

I would like to thank the Quartiers Danse Festival for this first professional dance opportunity. I started my dancing training two years ago (at 26) and so I'm at my first steps in the dance community. Although I am new to the dance community in Quebec, I see that this milieu and its structure is only a reflection of our society. For instance, there is a blatant lack of representativity on stage and in performances – which is very unfortunate because we don't get to see and experience Montreal's cultural and diverse wealth/community. Consequently, my previous observations regarding racism or social inequalities in spheres other than dance do not change because I now find myself in the dance community. The power structures are the same everywhere I go, no matter what environment I navigate.

It is very important to point out that as a black woman, I am not a victim. I am first and foremost a human being who breathes, lives and aspires to live in a better, loving and just world for all of us. Deep in my being, I have the conviction that we are all equal - but regrettably, I am very aware that there are euro-centric (and predominantly white) ideals that result in unequal treatment for all that is none white. I was forced to recognize that my personal beliefs and our societal reality are two concepts that are far removed from each other. The "BLACK LIVES MATTER" movement in Montreal confirms that this reality is not exclusive to the United State... it also happens in Quebec!

I believe that conversations like the round table on racism are fundamentally important for us to move forward as an inclusive Quebec society. These conversations are hard for everyone involved. We need empathetic listening, awareness of our individual and collective responsibility as well as concrete actions. Let's stop guilt and ignorance. By concrete action, I would like to encourage you to support the following two organizations:

- 1) HOODSTOCK: <https://www.hoodstock.ca/>
- 2) NEVER WAS AVERAGE: <https://www.neverwasaverage.com/>

In closing, I would like to point out that I do not represent all the voices of black people, I am sharing with you a unique opinion and experience. I want to collaborate with other active dancers / choreographers whether they come from diversity or not in order to make the dance community more inclusive for all. Finally, racism should not be up for debate. **Racism is not a debate; it is a reality.**

Thaïna Rosinvil