. Except where individuals have decided to preserve and teach authentic roots, the pedagogy assesses proficiency through the mastery of a vocabulary and system of moving that is European. The flawless delivery of a grand jeté, battement, and pirouette is held as the standard, while the precise execution of rhythmic and intricate footwork, intensely articulated hips, and three-dimensional rib manipulation is seen as outside the scope of what qualifies as superb technique. Additionally, the marker for excellent artistry rejects the African aesthetic for the European idea of beauty. Dropping the pelvis, rolling through the hips, and rebounding up through an articulated torso are replaced by a rigidly controlled torso with elongated arms and a leg extension. The reason for raising one aesthetic over another emerges from racial privilege favoring a white choreographer over others.

Glenn Loney's Unseen Genius, through dialogues with Cole disciples, illustrates the mastery of Jack Cole as a teacher. Loney even refers to Cole as the putative father of jazz dance. Scholars and practitioners around the world concur. Cole left behind a legacy of dance that continues to inspire dancers today. The deconstruction of the technique he used to create that legacy, however, is the remnants of worlds colliding. It is well documented that as a dancer with Denishawn, he spent a great deal of time with Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn studying in Asia. From Harlem to Asia and back, Cole's dance style was a hybrid. It was his version of dance done to jazz music. Success on the Broadway stage and in the posh nightclubs (still for the elite white) gave the Jack Cole version of jazz dance notoriety. He parlayed this notoriety into a successful Hollywood career, and he was granted a rehearsal hall on the lot of Columbia Studios, where he began teaching dance in the Cole style. His success in creating movement for stars and his ability to design dances of substance for film ignited a new generation of people who were moving in the Cole technique.

Cole's black contemporaries, most notably choreographer and anthropologist Katherine Dunham, were not afforded the same opportunity. As with most black artists of the 1940s and 1950s, Dunham's movement was labeled "ethnic" and considered a special form called "black dance." Here lies the irony. Jazz dance in its infancy was called black dance, and Dunham, among others, created dances that were closer by comparison to the original aesthetic of jazz dance than the technique of Jack Cole. Dunham and Cole both produced extremely powerful systems of movement. Study either technique and a comparison can be drawn.

For example, Ms. Dunham's crossover step and contraction that leads to a 360-degree body rotation, followed by a couple of walks in a hinge position, utilizes the same core and thigh strength as Mr. Cole's step, step, forward contraction leading into a backward hinge and touching the floor. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask this question: why did Cole's movement inspire the next generation to develop jazz dance further while Dunham's movement is minimally referenced? The answer is glaringly obvious. A studio for training dancers on the soundstage of Columbia Studios would not have been an option for Katherine Dunham. The privilege afforded to Cole as a white man in the racially divided America of the 1940s and 1950s placed his teaching in a prime position to be emulated. Dunham's technique, in contrast, remained on the periphery.

Counteracting Racism
The adoption of French ballet terminology and the acceptance of the linear aesthetic as a parameter has shaped the standard for teaching and assessing skill in jazz dance. The classrooms look something like an exercise in ballet gone rogue. Not a bad thing for ballet, as it sets the framework for conceptualizing ballet as an expansion technique. But this and all the other examples are situations of appropriation and lack of recognition. That is resoundingly clear.

Scholars, practitioners, and educators have declared this vehemently, and the call in this chapter is far from original. Why then must this subject be investigated yet again? When considering the monumental achievements by people of color in recent history, it would appear that the United States has
made major strides when it comes to the issue of racism. Why open this discussion? Brenda Dixon Gottschild sums it up best. “My response is that these facts need to be known and have not been acknowledged in a comprehensive manner. As much as we may think we know about American race history and theory, we remain in the dark on many specifics. And therein lies the problem.”

Jazz dance has been in a constant state of evolution since its inception. The various styles discussed in this book are a testament to this reality. It is doubtful that jazz dance will cease changing; it is too closely associated to American popular culture. New generations will add their reality to the mix, and they should. That is the spirit of jazz—life, freshness. As new ideas are added, jazz dance styles will accumulate and the opportunity for appropriation, omission and erasure will continue. So we must resolve the issue of racism now and if possible, do so conclusively. Our failure to handle this previously has ordained the recapitulation of transgressions on America's newest pop culture dance phenomenon.

Hip-hop, the new prey of usurpation, has taken anchor in cultures far from its roots in the South Bronx. Universal consumption of hip-hop has propelled the entity forward with little or no reference to historical lineage. The world may understand that hip-hop hails from black urban life, but very few understand the depth of its roots in gospel, blues, rock 'n' roll, disco, and jazz. The use of the term hip-hop to categorize a dance form is, in itself, an example of appropriation. The dance community (not solely) has employed the term generically, using it to describe any choreography created in a hard-hitting, aggressive style that resembles an “urban” way of physical expression. Lost in translation is the concept of hip-hop as a culture—a way of thinking, living, believing and expressing. The dance is merely one component of the culture of hip-hop, and all of the facets that comprise dance in hip-hop (breaking, popping, freestyling, and so forth) are direct descendants of African movement.

Teaching and creating jazz dance in such a manner that the African aesthetic is intrinsic in the process is crucial and necessary. Regardless of whether it is designed with shades of hip-hop, sixties throwback or disco flare, recognition of the voices that have contributed must be sounded. On that note, this discussion of racism and jazz dance needs to be investigated from the Latin and Asian (Indian) perspectives. The contributions that each of these cultures bestowed on jazz dance are worthy of recognition and ripe for dialogue. If we can continue to have objective and conscious discussion on racism in jazz dance, and can do so with the intent to repair infliction then perhaps we can better substantiate the pedagogy, practice and thrust of jazz dance. Further, this conversation and shift in consciousness can serve as a model for revisiting and considering the prejudicial scrutiny, insensitive usurping and cultural hierarchy that plagues dance and ways of moving that are not European by inception.

Notes
2. The first film to feature sound was The Jazz Singer starring Al Jolson (Warner Bros., 1927).
3. The “Motown sound” was a unique, pop-flavored soulful delivery of music produced by the Motown Record Company in the 1960s.
4. American Bandstand featured teens dancing to popular music. Artists would appear and perform (lip-synch) their recently released singles. It was a way to promote and sell records. Hullabaloo was similar to American Bandstand, with dancing to popular tunes. The difference is that Hullabaloo was choreographed in a jazz dance idiom on a company of dancers.
6. The revival of swing is referred to as neo-swing, a revival of the Lindy Hop, swing-out, and boogie-woogie. In addition to the dance and music, there is also an affinity for the clothing of the era.