

DON'T YOU FEEL IT TOO?

The 1000-Year Plan

Contributors

Marcus Young

Gabrielle Civil

Theresa Madaus

Aki Shibata

Forecast Public Art

Diane Hellekson

Coal Dorius

Table of Contents

Public Mysteries	4
Techniques	45
Article	46
Quotes	51
“Welcome to the Fire” Brings Dance Into Zones of Social Conflict	64

Public Mysteries
(DYFIT at the edge of imagining)—Gabrielle Civil

Perhaps you've seen us . . . on the side of a road, on top of a bridge or under one, on a rooftop, by a light post, in front of a museum, at the polls, at a protest, remembered, inside your dreams . . . or perhaps it's been you . . . grooving, swaying, twisting, stretching, provoking, befuddling, insisting, dancing in the streets. Either way, this evidence: this body in space, yours or mine, has mattered for some time, and, with good luck, will matter for a long time to come. This is the plan: a time capsule, a design and choreography of public mysteries. How dare we dance for a thousand more years? What does it mean to feel it too?

D Y F I T ?

In simplest terms, “Don’t You Feel It Too?” (DYFIT) is the act of dancing inner lives in public spaces. It is a participatory art project and civic intervention. At times, it can feel like a religion, a movement, a dance team, and a consciousness raising group all rolled into one. But I’m getting ahead of myself (a fair hazard when dreaming about the future). In a way, I’m a strange person to be chronicling this practice. That’s what devotees call DYFIT—not an activity or even an art work, but a *practice*. I’ve long been a DYFIT admirer. (Even when I use the abbreviation, I sound out the whole phrase, I ask myself the question . . .) I can recall conversations and events from as early as 2009 or 2010 when I was returning to Minneapolis from abroad . . .

But I am certainly not the venerable founder, Marcus Young, who has made DYFIT his life work. And I wasn’t there from the very beginning. Not like Aki or Theresa. I’m not a main organizer like Shira or Oliver or Diane. I’m not a mainstay like Elizabeth or Matt who show up eager each week, smiling, ready to dance. I’m not a member of the 2017 A-H-A cohort either—the brave band of artists-healers-activists who have been doing amazing things with DYFIT for almost a year. Kendrick. Xiaolu. Demetrius. Miré. Wendy. Heather. Caspian. Alejandra. Julia. They have been exploring connections between DYFIT and somatic healing, ethnography, filmmaking, writing, community building and more. I am none of these people.

Still, I am a DYFIT practitioner and dancer, a person who has witnessed its impact and marveled at its growth, a professor who has incorporated the practice into my classrooms, and a black feminist performance artist invested in the body in space and time, passionate about the intersections of art, activism, and healing, curious about the future.

(At the very edge of our imagining, what does DYFIT look like in the future?

What does it look like now?)

B O D Y

In 2017, DYFIT looks like a diverse group of people in Minneapolis meeting up each week with I-pods and earbuds to dance in the streets.

(In the future, do code words like *diversity* even exist?

Will racial harmony have neutralized the needs for such distinctions?

Will multiplicity and intersectionality be so deeply recognized, and understood, that they become simply par for the course?)

In our time, DYFIT dancers are brown, black, and white; Chinese, Dakota, Indian, and Chilean; African and diasporic; queer and straight, immigrant and native; female, male, genderfluid, and non-conforming; able-bodied and disabled; recovering, grieving, and surviving; trained and untrained in dance, in therapy, in meditation; young and old; much else and everything-in-between. In this way, DYFIT truly embodies a multicultural community. This is important because, in 2017 in our time, in the United States of America, people are extremely divided. Races and classes and communities are deeply stratified, and people from different backgrounds don't socialize too much. DYFIT becomes a precious convergence.

Of course, not everyone from every demographic is always there. Sometimes, it's predominantly young, white, and queer. Sometimes, as when Ananya brought members of her Ananya Dance Theater to dance, it becomes a woman of color convening. This kind of fluctuation is key. Just as you don't know how you'll feel when you wake up in the morning, or how your feelings will change as you move through the day, you don't know how or what the exact experience of DYFIT will be.

You have to show up to see who is there.

You have to show up to be a part of it.

You have to show up and let it happen.

(In the future, this will be the same.)

T I M E

In 2017, in we have been having a glorious summer season of DYFIT dancing. Practice is free and open to the public. Details have been announced since spring and appear on a Facebook calendar, a DYFIT website, and an e-mailed newsletter. News of DYFIT also spreads through workshops, class visits, press articles, and word of mouth.

(In the future, what new media circulates?

what new modes of transmission?

what new strategies of inclusion?)

Newcomers arrive, heart beating, wondering . . .

OUTSIDE

It's a beautiful summer afternoon, or maybe it's gloomy and grey. Rain or shine, we meet outside for DYFIT. In our time, in 2017, *outside* is synonymous with *public* or *external* as opposed to *inside*, *private* or *internal*.

(In the future, do you laugh at these dichotomies?

DYFIT exists to disrupt and blur these dichotomies.)

S P A C E

We meet at Peavey Plaza, an unassuming square near Nicollet Mall in downtown Minneapolis, or in front of the glimmering Weisman museum on the campus of the University of Minnesota or sometimes at Macalester in St. Paul. Practice happens in lively, populated places with multiple kinds of traffic--pedestrians, cars, buses and bicycles. This way we are sure to be seen and are forced to negotiate the potential awkwardness or delight of this visibility. Hooray! Look! A dog walker, your neighbor, a co-worker, your child's friend's mother, a potential employer, a security guard, your doctor, someone on the light rail from afar, someone stuck in traffic, a bicycle messenger zooming by . . . They could all see and be looking at you.

(In the future, someone could ask:

“Haven't I seen you somewhere before?”

and DYFIT could be the answer.)

T I M E

Practice unfolds in a clear ritual flow. The leader, sometimes Marcus, sometimes Diane or Theresa or Oliver or someone else learning to lead, welcomes us, acknowledges newbies, secures belongings, and checks in. (Does everyone have their earbuds? Does anyone need to store any valuables in a car?) From the start, we are meant to feel cared for . . . Then, the leader reminds us of the basic instructions. This language has morphed over time, as it surely will keep morphing, but for now, it's been whittled down to just these three rules:

1. Love your music.
2. Move honestly, fearlessly.
3. Feel what you feel.

With these words hanging in the air, we put on our headphones, press play and dance first in a practice round, to get the juices flowing, and then for a longer stint, ideally about 40-45 minutes.

(In the future, what are the rules?)

“Move & Feel” or just “Feel”?

What will be the status of fearlessness?

How long will we dance?)

MUSIC

Dancing DYFIT, you can play an entire album (Alice Coltrane!), a mix playlist of songs, or even a single song on repeat (Simply Red's "Lives & Loves," Tricky's "All Over Me"). It's your choice: it just has to be music you love. Or as we used to say: music you love "that loves you back." Michael Jackson, Sigur Ros, Loretta Lynn, the Supremes, the Carpenters, Black Flag, Tchaikovsky, whatever moves you that day and helps you move. that's what you play. If you stop feeling it, if you don't love it right then, you don't have to suffer. Stop and change it. Music in DYFIT is less a crutch than a divining stick, to tap into our inner selves. I

(In the future, do we even need music?

What and how will we play?)

B O D Y

Dancing DYFIT, we can stay near each other, shimmying to our own music, while remaining loosely in a group; or, we can venture off, dance full out on our own in and across public space.

(In the future, is there public space?

Will all space be public? privatized?

How often do you see a body moving

liberated in public space?

How often do you get to be that body?)

I often stay close to others for a while, watch their bodies peel away, then find myself dancing alone. My heat starts to rise and I find myself getting into the zone.

B O D Y

... feel what?

heavy
clumsy
rhythmic
thick
black
light
like a bird
not like
a feather
airy
solid
bold
scared
evident
obvious
juicy
ignored
hot
tired
dogged
scared
noticed
sheepish
overlooked
avoided
undeniable
activated
female
unfeminine
ungendered
spectacular
chugging
transparent
graceful
surprising
mysterious
unknown
known

... how do you feel?

Z O N E

My body heats up and I can feel my hips swaying, the tips of my fingers pressed together and snapping, the bend of my knees, my heart race rising, the flat soles of my feet, the ground beneath the sidewalk, and sometimes my ancestors beneath that ground, strength and connection. Sometimes, silliness bubbles up as I wag my finger, skip and twirl like a little girl or hop onto a bench, shaking my shoulders. Suddenly, in middle of an afternoon, the entire city is my playground, your my straight edge club without darkness or booze or weed. In front of everybody, I get to have this body and space and time. It's exhilarating and scary too, even though I've done it many times before. Even though I don't embarrass easily. At the center of my action radiates wonder and awe at my own audacity, along with some trepidation. Am I ridiculous? What does it mean to have this body? What is this feeling? Sometimes joy but also grief. The singularity not of having a body, but being inside this particular body. This collective singularity. This inner and outer landscape moving towards solidarity.

B O D Y

When dancing, the presence of others puts questions of self and community in full relief.

An older white woman pumps her fists to the rhythm of her feet, while a group of Asian college students pass by. A white man with a rainbow unicorn t-shirt dances into the intersection when the traffic light changes. A chubby black woman in glasses, gyrates and shakes while a white business man walks by in a briefcase. The chubby black woman is me.

(In the future, who are we to each other?

Who am I to myself?

Who can we be?)

The bodies of the dancers belong to themselves and not to the world. The bodies of the dancers inform and make the world, just as the world informs and makes the bodies.

ACTIVISM

bell hooks calls our society “white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchy.” So, what does this make our bodies in public space?

(In the future, which words will we still say?

Will we have figured out new ways to organize ourselves?

Who gets to take up space in the world?)

In 2017, to have a black female body and take up space is a radical act. To dance in public, as a chubby, black woman, not for money or approbation, is a reclamation. To do this for myself. To do this undaunted by the gaze of others. Doing DYFIT, I am forging belonging. I am insisting on my presence. This becomes both a protest and a proclamation for myself and for other people with marginalized or devalued bodies or identities. This changes the physical and psychic landscape of the city.

To this end,, DYFIT has been connected to the Million Artist Movement, a social justice movement for artists of color, and was featured in its convening on Resistance and Rebellion. Dancers have danced in front of election poll sites. From the outside, for the spectator, the dancing body is a vision of how the world can be. From the inside, for the dancer, it is an opportunity to claim public space, display vulnerability and open space for visibility and belonging. Particularly for marginalized bodies, and bodies of people in marginalized groups, these are activist acts.

B O D Y

The fundamental material of DYFIT is the body, the particular body of the dancer interfaced with the body politic of the city. In praxis, it matters tremendously then, whose body is in mind, or rather in the streets.

(In the future, do only human bodies matter in policy?

Will city planning and participation accommodate

a broad range of bodies, technology and flesh?)

Explaining her groundbreaking term “intersectionality,” legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw says:

“Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination.”

What if we replace the word “discrimination” with dancing? “Cars” with feeling?

Or “an accident,” “harmed,” and “injury with liberation? The identity of “a Black woman” cannot simply be swapped for woman of color, person of color, queer person, trans person, disabled person, especially because this identity can overlap with any or all of these other identities . . . This is part of Crenshaw’s point. But what if we could imagine many other people at this intersection? Many other people dancing?

HEALING

In 2017, we dance to reckon with our inner lives, our feelings about and within ourselves as well as our presence in the landscape of the city. In DYFIT, the process of exploring our bodies in space, our feelings in practice, is a crossroads of personal and social healing. People around us become witnesses to this process. They are an audience, in a sense, but DYFIT is never meant as entertainment. We are dancing, but not performing for them. We don't deflect the gazes of spectators, but we don't invite them either. We negotiate their watching. A dancer might smile, an internal spirit moves them to smile, but a "smile for the audience" is not a set performance pose. To the contrary, Aki says the practice gave her space to cry. Dancing DYFIT through a painful divorce, she would weep, allow herself to feel sorrow and grief, and allow those feelings to move in and through her body on full display.

(In the future, will we be encouraged to cry?

Can public tears be accepted as personal and social cleansing?)

B O D Y

Sometimes in DYFIT, I cry too. Sometimes, I laugh and feel ecstatic. Sometimes, I'm bored. Sometimes, I fall so deeply into a favorite song--Beyoncé's "Sorry" or anything by Prince--that I can't help but mouth the words, or sing a phrase out loud. The practice is gentle but clear: DYFIT does not encourage singing along. Mouths are meant most for deep breathing and later discussion. Just watching, you can't tell what music people are dancing to--or even necessarily what kind of music. A dancer leaps into a pirouette, then switches to boogie, then grinds down to a slow interpretative glide. This could happen all over of a couple of beats. DYFIT is not choreographed or synchronized. It is individual within collective purpose. We can move with or against the rhythm of a song. Theresa has said that DYFIT has given her courage, as a downtown dancer, to actually dance *to* the music. For me, at times, the music falls away and becomes a kind of psychic hum, a way to sound into my own body.

Because only the dancer can hear it, only the dancer knows.

(In the future, does the mystery remain?)

M Y S T E R Y

During a DYFIT practice, if anyone asks us what we're doing, the official response is the question "Don't You Feel It Too?" This is honest: giving the name of the practice. This is also turning the question back on its head, or rather away from the head into the body of the spectator.

(In the future, what could the dancer be feeling?

What does a dancer feel like then?

What does it feel like to watch this display?

How will feelings change?)

When the time for dancing draws down, we signal each other with a series of deep bows. The sight of another dancer bowing, ignites your own bow. This becomes deep breathing, psychic and physiological cooling down. Finally, *shivasana*. We end in corpse pose. After a few moments there, splayed out on the sidewalk, we revive and assemble to discuss what just occurred. How did we feel when we arrived? How do we feel now? What was the arc of this particular practice? What did they notice or see? What encounters did we have? Do we feel more connected to the city, to each other, to ourselves? How can we go even deeper, take the practice further? How can the practice itself evolve?

(In the future, how far has DYFIT gone?

How far can it still go?

How much of its original spirit remains?)

A C T I V I S M

DYFIT began as a creative protest to the 2008 Republican National Convention in Saint Paul, MN. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Great Recession and the housing collapse all still waged. At new lows of unpopularity, George W. Bush was winding down while McCain/Palin tried to seize the crown. When news hit that right-wing politicians associated with this mess would be landing en masse in the land of 10,000 Lakes, Twin Cities artists and activists got busy. Local artist Marcus Young dreamed of creating something deep to embody protest without an escalating tone of polarized, political opposition. Young was not opposed to confrontation; rather, he craved he craved opportunities for authentic encounter with difference, something Republican organizers had gone to great lengths to avoid.

To appease GOP jitters, the city of Saint Paul issued a proclamation that protestors had to remain in a designated “protest area.” Politicians, delegates, lobbyists and the media could then enter and depart the convention without directly encountering--or perhaps even seeing--political opposition. While the convention and the city aimed to marshal public space and control the movement of citizens, Young devised DYFIT to reclaim space, indeed to fill the borderland between a set “protest area” and the fixed halls of power.

Mostly young-looking people with mP3 players--Ipods or Androids or Zunes--could arrive to the convention center, unremarked as protestors, and start breaking out into dance. I imagine the adrenaline of this moment, the daring and anxiety. Just being there, just dancing could defy the city ordinance and break social codes. DYFIT was mobile, flexible, individual, collective, and a little wacky, too. Police officers sometimes overlooked or ignored the dancers. According to lore, a few officers tapped their toes or laughingly shook their heads. The tone of

the action was disarming. If an officer did become alarmed and started to approach, the dancer could stand down, go slack, shift into a simple walk, or turn back into a regular citizen walking away.

Of course, any form of confrontation was still a risk. In a highly charged, highly policed space, any unregulated action could be viewed as a threat and the first group of DYFIT dancers, took this possibility seriously. Looking back, I can imagine their fear, how their anxiety about dancing in public, already pretty high, could get ratcheted up a thousand-fold with the possibility of arrest. And what kind of protest was this anyway? No shouting, no slogans, no posters, no designated negative gestures . . .

(In the future, do people shout? make posters or banners?)

Do they beam their critiques into embedded chips in each other's brains?)

At the RNC, DYFIT highlighted how a series of people, moving in coordination across space in time, could transgress city plans and reclaim agency of the personal and public body. On an individual level, it offered people a chance to explore individual expressivity and their personal relationships to the body at the site of public crisis. It demanded, and continues to demand, the courage to reveal, manifest or discover a personal body in public, asserting that as a political act. Most importantly, DYFIT tuned out Republican messages, police alerts, and even traditional protest chants, in favor of listening to one's own melody, moving differently, and modeling another way of being in the world. In solidarity with the ardent critiques of other protest groups, DYFIT opened a space to explore outrage, fear, anxiety, pleasure, joy and other emotional states in and through the body. Non-violent and non-oppositional, DYFIT offered protestors a means not just to march, but also to groove.

(In the future, remember this
start as vital embodied action.
Remember participation and the body
dancing to disrupt social and civic codes.
Remember transgression and humor,
stealth and surprise.
Remember self and community,
self with community;
Remember the desire to reclaim
and take up personal and public space.
Remember politics and protest, people and art.)

A R T

In 2017, a recent postcard calls DYFIT “participatory public dance for social healing and inner-life liberation.” Dance, of course, is an art form, but the claims of the practice for art seem greater than just that. With the emphasis on activism and healing, I sometimes worry about the art part falling away. When I ask Marcus Young, why or how DYFIT is art, he says “because it started as an art project and still is one.”

A R T

While not the only steward of DYFIT, Marcus Young is the founder of the practice and has background as an artist and a person deeply informs DYFIT.

Things to know about Marcus Young:

Marcus Young is 楊墨.

He is lovely, humble, and ambitious.

He works extremely hard.

He values slowness.

He is very busy.

He loves tea.

He was born in Hong Kong in 1970.

He has lived in the Midwest for most of his life.

He has struggled with belonging.

His family ran a Chinese restaurant in Iowa.

His father died when he was still in his teens.

He is close to his mother and sister and her family.

He is Chinese and American.

He is gay.

He is tall and slender, and romantically unattached.

He has struggled with loneliness.

He has worked in multiple ways to build community.

He practices meditation.

He is very patient.

He cultivates mindfulness.

He is the founder of “Don’t You Feel It Too?”.

He is a multi-disciplinary artist.

His background and training inform the practice in deep ways.

(In the future, what do you say about Marcus Young?

Will you have a picture of him hanging as they have

guru photos hung in every Bikram yoga studio or in

the pulpits of the most ardent Baptist churches?)

A R T

Marcus Young earned his undergraduate degree at Carlton College in Minnesota where he majored in music with an emphasis on conducting. Later, he earned an MFA in Theater at the University of Minnesota with a concentration on directing. He also was mentored by the and legendary Chinese dancer Shen Pei for many years and continues to work in dance as a Consulting Director with the Ananya Dance Company, Ananya Chatterjea's justice-oriented ensemble grounded in South Asian dance techniques. This training alone resonates with key values of DYFIT--music, movement, dance as well as the conducting/ directing of people in artistic movement.

Young has also worked in visual art realms including installation, performance art, and social practice. He has premiered work at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, curated evenings at the Walker Art Center, and received prestigious fellowships from the Bush and Jerome foundations. He has used institutional support to develop work outside the Like many artists of the twenty-first century, he is interested in art in life, art as life, and the operation and disruption of the everyday. He names Yoko Ono and Marina Abramovic as influences (you can see Marcus standing in the background in the latter's film *The Artist is Present*) and has built closer ties to Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Tehching Hsieh (who has shared dumplings with Marcus on more than one occasion).

(In the future, art historians and monks
write treatises about the relationship between
DYFIT and the work of other artists.

Will art historians and monks be the same?

Will both do DYFIT?)

A R T

I can't remember when Marcus Young and I first met, but it might have been in 2004 when I visited his "Big Idea Store." Selected for the Jerome Foundations Inside/ Out public art program, this project recreated an old-fashioned general store within the walls of Intermedia Art's gallery. He wore long pants, a vest and a bow tie. He had a general counter and tables a long table full of wares, including fortune cookies, if correctly recalled. The shopper would sit at a long table, with old-fashioned lamps and flip through the rolodexes searching for an idea. The rolodexes in motion whirred in a pleasant hum around the room, putting me into an almost meditative state. Once a person selected an idea, she bought it for a nickel and went on her way.

Since then, I've encountered much more of his work. He calls himself a "behavioral" artist, a term that highlights his interest in making and using art to engage and transform the behavior of individuals and groups in society. In "Pacific Avenue," he wore a long robe with a high mandarin collar, and walked at glacial pace through the business district at rush hour, carrying an umbrella and continuously smiling. In "From Here to There and Beyond" he drew a line from the gallery of the Minneapolis College of Art & Design, starting with a crack in the wall, then crossing through the tile on the floor, smashed up through the window on the door and then outside through neighborhoods for two miles all the way to the Mississippi River. Your first time following a line, you wouldn't know where it would lead or how long it would take. All this work was about trust, observation and transformation, as well as defamiliarization and reclamation of public space.

From 2006-2015, Young also worked as a "city artist" for the city of Saint Paul. Observing positions of "city planner" and "city engineer," he argued that the city needed a person whose job was to consider and create opportunities for art within civic and municipal

processes. Upon hearing that the city had a budget to replace the concrete of broken sidewalks, he developed a city publishing poetry program called “Everyday Poems for City Sidewalk,” in which poems by St. Paul residents would be stenciled into the newly poured concrete squares. On Earth Day, he created “Wishes for the Sky” to foster a space for community to gather and send their hopes aloft on eco-friendly kites.

To understand DYFIT and maintain its future practice, it is important to understand these artistic antecedents. Young’s work in public and city art, his exposure to city planners, his background in performance and conceptual art, his move out of the gallery into the streets, his interest in community, his positivity and playfulness, his commitment to the enigmatic, all have shaped the values of DYFIT and should endure as its legacy.

(In the future, is Marcus Young famous?

Does he want to be?

What will happen to the DYFIT with the passing of the founder?

How much is his, yours, ours, everyone’s?)

T I M E

DYFIT reflects social, artistic experiments of its time. In the early years of the twenty-first century, flash mobs became the rage. Coordinated groups of people would appear unannounced to perform a synchronized public act, often dancing and singing, only to disperse immediately after the action was over. In 2001, Apple launched the first I-pod, moving the Walkman into the digital age. With its success and the rise of other Mp3 players came the “silent disco,” where people arrived at a party with their own music and headphones and everyone danced to their individual music together at the same time.

This notion extends to its further edge in Yorgos Lanthimos’s 2015 film *The Lobster*. When a group of radical individualists decides to have a party, they each select their own headphones and dances alone to their own music in their own time. “Have a good night,” says Rachel Weisz’ character, turning her back on Colin Farrell and the rest of the gang, to dance like everyone else alone.

As in flash mobs and silent discos, in DYFIT, people dance the time of their lives. The struggle between public and private, individual and collective is one of the hallmarks of our time, whether it be space, rights, bodies, or belongings. DYFIT, however, gears itself toward continuity, community, and connection, while never shying away from loneliness or pain.

A R T

As in the large scale public art works of Christo & Jeanne-Claude, the bureaucratic work of DYFIT is as much a part of the art as the specific sessions of dancing. In planning and organizing meetings, Young strikes a meditation bell and invites stillness. He incorporates guided visualization and poetry. As the practice has expanded, he has played with the language of marketing, the inclusion of corporate sponsorship and collaboration, while still striving to maintain the core of creative vision and action. This is a delicate dance, one that will surely continue into the future.

(In the future, is DYFIT traded on the Nasdaq?

Will there be a corporate, corporeal state?

How can and should the practice of DYFIT expand?

How can it reach more people, offer more opportunities
while resisting co-optation and commodification?

What could it mean to buy in or sell out?)

A C T I V I S M

In 2017, GLBT Pride celebrations are often accused of being sell out, family friendly, commodified, corporate sponsored affairs. In Minneapolis, this year, after the acquittal of the police officer who murdered African-American motorist Philando Castile, calls arose to boycott Pride which was to feature a police contingent flashing lights to accompany the parade. What can begin as one call for justice can turn tone deaf to another one.

But I remember last year, when DYFIT convened to practice at Pride, in a pretty section of Loring Park. On June 25, 2016, we met for practice at a pretty corner of Loring Park in Minneapolis. It was a gorgeous day, and a festive one as the annual festival was in full swing. Music blasted from loudspeakers. My friend Amy came along to experience the practice for the first time. Not far from us, a cloud of long multi-colored streamers hung over a resting area of lawn, falling in all hues of the rainbow.

It had been a while since my last practice, and so I was concentrating on, well, concentrating. I wanted to be present in the populated festival, allow my dancing body to be in the mix, but I also wanted to explore my inner self. I danced alone for a while, moved alongside stalls of community activists handing out literature. I spent time by a tree not far from another dancer. Then a contingent of folks arrived unpacking hatred from suitcases, signs on sticks “Repent! Jesus hates fags.” They looked drab white, mainly adult with a couple children in tow. I pitied those children. They numbered fewer than a dozen, and yet their impact was exponential. A white man in a baseball cap pressed the bullhorn to his mouth his lips started moving. Blissfully, I couldn't hear what he said. But I knew, I knew . . .

Then I watched Oliver move closer in harem pants. Theresa slid over, almost skipping. Then Shira. One by one the dancers created a new zone between them and the rest of the festival. I sashayed down the hill to join them and could see up close the harsh machinery of the bullhorn

man's jaw. I wasn't phased. Prince was crooning "Life Can Be So Nice" in my ear. Without planning it, we had shifted the energy of the counter-protestors, or at least contained it. Without violence or vocal confrontation, we became a front line, dissipating the negative energy.

What was tense for some spectators became humorous. A gay couple walked by and smiled. A person with multi-colored hair gave a thumbs up. Two teenage girls paused and started dancing a little with me. No one tried to stop us. No one asked what's going on. Simultaneously the hate mongerers were mongering and we were dancing! Moved against their hateful presence of the activists, our bodies became counter-protests. Our bodies also insisted on their own mystery within this process. The hardest part of this practice at Pride for me was staying true to my own breath, my own experience, and not making it about these other people. They were already taking up so much space. How could I let myself not shrink before their hatefulness? To smile, like Marcus in "Pacific Avenue" and to both be dancing against that hatred, but more deeply dancing towards the love I want to hold and engender within myself.

A C T I V I S M

Marcus has said that the activism of DYFIT is like the shaft of the spear of revolution, what holds the tip and allows the hand to move the tip to its target. It's the groundedness of conviction. It's the self-care and breathing. The joyful buffering of our dance at Pride felt that way. Harking back to the origin of the practice, this Pride event marked a milestone for DYFIT and planted the seed for "Welcome the Fire," a DYFT practice that took place this year at Planned Parenthood, the creation of a space between the Anti-Choice protestors and their counter protestors. More than replicating traditional modes of protest and counter-protest, DYFIT offers a third path. Sometimes a buffer zone, sometimes a threshold.

(In the future, do thresholds roll out
between worlds, perspectives, realities?
Do you dance in the thresholds?)

A C T I V I S M

In *Liberation Now!*, feminist theorist Ana Louise Keating says beautiful things about thresholds. Calling for alternatives to traditional oppositional thinking and action, she names these alternatives “threshold theories.” For her “*thresholds* represent complex interconnections among a variety of sometimes contradictory worlds--points crossed by multiple intersecting possibilities, opportunities, and challenges. [T]hreshold theories facilitate and enact movements “betwixt and between” divergent worlds, enabling us to establish fresh connections among distinct (and sometimes contradictory) perspectives, realities, peoples, theories, texts and/ or worldviews.” Replace theory with action with dancing with DYFIT.

HEALING

If this world evolves into the better place we're imagining and striving to create, will it, will we, still need DYFIT? Considering the protest roots and deep aspirations of the practice, this question has come up more than once. Is the healing we're seeking connected to ecological and social ills, to our place in the brokenness of this world? As human beings will we always have a deeper psychic need for inner liberation?

T I M E

What must it have been like to attend the first yoga classes? To bend over, hands and feet planted in the earth, and then describe the experience to a friend, first uttering the phrase “downward facing dog”? What must it have been like to first sit in meditation? To gather with others in a meadow or on the side of a mountain and breathe? Did they know thousands of years ago that we would follow in their footsteps? look with wonder at their practices, albeit adapted, altered, displaced, decontextualized, reterritorialized, renewed . . . ?

(In the future, do you?)

T I M E

Tasked to consider DYYFIT in a thousand years, language entices and slips. Are we talking a hundred years? No, too soon? Too easy for our minds to focus on details. A thousand years? So far . . . Will this planet even exist in a thousand years? Well, fossils and canyons and ravines are oceans are even older. But we humans, will we allow this planet to remain? Will our appetite for destruction chew it up and spit out the bones? More worrisome, at the rate we're going, will we exist? Will we make the earth so uninhabitable that we ensure our own destruction, and once rid of us, the earth will spring back to its past glory, regain its ecological and spiritual balance? The spirit of DYFIT encourages us to face the current jeopardy, and to exercise our most hopeful imagination.

Earlier this year, Kendrick sent Marcus and me an e-mail to help inspire us for our DYFIT thousand year plan. She sent us quotes from a story in the 2015 anthology *Octavia's Brood*, science fiction stories for social justice, edited by adrienne maree brown and Walidah Imarisha. In Alexis Pauline Gumbs' story, a young girl describes her initiation into her society:

“We are here five generations after you and a lot has happened. . . . It is hard to imagine what it felt like for people to walk around with all that hurt from harming and being harmed. But I can tell from the writing that people were afraid so much. History was so close. But the amazing thing is how people spoke and wrote and danced anyway. . .

This proximity of history was also the proximity of mortality and death. Kendrick herself has been writing a lot about that mortality, remarking her own continuous slide away to the other side. A member of the A-H-A cohort of DYFIT, Kendrick has struggled with chronic pain. This year, she has taught me a lot about the power of the practice. She finds it so stimulating, that she doesn't need external music. In her wheelchair, with her hands and sometimes with a push from

a helper, she dances to the sound of the wind, the trees, the footsteps of people walking by, the vision of our own dancing. This already seems like the future.

Gumbs' story continues:

“Now in the 5th generation since the time of the silence breaking, we are called hope holder and healers. There are still people doing a lot of healing,, but it seems like generation after generation people got less and less afraid. People took those writings and started to recite them and then another generation hummed their melodies and then another generation clicked their rhythms and then another generation just walked them with their feet and now we just breathe it, what you were saying before about how love is the most powerful thing. About how everything and everyone is sacred.”

The words from the story, from the young girl, from Alexis, Adrienne and Walidah, finally from Kendrick are a powerful reminder. They are the aspiration of DYFIT, its purpose and breath. They are the spirit of this plan.

S P A C E

My laptop screen fills with the image of Julie Mehretu's painting "Looking Back at a Beautiful Future." At the top of the frame, red lines streak across the sky. At the bottom, blue-black curves, like wild pen strokes or long blowing strands of hair. Underneath these marks, multi-colored shapes that look like refracted land formations. As if a globe had been pulled apart with its continents reformed, flattened and stretched, pulled into new dimensions. On the lowest level, faintly discernable to the eye are the remains of a map or a blueprint, now palimpsested, activated and transformed. When I think of DYFIT in a thousand years, when I think of the city, or wherever we will be, at the edge of my imagination, I see this. The plan of the city explodes into color and imagination. Merce Cunningham once said, "Dancing is a visible action of life." We can't see the dancers, but we know we are there.

M Y S T E R Y

That first time you danced in public, do you remember it? Were you scared? awkward? sheepish? embarrassed? alive? How did your body feel? How did the ground feel beneath you? How did the city, the space feel around you? Now move to the edge of your imagination. Move out into the public. Move deeper into your inner life. Fast forward a hundred years, a thousand years, as far as you can reach. In order for us to get there, we know, a whole lot needs to be worked out, but for now jump ahead. Through cyborgs and geodesic domes and tiny machines in the valves of our hearts. On city blueprints, between the berm and the curb, in the designated dance lane, the LED leaves on the trees. Jump beyond even all these, their possibilities and perhaps salvation. Realize new problems and resolutions will also arise.

*(In the future, in this new space and time,
in your body, in your most hopeful vision,
what will the world be like?*

What will DYFIT be like?

What will you feel?)

*Peace, pride, power, pain, possibility, persistence, playfulness,
a piece of the past, appeal to the future?*

Don't You Feel It Too?

Tao Poems

Techniques (for dancing as protest)

by Marcus Young

after Ursula K. Le Guin's rendition of the Tao Te Ching, verse 10

Can you sense soul in your ecstatic body,
not fear its power, not hide from truth,
and so learn to be whole?

Can you align wildness with your peace and anguish,
lend them to the wide horizon,
and so learn to be natural?

Can you tease the way of fate,
so it relaxes and dances?
Can you love people and defy them,
inhale, exhale everything?

“Opening, closing the gate of the Universe,”
can you be fool, warrior, and artist?
“Piercing bright through the cosmos,”
can you be life and death?

To make yourself strange,
to be enormous and low,
right but flowing,
moving like deep air and deep water,
to use everything you have,
this is gathering power by not taking away.

Article

By Diane Hellekson

A few years after founding the experimental public dance practice Don't You Feel It Too?, Marcus Young mused aloud on the notion of a hundred- or even a thousand-year plan.

This was partly a playful challenge to those who might dismiss the practice as a self-indulgent trifle, tripping through culture like an unrehearsed flash mob. It also acknowledged the vast potential Young and the rest of us felt in the practice, which consistently elicited a sense of joy and empowerment in those who tried it. Our reason for dancing was deeper than fun or exercise; we had the sense that DYFIT could be, like the ancient practice of yoga, a regenerative way of being that could transcend time and cultural limitations. Young immodestly wondered whether we might have something in common with the yogis of millennia past, as they began to form and define their practice. Is our hybrid of art, meditation and activism less curious than the first mantras and rituals introduced by the Vedic priests? When we dance like fools on busy sidewalks, do we look any less strange than did the first mystics who arranged their bodies in impossible shapes?

While the roots of our practice aren't so deep as those of yoga, the lineage of Don't You Feel It Too? is venerable in its own way. It arose, most directly, from an urge to protest peacefully (at the 2008 Republican National Convention) and also from a burgeoning body of work that blurs the distinctions between art, life and social change. DYFIT didn't set out to be spiritual, but the practice of dancing in public does connect us with something larger and "beyond" ourselves, while also rooting us in our bodies and among our fellow humans.

Our small circle knows the results are profound, but, after 10 years, we attract relatively few participants—typically between 2 and 20 at any given gathering—and we are only beginning to understand how and why the practice works. For insight, we've engaged a somatic therapist, a neuropsychologist and a Zen priest,[1] among others, who have offered explanations for parts of the practice. Yet we still find DYFIT mysterious. In part, this is intentional (after all, the name of the practice is a question), but we want to know more, and to know we are on the best path forward.

Could a thousand-year plan help us understand and develop what we are doing? Might it offer something tangible that could both guide the practice, attract participants and set forth our particular wisdom about urban places and how people occupy them?

Through Young, Don't You Feel It Too? had yearlong support from Forecast Public Art to investigate the practice on many fronts, including a very long-term plan. To that end, Young and artist Gabriele Civil

organized a charrette in June?? 2017, with DYFIT practitioners as brainstorming stakeholders.[2] Later, he engaged an artist trained as a landscape architect, Coal Dorius, and a writer/landscape architect, me, to represent what came of the charrette and put a finer point on what this plan really was meant to be.

This past year, as racial and political divides threatened national peace, global well-being and individual lives, we felt an urgency in our joyful self-expression and our activism against homophobia, racism and women's reproductive rights.[3] By dancing, wildly, freely, publicly, we could more easily imagine a just and peaceful world ahead. Could we also help realize that world, one wild, silent dance at a time?

The Notion of a Thousand Year Plan

Who makes 1,000-year plans, anyway? DYFIT has some unsettling and obscure company.

In 1937 Hitler's architect, Albert Speer, crafted a plan to remake Berlin into Germania, a world capital on a monumental scale, appropriate to reflect and inspire a thousand-year Third Reich, Hitler's new world order with Germania at the helm. The time-frame was more faith than plan, but Speer's urban design was set forth in detail: a grand boulevard, concentric ring roads, a circus of Nazi statuary. Speer's Triumphal Arch would dwarf Paris' Arch de Triomphe and his domed hall would accommodate 180,000 Aryans. (The cost of realizing the dream would be minimized by utilizing concentration camp labor; two camps had been strategically located near quarries.)

Antithetical to Germania, and as yet unrealized, is the thousand-year plan for Biosophy, a movement aiming to improve humanity's collective character and spiritual conscience, thus allowing for collaborative world peace. In his 1930s essay, "The Need for a Thousand-Year Plan," Biosophy founder Frederick Kettner explains that change comes slowly, especially when rooted in minority voices, and that spiritual evolution had to occur before diverse people could effectively understand one another and work together effectively. "The mind has helped to create civilization, to build comfort," Kettner wrote. "Humanity's next problem is to realize the creativity of the heart in people, to help the heart guide the mind to new horizons of consciousness. This is the problem to be worked out in the Thousand Year Plan. Humanity has already developed a sense-world and a mind-world. The next step in the process of evolution is for people to develop intelligently in spiritual growth."

Interestingly, Kettner discussed why Biosophy needed a 1,00-year plan, but doesn't define the plan really *is*—perhaps he found the process as challenging as we did. How can we foresee how a process might work over so long a time, amid changes we can't foresee? (*Issue of faith is in here, and this also foreshadows Coal's solution*)

While Kettner's perspective offers parallels to DYFIT, our early thoughts about plan's form were more in line with Speer's: ideals reflected in physical design. By spending focused, intimate time on city streets (particularly Nicollet Mall), some DYFIT practitioners have developed a keen awareness of urban design. Our emphasis on the present moment and our relationships with marginalized occupants have given us a rare perspective on how the streets and sidewalks work, and elicited a plethora of ideas of how we might change urban patterns—on the ground and in people's behavior, bodies and, perhaps, attitudes.

The Charrettes

The charrette, a workshop process used often by landscape architects and planners, involves a stakeholder group, facilitator and a lot of paper and markers. Often, the facilitator will present a base map or set of conditions and several beginning concepts or elements for viewers to choose among. (more explain process) In beginning this charrette, however, Gabriele Civil led us in a meditation, inviting us to range large, unconstrained to a specific place or time, and let our visions run free, through our hearts and into the future.

Describe the process, the teams... Then use Marcus' organizing list (1-8 below) to as a frame for the specifics that came out in the charrette.

(Order here is not hierarchical but based on potential idea flow.)

1. The makers of public space are not isolated specialists, but translators of the public will, with an altruistic aim to serve both nature and her partner-humans.
2. Public space grows out of and supports the internal life, our basic goodness. It isn't owned and is generously available to all people. No one is homeless.
3. We make peace that we are and we are not nature. The city has changed to emulate nature. Our ways have changed to be based in nature. We dance to know ourselves within nature. If it could, nature has forgiven us.
4. Art has changed. You can't quite tell if you are using it, making it, or living it. You just know it helps your life like awareness. You know it comes and goes and returns. You are familiar with it, like you are with yourself.
5. People are embodied, expansive, and unafraid, beings with myriad facets to their identities, who are vulnerable yet safe, tender, rooted.
6. Dance is a natural and constant way of life, essential in maintaining the good health of our collective nervous system.

7. New words, new feelings, new identities, new kindnesses, new understandings of sorrow, new ways to care for each other, new freedoms, new ease. Keep making.

8. Our minds can imagine 1000 years, our bodies can feel 1000 years, and we can plan 1000 years.
(Maybe we can achieve this in less than 1000 years.)

<<MY: could use more explanation of what this one means. How essential is it to the charrette results? It's beautiful and poetic, but I don't quite get it! >>

The Mobiles

Normally, charrettes and design teams start with generalities and end up with specific recommendations and drawings that communicate a collective vision. We began by envisioning specific utopias: new urban centers and rural networks, a society characterized by peace and acceptance, an intimate interrelationship with nature, ease in carrying radishes...

After that, though, our plan became as evanescent (may not be right word)—and process-oriented—as Kessler's treatise on spiritual evolution as a way to world peace.

(Then, the playing with place and memory, the going to mobiles...ending with a concept, represented by wood, paper, string and binder clips. Those reasons you and I discussed. The idea of process.)

Conclusion

In some sense, this plan, this exercise in imagining, is an act of faith. Amid the crushing daily news about those who seek to purge our people and despoil our earth, it is audacious to imagine a future where xxxx and "nature inter/are."

Blah blah blah and some fabulous finish.

[1] Somatic therapist Thea Lee led workshops with DYFIT leaders and staff from the homeless youth drop-in center, showing how the principles of her discipline apply to DYFIT. Neuropsychologist xx name xxxx engaged with Marcus Young at xxx conference, where he presented a paper in 201x. Psychotherapist Kathleen Avila danced with us and, in several discussions, explained why she thought our process was so effective. Sosan Flynn, Guiding Teacher at Clouds in Water Zen Center, St. Paul, has practiced DYFIT several times and noted parallels to her spiritual practice.

[2] Charrette participants: Gabriele Civil, Diane Hellekson, Julia Davidson, Laura Levinson, Theresa Madaus, Wendy Morris, Heather Peebles, Mire Regulus, Aki Shibata, Xiaolu Wang, Marcus Young.

[3] In 2016, DYFIT, practiced on the edge of the Twin Cities Pride Festival in Loring Park, Minneapolis, and ended up surrounding anti-gay protesters as we danced, diffusing their power without engaging their hatred. Inspired by this we staffed a booth a 2017 Pride, and organized spontaneous dance “parties” as well as a counter to protests. DYFIT has worked with Million Artist Movement, a racial justice organization, and danced twice at Planned Parenthood, St. Paul, during demonstrations there.

Quotes

A compilation of quotes by participants of *Don't You Feel It Too?*

“I was raised not to be joyful. I am protesting that. I am breaking that every time I dance. I commit to be me, practicing my alignment inside with outside. I believe in modeling the love and freedom I hope for others.”

– *Aki Shibata, Artist and participant since 2008*



I grew up Mormon. It was an excruciating experience full of self-shame, especially related to body image. I've stored a lot of pain that I've been working to heal. Dancing that day, connecting with and feeling comfortable in my body, was an incredibly revitalizing ritual. I felt so happy, nothing could get me down that day. I gained knowledge of my power through this exercise.

– *Erin Yaritz*



“For me the practice was a living, breathing form of activism rooted in the affirmation of humanity. Moving my body through space gave me a sense that I was celebrating my existence in this world, that my body and my life matter. That felt to me like liberation.”

– *Signe HarriDay, Organizer and member of Million Artist Movement*



“Don't You Feel It Too?” is my worship, my healing, my activism.
This practice locates me in my body as a creative and vulnerable person in the world. It gets me out of my head, helping me to realize the truest experiential guide I know: my heart.”
— *Oliver Adam*



“It is a form that breaks traditional theatrical boundaries to learn about dance and public art. It is also a platform for learning about self, self-expression, spirituality, and societal behavior, as it functions as a sort of lay anthro/-psycho-/sociological experiment. Using the form of dance, it allows the practitioners to probe the rules of society and self, to forge connections, and to find oneself. It's a constant lab for both art and life.”

– *Theresa Madaus, participant/dancer-choreographer*

“I think it is a type of learning that comes from kinesthetic experience, very similar to observational drawing actually. To draw you look very carefully at the object and trace and express the contour or texture of the objects on the paper, and to do *Don't you feel it too?* is looking very close to inner-self and trying to express it in movement and emotions. There is so much to learn about yourself and what is around us. — *Aki Shibata, participant*

“Welcome to the Fire” Brings Dance Into Zones of Social Conflict

Forecast Public Art 2016 Forecast Min-career Project Grantee Interview

Thanks to a 2016 Forecast Mid-career Project Grant, *Don't You Feel It Too?* (DYFIT) is gearing up for a big season which includes a new type of activity called “Welcome to the Fire.” This new activity will explore bringing DYFIT dance right into the hot zones of social conflict. One example of this is the work developing around the issue of women’s health care and abortion focused around Planned Parenthood. (The entire season of activity which runs April through September 2017 will be announced later this month.)

On February 11, 2017 the ten-year public dance practice DYFIT invited dance-activists to be present as a third energy among the thousands in attendance rallying for and against Planned Parenthood on Vandalia Street in St. Paul, Minnesota. It was a learning experience preparing for a bigger DYFIT action planned for Friday, April 14, 2017.

DYFIT’s founder and behavioral artist Marcus Young, who could not attend on February 11, interviews two long-term practitioners who did go. The interview features **Diane Hellekson**, a writer and landscape architect living in St. Paul who has practiced *Don't You Feel It Too?* since 2010 and **Theresa Madaus**, a queer dance-maker, performer, and arts administrator who has practiced *Don't You Feel It Too?* since its beginnings in 2008. This interview was done over email.

—

Marcus: *It was an early Saturday morning. How did you feel when you first arrived and first started dancing?*

Theresa: I spent a good 15 minutes looking for parking, circling the area and seeing the faces of the people and wondering about their intentions, affiliations and presence there. I walked past the Pro-Life Ministries rally area, and as I passed their speeches and supporters, I felt a well of resistance rising in my chest. It lives there as tension and pressure, kind of like a lump or a bar pressing across my heart and internal organs.

When I started dancing I immediately felt a relief from that bar. The pressure could flow out of my body. I felt energized and in touch with my anger and the fierceness of my own love for my body, for my freedom and agency over my own body, and the sanctity of my body’s ability to move itself, express itself, control itself, and be a worthy and living part of the world.

Marcus: *That’s very powerful! “Fierceness...sanctity...worthy...” It sounds like you transformed the negative pressure into a positive resistance. Would you say that?*

Theresa: I think that’s accurate, though I’m realizing I have a hang-up with the word “anger.” I associate it with negativity, and since my anger remained, I have a moment of thinking it didn’t transform. But I am also thinking that it’s not about transforming anger into joy. It’s maybe more

important for the anger to remain and for the way that anger exists in me to transform. And in that case, yes, definitely! Transforming negative pressure into revitalizing and powerful resistance.

Diane: Beautifully said, Theresa. I'm always amazed when I hear how dancing allows someone's body to give power to the mind, encouraging our thoughts to do right by us. It's as though dancing makes the mind tell us the truth. I also felt anxious, but it was a healthy anxiety—getting ready for something important. I hesitate to say it, but internally, I felt a bit like a boxer in a ring, loosening my body, psyching myself up.

Marcus: And did it feel like boxing after you started moving?

Diane: At first, I was timid in where I chose to dance—or perhaps strategic like a boxer, circling, feinting, sizing up my “opponent”—the charged protest space.

We always have choices of where to go when we dance, but this felt unusually fraught, since it was almost like “choosing sides.” I felt comfortable around the pro-choice sign-carriers, who more often acknowledged my presence with curiosity or a smile. It certainly could have been my own energy that made this seem so, but I found very few of the anti-abortion demonstrators engaged visually with me. They tended to look off in the distance, or down, in prayer. Perhaps there was a perception that wild dancing was not devout?

About 20 minutes in, I saw Theresa in her pink cap, right in front of the building, her body close to both sides of the protest; I felt buoyed by her bravery. She looked so happy, and while I had been enjoying dancing, I was still concerned about how things were going down, and keeping my distance from the epicenter of the protest. My playlist at that point was tough, loud, adversarial music that informed my moves. I often dance to punk and hard funk, and I had intentionally chosen protest-tinged tunes to give me strength. Later on, I explicitly turned on Al Green's “Love and Happiness,” which always imbues my moves with a degree of generosity.

Theresa: It sounds somewhat silly, but my bright pink sweater and hat gave me courage. I needed a non-textual symbol to link me to PP supporters. Or maybe more importantly, to distinguish me from the pro-lifers. I really needed to feel like my dancing couldn't be mistaken for a religious, misogynistic, patronizing or patriarchal expression.

My dance, after all, was a kind of prayer and “pro-life” stance—one that is explicitly not anti-abortion, but for life—my life, other women's lives, the interconnectedness of humanity. In order to be in close proximity, I needed symbolic distance from their version of prayer and “pro-life” stance—one that is narrow, fetus-centered, and invites misogyny, shame and violence.

I'm especially interested in this because I really delight in the beauty of the mystery of DYFIT—that so often, you really can't articulate exactly what or why someone is dancing. And I believe the dancing speaks for itself. So I want to dig more into why I felt a danger in that slippage here and also how to maintain the integrity of the practice in a way that respects both my clarity of values and the mystery of the dancing.

Diane: Yes to all that! The night before the practice, I bought a half-dozen pink bandanas to have available as “identifiers” for any of our group who wanted one. I tied one around my neck, seeking to reduce the possibility of being seen as an anti-abortion zealot, dancing some sort of fetus worship. When I offered a bandana to two DYFIT dancers, both declined; one was explicit about being there as a neutral party, just to spread love unconditionally. Me, not so much. I did feel that in my dancing I could seek to defuse tensions, which were palpable, even from across the street from PP. One woman walking by asked what I was doing; when I said, “Don’t you feel it too?” she replied, in a resigned tone, that, yes, she did, and found it sad that “everybody hates each other” at these protests. I don’t know which “side” she was on.

I began feeling like a provocative interrupter in part because I was in extreme contrast to the scene—we were the only ones, perhaps, whose motives weren’t entirely clear. I didn’t mean to be confrontational, but rather to be true and warm and myself, and hope that was something that this group, this milieu, might accept and benefit from, however subtly.

Which is not to say that I was all generosity. The national context of the PP protest was very strong for me, and I didn’t really want to let my righteous anger go. I danced a few yards behind a group of young men (sign-carrying, anti-choice), pumping my fists (they didn’t notice). I mixed neutral, aimless movement with pointed fierceness. At one point I dug up a move we did a few summers ago in Peavey Plaza—a sort of wide-armed sweep, which I have come to think of as “casting a spell.” And I did try to put a spell on a few people, to see if they could understand why we like subsidized health care for women, to see if I could soften their thinking. I’m quite sure it didn’t work. But I know I had a much richer, more emotional time than my friends who were confined to the pens, basically marching in circles.

When we had stopped dancing and were gathered on the sidewalk, a young woman stopped to ask us what we were about, and to thank us. She was so enthusiastic about the energy we brought—I believe she used the word “art”—and felt we provided a relief to the serious proceedings, injected a note of grace and delight. It was hugely heartening to know that we’d been seen that way.

Marcus: Ah, so is that the theory of change here? Or is there more to it than “a relief to the seriousness”? Diane, you talked about behaving unlike either side. Your intentions were not easily readable, perhaps even mysterious. Theresa mentioned the mystery within DYFIT, and whatever that mystery is it seems to allow prayer, anger, love, hate, politics, self-care, and many other things to be in the same embodied space, all in dynamic relation. So what is the theory of change in ourselves? And how might it affect beyond us, into society in this moment of societal face-off? What is the point of this mystery, this “useless” or subtle spell, this dance? Theresa says the dancing speaks for itself.

Theresa: There is something freeing about dancing because it is speaking in a different language than the one that most of the arguments are in. If and when I try to engage people in a discussion around abortion, women’s and gender-non-conforming bodies, healthcare, misogyny, etc., I don’t feel like it will go anywhere. Mostly people hear just what they want to hear and dig deeper into already entrenched views.

Dancing my truth is a way of expressing without participating in the mind-numbing back-and-forth verbal disagreements. There is no narrative. You can't respond to my living, moving body with a treatise. It is temporal, physical, non-linear, sensory, encompassing the mind while also escaping all around it.

I don't expect to change anyone's mind with my dancing, but how we live and breathe and move our bodies does shape the world around us. So perhaps something else is changing. Maybe it's leaping ahead a bit—beyond the argument, straight into creating the world I want to live in: a world where my body is liberated. I know this is most transformational for me as participant, but I have to believe that it jostles the rigid container of those witnessing as well. Our liberation is connected.

Diane: I have many friends whom I consider true activists, and while I admire their doggedness in making statements, posts and art about their concerns, I do sometimes question the effectiveness of it all. Fulminating on the wrongs can be cathartic, especially now, but it does get to feel like an echo chamber; less like change than angry panic. All these words, often sounding just as judgmental and self-righteous as those of their opponents. I find that using my body as my vehicle for expression, protest and public “speech” feels safer and more peaceful.

It's interesting that I can say “safer”; that is a privilege. I recall something that came up around Black Lives Matter a few years ago, when people in the movement were asked how white people could support them. One way was to for white people to put our bodies on the line, to use our whiteness as a shield. I found that to be really smart, to ask us to deflect threats physically rather than making statements.

So, change... On some level, I do believe that thing that yogis and New Age thinkers espouse, that by bringing peace and kindness into your daily life, you can shift some larger trajectory. But while I do appreciate that approach, it doesn't fully suit me. I want and need something wilder, more complex to feel that I'm making/expressing/ disseminating positive change. And this strange public dance gives me that. It lets me retain some of the anger and awkwardness and sorrow I know is in me, while making an outward expression that is generous and non-confrontational.

***Marcus:** This may be a bit off-topic, but in gearing up for our next dance action, also at Planned Parenthood on April 14, I wanted to ask you about the time in between dancing? After a practice session, we go back to our non-dancing lives, so full of things to do, worries to worry about, away from the single-minded, all-embracing, full-bodied, exuberant practice. Do you feel DYFIT is with you somehow in those many non-DYFIT moments?*

Diane: It is with me, as an invisible spine, a reminder of what I'm about even when daily life and job feel mushy-prosaic. The memory of DYFIT is also a bit of a stick in the side, an occasional reminder that I'm not living my potential, being my best self much of the time. In that sense, it's an irritant.

So of course when I dance, it's almost always a relief, even when I have to struggle to show up. It's a richer version of what I feel when I make the effort to get on my bike or in my kayak. I imagine

it's also the way believers feel when they show up at a place of worship—perhaps they had to drag themselves, but they feel good that they did, and the benefit follows them.

Between practices, I also think of the individuals I dance with; there are images in my head of particular motions, expressions, interactions. I find this very warming, a reminder that the action of DYFIT would not work so well without the group, the relationships. Even though I don't know you all very well, I do feel a sweet bond, and that enriches me beyond the practice.

Theresa: In the same way that how we move our bodies shapes our world, it also shapes us. I definitely feel the way that DYFIT has shaped me. My sense of myself as a liberated body (or liberating—it is always in process) stays with me. My capacity for joy and generosity remains stretched after dancing. I feel more solid in who I am and how I want to be in the world. I have a sense of possibility and power that helps support generosity and direct me towards other liberation movements. DYFIT helps me show up more, even when I'm not practicing it—at protests, at work, the way I relate to authority figures from the police to my boss, the way I perceive myself.

Marcus: I really appreciate how daring, open, and thoughtful you both have been. You've shared a lot about yourselves and your insights into the practice. I've learned a great deal. Even after all these years, it feels like there is still so much to explore.

Here's a final question, perhaps ending on a doozie. Do you want others who think very differently, who even have strong beliefs that are opposed to yours, let's say Pro-Lifers, do you want them to try this dance?

Diane: Absolutely, yes! This practice is not meant for one particular coterie; it is open to anyone who is willing to embrace it. So far, our group has seemed to attract people who hold similar beliefs, particularly on issues of diversity and justice. If some people who diverge from our thinking would try DYFIT, perhaps it could initiate a bit of cross-cultural conversation, which so many of us are saying we need these days.

Theresa: 100% yes. I think it could be scary and difficult for us to dance together. There is a lot of distrust and anger, and this practice can be so open and vulnerable. But if we can trust each other to show up in that vulnerability, if we practice openness together and have the container of DYFIT to guide us, I imagine beautiful things could happen. What if we could start conversations not from a place of discussing deeply held beliefs, but from a temporary shared experience? What if it's not about the conversation at all, and it's just the experience of powerfully tapping into the richness of our human selves?