

## Lecture Two: week two

### What do we see as dance? What do we understand dance to be?

From watching the week one video it is clear that dance is deeply rooted in the nature of culture. Across the world people have used their moving body (dancing) to express their feelings and thoughts about what it means to be alive. In the Lecture One video (*Dancing-Lord of the Dance*) we placed a particular focus on three families of dance. The dances of the Yoruba religion which have given rise to dances in Brazil from the eighteenth/nineteenth century onward– and can also be seen as influences popular/social 20<sup>th</sup> century dances in Euro-America. The film also looks at Christian dances and attitudes to dancing. Because of European Christian missionaries traveling to all corners of the globe, these Christian values about dancing have influenced dance around the world. This influence has resulted in an oppression of dances followed by new dance styles being invented as people found ways to dance in secret or bend the laws against dancing placed on them. Dance is a living practice – it is forever responding and changing.

Often when we see a new dance from another culture we assume that the dance is '*traditional*' – has not changed since it was first done. In Lecture One we spoke about how hard it is to remove the dancer from the dance. Because of this every dance that is done has something of the day it is done infused into it. This is because it is being danced by live people, of that day. The dancer doing the dance gives something of the 'now' to the dance. Dance is not like a painting which can be dated to the first time it was painted.

It is important to notice and catch the moments when we see a dance and assume it is 'ancient' or 'original'. We then need to ask ourselves why we think this. It is very likely that the assumption of 'ancientness' is just us not being familiar with a cultural practice and therefore assuming it is not happening today. When we watch participate or dance we are using 'cultural indicators' or 'cultural codes' to understand and value what we are doing. If we are not familiar with the cultural codes of a group of people we can sometimes fail to notice them or dismiss them as dead (of the past). That is why it is useful to define dance for yourself.

But we are not defining dance in order to know what it is. We are defining it in order to look at what '*story*' we tell ourselves about dance. As we discussed in Lecture One dance cannot be defined but in trying to define it we can see what we think of it ourselves. As you move through the course you will be introduced to 'dances' that you might not think are dance! Or dances you had thought a particular way about and now you are thinking differently about! That

is great because the point of this first Unit is to start to see more than **one story** for what dance is. In this week's video Chimamanda Ngozi talks about the importance of recognising more than one story.

Watch the week two video (The danger of a single story -Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie) and continue with Chapter 1 in the text book.  
Respond to Discussion Board Two.